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THE EVOLUTION OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES OF NATIVE PEOPLES

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ABSTRACT

This project examines several historical institutions that have been used to educate Native populations and the impacts of these respective schooling systems. This project analyzes curricula and living conditions within these schooling systems so that their cultural and historical impacts may be better understood. To understand the full impact that varying educational opportunities have on Native communities, this project spans from as early as colonial schooling attempts in the seventeenth century until education about and for Native peoples in the modern day. By first examining the type of education offered to Indigenous populations and how this altered the lives of Native people, the issues within modern public school curricula regarding Native history can have harmful consequences. This project will also touch upon the changes that have been made in modern curricula to provide more accurate depictions of Native communities and their histories. By showcasing historical forms of Native education as well as modern representations of Indigenous histories in academia, I strive to bring awareness to and invalidate holdovers of European hegemony over education. It is only by understanding the ways in which the hegemon controls the historical narrative of Native people and their culture that society can begin to reform the way that Natives are viewed and treated via better education. This project aims to point out the harm being done to Native communities by misrepresentation in order to bring about better representations and educational opportunities for the community and end a cycle of hurt that has been ongoing for generations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to begin this project by acknowledging that many of the topics that will be discussed have complicated, sensitive, and intimate histories. The impacts and effects of the events described within this work are still visible within modern Native communities and will be discussed as such. The intent of this piece is not to worsen or exploit the ongoing hurt or damage caused by the various education systems that have been forced upon Native communities. Instead, this piece is meant to highlight the injustices that various Native American communities have experienced at the hands of their suppressors in schoolyards, classrooms, and society at large. This piece also seeks to address the poor representation of American Indian history within modern public educational systems, as well as the way these systems perpetuate the idea that Natives are a people of the past rather than living communities.

Quickly, I should note that the terms: “American Indian”, “Native American”, “Native”, “Native peoples”, “Indigenous”, et cetera, will be used interchangeably throughout this work. I have tried not to favor any of these terms and use them, for the most part, synonymously with one another. I should also note that the capitalization of the terms “Native” and “Indian” where they appear in citations have all been adjusted to a capitalized format regardless of the author’s original capitalization out of respect for the Native communities and peoples.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to a few people and groups who have helped immensely throughout the creation of this long essay, which has turned into a short book. Special thanks to Professor Kugel, who trusted me enough to support this project and give me the

freedom to craft it to my liking; Lorene Sisquoc, for allowing me to come to Sherman Indian High School and utilize the materials in the museum and archive; Luke, for providing me with an extra set of eyes to look over this project; Mar, for all of your love and support during the times when I felt like I would never reach the end of this project and for your integral help translating historical Spanish texts; Meghan, for being proud of the work that I was doing despite not entirely understanding the subject or what I am talking about most of the time; Abuela, for being such an inspiration and maintaining subtle aspects of your traditional culture that I have only just begun to understand, I hope that continuing to learn about your heritage will keep your memory alive; and lastly Grandpa, for being so very proud of me and so excited about this project which you never got to see the completion of. I hope I have made each of you proud. I could not have done this without any of you.

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PREFACE

Before diving into this book's main topics, I would like to share my inspiration for my work. I was drawn to the topic of educational institutions devised for Native peoples due to my family's experience with education. My abuela, Yoloxochitl Ochoa, lived on a Yaqui reservation in Sonora before moving to the United States. I am uncertain of what my abuela's enrollment status may now be. As such, I am not an enrolled member of the Yaqui Tribe. However, I identify as a descendant of the Yaqui Tribe and try to approach Native history and culture with respect while acknowledging that I am not entirely immersed within any Indigenous community, nor am I entirely an outsider. While my abuela did not attend a boarding school, nor have I ever heard her speak of any familial experience with one, I have done my best to sympathize with the cultural loss fostered by the California Missions, Colonial Indian Schools, Native Boarding Schools, and other oppressive attempts at educating and assimilating Native peoples. I have tried to address the topics within this piece with the utmost respect and sensitivity despite my disconnectedness from my Native heritage, and hope that I have created a project that encapsulates the true weight of the institutions discussed.

My interest in highlighting the injustice that Native Americans face within educational institutions comes from the way that my abuela went about educating her children within a school system that did not serve them. Now, the school that my father and his siblings attended was not one designed for Native children, nor was it a blatant weapon of cultural genocide. The school was, however, a system of assimilation for the Hispanic community that was inundating

many school districts throughout Los Angeles County, where my abuela made her home after migrating to the United States with my abuelo. My abuela made the decision to assimilate her children as completely into American society as she and my abuelo could. Once her children, including my father, reached the age where they entered the Los Angeles school system, they were told to only speak English both at school as well as at home. My abuela distanced her children from her Native culture as well as from her husband's Mexican heritage. The result was a whitewashed generation of children who spoke Spanish but knew little of their traditional cultures and heritages. My father went on to have me and carried on this trend of total assimilation by making the decision not to teach me or my sister to speak Spanish or teach us any of the little knowledge he had of our Yaqui and Mexican cultures.

Now that I am older and have found an affinity for history, I am saddened by the loss of my abuela's and abuelo's cultures and family histories fostered by this belief that the generations after them could have better lives if they fit into a society dominated by white culture. As such, I am compelled to study and share the histories of other Native peoples who were either forcibly assimilated or made the choice to assimilate, like my abuela did, into the dominant culture and society of the time. It is for this reason that I set out on this project. I hope that the research and analysis presented within this piece can shed some light on the ways in which education has been weaponized as a form of erasure against Native communities in order to prevent similar instances from occurring in the future.

INTRODUCTION

The question of how to educate Native Americans has plagued the minds of the leaders of dominant societies since the first encounters between the Europeans and Native peoples. Many of the earliest efforts to educate Native Americans were conceptualized with the belief that Native people were an inferior race who lacked any sense of civilization or religion. Thus, it was often determined that the Natives should be educated and Christianized so that they might be assimilated into civilized society. These beliefs about the character and nature of Indigenous peoples endured for centuries and, as a result, persisted through several models of educational systems. These various educational institutions were usually founded with the common and basic principles of “civilizing”, “Christianizing”, and assimilating the Indigenous populations.

The implementation of these educational attempts varied depending upon who was doing the educating and what the ultimate goal of this education was. For example, as the Spanish colonized America, they sought to educate the Indian masses so that they could be shaped into Spanish citizens and be incorporated into the Spanish empire. The approach that the Spanish took contrasted with that of the Jesuits in the eastern regions of what today is the United States. The Jesuits were focused more on converting Native individuals than their incorporation into civilization or empire. Jesuit missionaries primarily offered schooling to Indian pupils so that the Natives could learn to read the bible and then go on to minister to other Native people. Despite this variance in their approaches to educating Indigenous populations, the general goals of a majority of the historical attempts made by dominant society toward the education of Native

people have had the same rudimentary goals and tend to be at least somewhat oppressive in Nature. Eventually, these early attempts at Native American education would be reformed, and a new, much more oppressive schooling system would be institutionalized throughout the United States and upheld until its morality was eventually questioned. This system was the infamous Boarding School system, which was weaponized as a means of cultural genocide under the guise of assimilation and education.

It is important to note that American Indians were not, and are not, passive participants in the educational systems that have attempted, and still attempt, to subjugate Native peoples while also trying to systematically eradicate Native cultures, beliefs, and identities. There are many recorded instances of organized resistance movements and independent acts of protest being carried out by Native people in active opposition against these oppressive systems. It is not possible to address every instance of resistance to these institutions within this work. However, acts of resistance to Native schooling attempts will be discussed in more general terms so that the agency of the Indigenous peoples subjected to these institutions can be examined. The Indigenous individuals who did engage in resistance were often punished harshly for their varying acts of protest. This did not deter future resisters from rebelling against the oppressive regimes that were forced upon them in a variety of educational institutions. It was not until the twentieth century that these acts of resistance brought about major changes in the educational opportunities offered to American Indians.

This project is an episodic evaluation of the evolution of the various educational institutions and opportunities offered to Native people, as well as their impacts on Indigenous communities. This work will focus on the period from the colonization of the North American continent and the establishment of the “New World” up until the end of the twentieth century. This piece is a topical approach to the subject of Native American education rather than a complete overview of every form of Native schooling to ever exist. As such, this piece will not always follow a linear nor consecutive course through this history but will attempt to lay out a timeline of these institutions in a comprehensive way and create an argument of how these institutions fed off of the goals of prior educational institutions for Native communities. It is important to note that many forms of Native education have been left out of this narrative. These forms of education are no less important than the institutions that this work focuses on. The omission of any institutions or attempts at Indigenous education from this work was not an act of discrediting these systems. Instead, it was an act of narrowing the focus of this work for the sake of conciseness. The same can be said for many court cases, legal actions, and activist movements, which will not be featured prominently in this work.

With all of this being said, it is essential to have a general understanding of what education looked like among Native communities prior to the interference of various colonial forces. This historical background is integral to a complete evaluation and understanding of the institutions, education techniques, and curricula devised by colonial forces and their impacts. Admittedly, this background is a gross generalization of the form of education offered to Native

children within their own communities prior to European contact. Despite this, it is nonetheless important to understand that the skills, morals, and culture being taught to Native children would have varied from tribe to tribe. A general understanding of the type of education Native children were receiving prior to the arrival of European colonizers can be gathered from the examination of educational and cultural trends from various tribal nations. In doing this, one can come to a general understanding of Native forms of education.

I. NATIVE EDUCATION PRIOR TO COLONIZATION

Introduction

When the Europeans arrived on the American continent, they brought with them preconceived notions as to what academia and education looked like. As such, it was observed by the Europeans that education simply did not exist among such “primitive” communities.

While European forces who encountered Native communities would continuously argue that they found nothing resembling any form of education in American Indian societies, education was, in fact, present within these societies. Native education did not come in a format that the Europeans might expect or in a form that could be considered a structured institution of academia. It is true that typical Indigenous education did not follow any standard curricula, nor were lessons taught in a school house. Instead, Native education was centered around practical learning that taught Indigenous children how to survive in the environment around them. Native education varied from one community to another due to circumstances such as environmental and cultural differences. Despite this variance in the type of instruction that Native children received, three aspects of education were central to all Native education. Tribal communities made a point of teaching their youth economic skills, cultural heritage, and spiritual awareness.

The Reality of Native Education

Native systems of education were drastically different from the educational systems that Europeans were accustomed to. One of the principal differences in these systems was the understanding of who was responsible for educating the youth. European societies often deemed

children's education to be the parents' responsibility, while Native communities viewed education as a communal effort. George Pettitt, an anthropologist who studied Native child-rearing practices, explained that "...education was not concisely institutionalized..."; it was instead "a community project in which all the reputable elders participated at the instigation of the individual family."¹ Native parents relied on other members of their community to assist in raising their children, and the communities, in turn, did their part in providing the youth with a well-rounded education. Native communities understood that these "...children held an important position in Native American cultures. Their family and community gave them love and care, and reared them in an integrated educational environment designed to develop mature and responsible members of society."² Native communities devised a system of education that would allow them to not only teach their younger generations how to survive, which was the primary goal of Native education but also teach them how to be good members of society. This is not something that Europeans ever made a note of during their initial contact with Native communities. This sort of education also does not align with the European belief that Native peoples were entirely uncivilized and savage. Such barbaric people would not have made it a point to raise upstanding members of society, and yet, "All Native groups recognized the significance of child-rearing practices. Their children held the promise of their continued identity

¹ George Albert Pettitt, *Primitive Education in North America* (Berkeley ; Los Angeles : University of California Press, 1956), pp. 5, 22.

² Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University), p. 8.

as a people. In their youth lay the kernel of their future.”³ Native children had always been considered essential for continuing Native ways of life, making their education all the more critical when Europeans eventually reached the Americas. The lessons taught to Indian children were often delivered opportunistically.

Native children were taught skills and lessons as a part of their daily lives, allowing them to learn survival skills as well as culture through observation and emulation. This is not to say that all lessons for Native children were spontaneous. There may not have been a strict curriculum or schedule to follow, but “Every Native group required that certain skills be mastered before a youth was accepted as a mature member of society. These requirements generally fell into three areas: economic skills, knowledge of cultural heritage, and spiritual awareness.”⁴ These three types of knowledge were passed down from the community elders to the youth. The elders would evaluate an Indian child’s grasp of these skills, and if they were not deemed knowledgeable enough, that child would not be considered a full member of society. A proper education was a rite of passage for Indigenous youth; a good education was required to be considered a full member of society.

Some aspects of Native education were divided by gender, as Indigenous communities had different expectations and understandings of the roles of the men and women in their communities. These gendered expectations for Native individuals affected the lessons that were

³ Ibid, p. 8.

⁴ Ibid, p. 11.

taught to the youth within communities. Gendered lessons were most often learned through emulating elders. As such, “Play was yet another means to educate Indian children.”⁵ Playing pretend or mimicking the daily tasks and lives of the adults around them allowed Indian children to learn the basics of their community’s culture. This also allowed Native youth to learn what was expected of them from society. Native communities expected their boys and men to be the providers and defenders of their communities. The boys would play, “Some games, called ‘the little brother of war,’ taught boys the necessary skills to handle weapons and developed physical endurance.”⁶ These types of games were not only a key component of Indigenous childhood development, but they were also a low-stakes way for Native boys to begin learning the basics of what could be considered more dangerous lessons. A boy who learned to handle weapons and developed endurance through playing would be much more equipped for hunting lessons or education of fighting and warcraft that the community would later bestow onto him. As for Native girls, they were expected to do tasks that had more to do with the domestic area of Indigenous life. These girls would play games that mimicked what could be considered the Indigenous equivalent of a housewife, such as when girls in Crow culture “put up a tent and played at carrying all the household activities she would later take on when she married.”⁷ These divided ways of learning only grew stronger as Native children were taught lessons of economic skills. The economic tasks of men and women within Native society were the most drastically

⁵ Jon A. Reyhner & Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History*. (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 2017), p. 17.

⁶ Ibid, p. 17.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 17-18.

segregated in terms of separation by gender, while most other areas of Native education were taught to children of all genders in Native communities.

Economic Education

The most fundamental goal of Indigenous education was always to teach children how to survive, which meant learning how to economically support themselves as well as their communities. The economy of Native Tribes varied based on the resources available to them, dependent upon factors such as the location of their community and the seasons. “Regardless of these basic economic differences, all Native children learned at an early age that survival depended upon well-tested knowledge of skills...”, these skills included training in the production of items that could either directly support the community or could be traded or sold to support the community’s economy.⁸

Native boys were taught economic skills that required them to venture away from their community, while Native girls were taught skills that allowed them to stay within the safety of what can be considered the domestic realm of Native society. This most often meant that “...training for economic maturity- fishing and hunting for boys; and for the girls horticulture and household tasks, such as cooking, the preparation of skin or feather garments, or the making of mats, baskets, or pots- was a crucial aspect of education.”⁹ These tasks would train Native children to economically support their community. Without this sort of education, Native

⁸ Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University), pp. 11-12.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 51.

communities would have fallen into ruin. Without any means of income or providing for the community, societies, and cultures will eventually crumble. As such, economic skills were just as valuable as cultural teachings in the education of Native youth.

Cultural Education

Cultural education was vastly important to the continuation of Native ways of life and was regarded as such when communities reared their children. While culture was not the primary focus of Indigenous forms of education, “Knowledge of cultural heritage marked the second aspect of childhood learning among the Native peoples of North America.”¹⁰ Native culture shaped the way they viewed the world around them. As such, most lessons of Native culture were taught as topics arose in daily life. Traditional stories then bolstered these lessons, detailing the origins of Native cultural practices and beliefs. In this way, “Storytelling taught on many levels, with the tales reinforcing cultural ideas learned in more daily and mundane lessons, and moral instruction punctuating the lives of Native youth.”¹¹ The oral tradition of storytelling was essential to instilling cultural knowledge into the minds of Native children. The cultural knowledge and traditions that were passed down through oral traditions were often interconnected with the spiritual knowledge of Native communities. These education criteria often go hand in hand, as teaching one helps sustain the other. Spiritual awareness was a huge

¹⁰ Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University), p. 12.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 13.

part of cultural teachings and Native edification overall, which is why it was the last criteria for a proper Indigenous education.

Spiritual Education

Spiritual awareness was the last main area of focus within general Native education but was deeply interconnected with almost every aspect of Indigenous learning. Spiritual forms of education were not at all divided by the gender or intended role of Native children within society. In fact, spiritual education “...applied to all youth within each group, male and female, the wealthy as well as the poor.”¹² Spiritual education was also limited by the age of Native children. It was the understanding of many Native communities that the spiritual and natural worlds were deeply intertwined and maintained by a careful balance. These communities “...understood that, contrary to the teaching of Christianity, humans did not hold dominion over the earth but must live in harmony with it.”¹³ The world's harmony and balance had to be maintained through careful action; straying from spiritual expectations could mean the downfall of individuals or entire communities should these misdeeds enact the wrath of any spirits, Gods, or ancestors. Due to the level of importance that was attributed to spiritual awareness in maintaining Native ways of life, “...the path towards spiritual awareness began early. Youth absorbed spiritual attitudes through family and older members of the group as well as through ritual and ceremony, which

¹² Ibid, p. 15.

¹³ Jon A. Reyhner & Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History*. (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 2017), p. 17.

provided an important dimension for all Native cultures.”¹⁴ Spiritual awareness was so deeply ingrained into Native society and culture that it was nearly imperceptible to the Europeans whom they would later come into contact with. In the Native worldview, everything was sacred and had some level of spiritual value, while the European world designated separate sacred spaces for things that they viewed as spiritually or religiously important. This would ultimately be the difference between Native and European forms of education that the Europeans found to be most troubling. For this reason, many of the first European attempts at schooling Native American peoples would be made by missionaries.

¹⁴ Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University), p. 16.

II. FOUNDING THE SYSTEMS FOR THE EDUCATION OF AMERICAN INDIANS

When analyzing the ways in which the educational opportunities available to American Indians have changed, it is equally as important to understand the basics of Native educational systems as it is to understand the beginnings of European attempts at schooling Native Americans. The earliest formal attempts at schooling Native Americans emerged in the early 1600s, as more permanent colonies were established in the Americas, often taking the form of Puritan Schools or Catholic Missions. However, this form of organized education for Natives did not emerge until the eighteenth century. In order to fully comprehend the efforts made by colonists to educate the Natives, one must understand the context in which the Europeans settling in the Americas viewed the Native people.

Native cultures were unlike any culture that the Europeans had encountered before and varied from region to region as well as from tribe to tribe. This variety and unfamiliarity within Native culture greatly confounded Europeans and heavily influenced the European views and opinions of Native people. Furthermore, the way that Europeans viewed American Indians influenced European decisions on how Native populations should be treated. David Wallace Adams explains how the fate of American Indians and their culture was decided in the New World in his book, *Education for Extinction*. Wallace provides a detailed explanation of the pivotal process of deciding the fates of Natives,

In the search for a resolution to the dilemma, policymakers were served well by long-standing images of Indians and their lifeways. Basic to all perceptions was the conclusion that because Indian cultural patterns were vastly different from those of whites, Indians

must be inferior. Whether discussing the Indians' worship of pagan Gods, their simple tribal organization, or their dependency on wild game for subsistence, white observers found Indian society wanting. Indian life, it was argued, constituted a lower order of human society. In a word, Indians were savages because they lacked the very thing whites possessed- civilization.¹⁵

Europeans struggled to find any commonalities between their cultural practices and societies at large and those of their Native counterparts. Consequently, a majority of Europeans determined that Native cultures and even lives were lesser than those of Anglo societies. European societies operated with the assumption that "...because the law of historical progress and the doctrine of social evolution meant that civilized ways were destined to triumph over savagism, Indians would ultimately confront a fateful choice: civilization or extinction."¹⁶ This dehumanization of Native people made it far easier for colonial societies to justify the erasure and destruction of American Indian lives, cultures, religions, and societies. Colonial forces would seek to destroy Native forms of education in favor of replacing them with European systems of edification. With all of this in mind, it was easy for colonizers to view their actions as just. They saw themselves as people making an honest effort to aid the Native Americans before they would inevitably succumb to the fate of all that is primitive: extinction. In the minds of the Europeans, their cause was moral, and they were saviors to an otherwise doomed race.

One of the many differences Europeans had a hard time comprehending was the difference between European and Indigenous religious practices. Native peoples incorporated religion and traditions into every aspect of their lives, while Europeans tended to practice

¹⁵David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (University Press of Kansas, 1995, 2020), p. 8.

¹⁶Ibid, p. 8.

religion in sacred spaces and at designated times. European settlers also had a tough time understanding the religious practices and belief systems of the American Indians. Sam Gill represented this dilemma in his piece “All Mankind is One”, contained within his more extensive work entitled *Native American Religions: An Introduction*, by explaining, “They equated religion and Christianity, and while they probably did not expect to find Christianity among Indians, they appeared to expect some corruption of religion in the form of idolatry. Yet they reported finding not even that. For them, Native Americans had nothing that resembled religion.”¹⁷ When the Europeans were unable to find anything that resembled their own religion among Native communities, the Europeans decided that it was their duty to educate and, therefore, Christianize the American Indians. This decision would define the institutions, schooling systems, and curricula designed to educate Native youth during the period of colonial development in North America.

Furthermore, “The complex structure of Native childhood was to be severely tested with the arrival of Europeans, for the greatest inroads of upon Native culture were made through their youth.”¹⁸ The Europeans had been unable to recognize the type of education being delivered to Native children. However, they were able to comprehend the integral role that Native children played in the survival of Native cultures. This made Indian children the most obvious target for assimilation and European educational efforts, justified by varying claims of religious duty. Religious and cultural reformation would remain a critical factor in the establishment of schools for Native youth and became a prime factor in the development of curriculum within these educational systems. It is, however, essential to note that there was vast diversity in schooling

¹⁷ Sam D. Gill, *Native American Religions: An Introduction*, 8. 2nd ed. (Cengage Learning, 2004).

¹⁸ Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University), p. 23.

attempts for Native people. Although most schools were developed with a common goal in mind, to Christianize and civilize the Natives, the methods for achieving these goals varied from colony to colony and often depended on what sect of Christianity the settlers in the colony were, their nationality and their relationship with the Natives at the time. Margaret Connell Szasz better describes this diversity within educational attempts in her book *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783*. Szasz describes the diversity of schooling practices within the colonies by stating, “The nature of the Euroamerican, the nature of the Indian, and the conditions in the given colony all led to widespread diversity; and here, Indian schooling shared some parallels with mainstream colonial history. The diversity of the colonies... was clearly reflected in this crucial dimension of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America.”¹⁹ Although the methods used for educating the Native people varied from place to place, the same viewpoint remained among those involved in the school system.

It seems that a majority of Europeans who made the effort to Christianize American Indians did so out of the belief that it was their moral responsibility and that this would be a positive experience for the Native community. This belief was held by the Spanish, who had made their way from the East Coast to the West Coast, where they would establish the infamous California Mission System, as well as the English and French, who made the most notable attempts at educating Natives of the eastern regions of what today is considered the continental United States. Szasz depicts this way of thinking when she writes, “The colonial schoolmasters to the Indians viewed their efforts as honest attempts to change Indian youth, hoping that Indian

¹⁹ Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University), pp. 4-5.

schooling would redirect the lives of those who held the future of their people in their hands.”²⁰

Szasz explains the belief that many of these colonists had that their efforts would improve the lives of Native people. When reviewing these motivations and intentions, it can be troublesome to realize that the colonists made an effort to distance Native youth from their families and their culture. It seems that the practice of targeting education attempts and Christianization efforts towards children was done so with the belief that these youth would go home and share what they had been taught with their community. Colonists believed that if these youth were successful in learning Anglo-American culture and teaching it to their communities, then slowly, the Native community would evolve to be more like mainstream Anglo society. The settlers of this period were not alone in the belief that American Indian schooling could benefit the community; Szasz also notes this shared sentiment in her work, “A number of colonial Euroamericans and Indians deemed Indian schooling as the ultimate tool for achieving cultural change among Indian people.”²¹ Many American Indians shared the belief with Anglo-Americans that schooling would benefit the Native community, albeit for different reasons. The Anglo-Americans saw schooling Native people as a means to civilize a savage and uncultured people. In contrast, Natives saw schooling as an opportunity for their community to learn how to survive in a changing world.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 4.

²¹ Ibid, p. 4.

III. THE CALIFORNIA MISSIONS

Introduction

While a prominent portion of this project will focus on relatively eastern portions of the United States, it is nonetheless important to address one of the earliest attempts at educating Native Americans, the California Missions. The California Mission System is by no means the first attempt at Christianizing or educating Native Americans; however, the California Missions are one of the most well-known attempts at educating Indigenous peoples in early American history. While the California Missions are most widely recognized for their intention of spreading Christianity to Native Americans, the missions also served as institutions of education. In order for the Indigenous populations to understand Christianity and be converted, they must first be taught literacy as well as the basic principles valued in European society. This education was necessary so that the Natives would not only understand the religion being preached to them but also to create civilized communities in a land that Europeans viewed as barbaric and rudimentary.

Nearly all of the educational systems designed for Native people lacked the academic structure of modern schools and instead followed a pattern of Christianization and civilizing efforts; this includes the California Missions. When examining the central pillars of education within the missions, it becomes clear that education did not exist within the mission system as a highly structured and academic institution that modern society classifies as a proper education. This does not mean that education did not exist within the missions. Understanding education within the missions is more complex than analyzing a set of scholastic lesson plans or curricula. Instead, education within the California missions must be observed in the subtext of the goals and actions of missionaries and the mission system. Education within the missions existed in

forms such as religious teachings, moral reform, implementation of agricultural and skilled trade practices, and, in some cases, emphasis on literacy. Education within the missions most often did not exist in the format that education exists in modern times. However, education was implicit and integral in shaping the cultural and moral values and religious practices, as well as the work and economic opportunities of Native peoples living under the jurisdiction of Franciscan missionaries.

Education was a necessity for the success in the conversion and civilization of Native populations, which was the intended purpose of the California mission system. Understanding the goals the Franciscans were trying to achieve makes it easier to understand the intrinsic forms of education that correlate with varying aspects of their intended goal. The goal of the mission project itself, which was to be run by Franciscan missionaries but funded by the Spanish crown, as explained by Daniel Garr, is as follows,

In theory it was assumed that a mission community was to have completed its task of evangelization, education and civilisation within a specified period of time, initially ten years, after which its spiritual affairs would be handed over to a secular clergy, its lands distributed among the Indians, and its municipal government would function in the manner set forth in the *Recopilacion*.²²

Upon the establishment of the missions, it was made clear that the ultimate goal of the missionaries was to educate Natives until it was clear that the Indians met specific standards of Christianization and civilized life so that they would be able to function independently as citizens of the Spanish empire. While the Spanish crown was supplying the funds for the establishment of the mission system, it would be the missionaries who carried out the efforts to educate the Native peoples residing in California. Although the missionaries' primary focus would be the Christianization of the Natives, the goal set for the mission project was reiterated by missionaries such as Fermin Francisco de Lasuén,

²² Daniel J. Garr, "Planning, Politics and Plunder: The Missions and Indian Pueblos of Hispanic California," *Southern California Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (January 1, 1972), 291.

We are apostolic missionaries bound by the papal bulls to depart from the missions as soon as we recognize that the neophytes... are sufficiently instructed in the divine law, and sufficiently competent to care for the economic welfare of their families and for the political government of the pueblos.²³

Despite having differing ideas about the foremost goal in the education of Natives, the Spanish believing it to be the civilizing of Native people while the Franciscans prioritized the conversion of the Indians, there was an understanding among the Franciscans that the goals of the Spanish must be realized both to maintain funding but also because conversion could not be carried out without civilizing the Indian populace. Both goals would require the edification of Native peoples, but each instructional objective would present the missionaries with a unique set of issues. One must examine the primary focuses of curricula at the missions in order to understand the issues that the Franciscans encountered in their endeavors to educate their Native pupils.

Life and Academia within the California Missions

The matter of civilization would prove to be the most challenging for the Franciscan missionaries. One of the major setbacks in the civilizing process that was shared by many Europeans was the concern of whether or not Indians were capable of being humanized. The concerns over “humanization” and “civilization” imply a belief among the Spaniards and Franciscans that, in their natural state, the Natives were less than human. This matter can be observed in Lasuén’s own apprehensions regarding the civilizing process,

Here then we have the greatest problem of the missionary: how to transform a savage race such as these into a society that is human, Christian, civil, and industrious. This can be accomplished only by ‘denaturalizing’ them. It is easy to see what an arduous task this is, for it requires them to act against nature. But it is being done successfully by means of patience, and by an unrelenting effort to make them realize that they are men.²⁴

²³ Fermín Francisco de Lasuén and Finbar Kenneally, “Lasuén to Neve, Mission San Diego, January 25, 1779) in *Writings, Vol. 1*. (Washington: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1965), 76.

²⁴ Fermín Francisco de Lasuén and Finbar Kenneally, *Writings, Vol. 2*. (Washington: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1965), 202.

Lauén's implication that the Native people did not know they were men only fed into the tendency of the missionaries to dehumanize the Indians. This tendency can also be observed in the guidebooks provided to the missionaries, which addressed possible concerns and issues that the missionaries may have. The Itinerary poses the question, "If the Priest of Indians should attend to teach them a regulated and humane way of life?"²⁵ The resulting statement implies the necessity of the Franciscans to continue in their civilisation efforts by claiming, "...that those who lack regulation, and honest laws in their way of living, are but men only in appearance, and beasts in the rest..."²⁶ The Franciscans were puzzled by how they were supposed to turn the Indians, whom they did not even view as proper human beings, into upstanding citizens. This produced new concerns over how to go about this type of edification that would allow Natives to "take their place as Mexican citizens in the new Republic."²⁷ Efforts to educate the Indians so that they could become competent members of society would have to begin with major reforms of the cultural and moral aspects of the Natives' daily lives that the Franciscans identified as being barbaric or savage.

Moral and Cultural Reform

In order to achieve the level of moral and cultural reform that was imperative to the accomplishment of both the Spaniard's goal of shaping Natives into model citizens as well as the

²⁵ Alonso de la Peña Montenegro, *Itinerario Para Párrocos de Indios*. (Ediciones Corporación de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1985), p. 70. * It should be noted that this source is only available in Spanish. All translations provided for passages of this book were done by me (Sarah Ochoa) with the assistance of my dear friend Maritza Moran. From this point on, all references to this book will include the original text following the citation for the passage. The original quote from Section 10 of the book is, "Si el Cura de Indios debe atender à enseñarles policía, y modo de vivir humano?"

²⁶ Ibid, p. 70. The original text of this quote reads, "...que los que carecen de policía, y leyes honestas en su modo de vivir, no son hombres, sino solo en el aspecto, y bestias en lo demas..."

²⁷ C. Alan Hutchinson, "The Mexican Government and the Mission Indians of Upper California, 1821–1835," *The Americas* 21, no. 4 (April 1, 1965), p. 335.

conversion of Natives, the Franciscan friars had to commit to a system of civilization that would take nearly total control of the lives of the Indians. The civilizing process was not fast, which is reflected in the extension of the allotted amount of time given to the missions to achieve their goals and leave behind an independent Native populace. Edward Castillo, a historian of Native descent, described the system that the Franciscans had created to reach their goals, “The padres established a strict feudalistic regime that sought to control every aspect of their daily lives: where they could live, who they could marry, and the daily labor tasks for men, women, and children.”²⁸ The system created by the Franciscans was inherently oppressive and was designed to be so in order to ensure its success. By ensuring that the Indians had no control over their own lives, the Franciscans were more readily able to implement the changes in the Indians’ moral and cultural character to produce a Hispanicized version of the former savages. The guidebook provided to the missionaries outlined the types of lessons that should be taught to the Natives to civilize them and rid them of their primitive habits, “To teach the Indians how to live with order and regulation, and to be clean, honest, and have a good upbringing, and get used to Christians, say their blessings at the table, give thanks after eating, and when they go to sleep dedicate themselves to God...”²⁹ This description of the Franciscan interpretation of morality is highly reflective of the way in which the missionaries were able to make progress in achieving the goals laid out for them by the Spanish crown while still honoring their own objective of Christianizing the Native populace. The civilizing process over time would have an impact on every facet of Indian life and education, as represented in the work of Kent Lightfoot, “Enculturation programs

²⁸ Edward D. Castillo, “An Indian Account of the Decline and Collapse of Mexico’s Hegemony over the Missionized Indians of California”, p. 392.

²⁹ Alonso de la Peña Montenegro, *Itinerario Para Párrocos de Indios*. (Ediciones Corporación de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1985), p. 70. The original quote from Section 10 of the book is, “que se enseñen à los Indios à vivir con orden y policía, y tener limpieza, honestidad, y buena crianza, y que como acostumbra los Christianos, digan la bendición à la mesa, y den gracias despues de comer, y quando à dormir, se encomienden à Dios...”

were employed to transform the social, economic, political, and religious practices of indigenous peoples. These programs varied along a continuum of ‘directed’ culture change.”³⁰ While the process of stripping away the moral and cultural beliefs of the Indians would prove to be tedious, its effects soon became visible within the Indian populace residing at the missions.

The cultural effects of the civilization process can be more clearly observed within the Native population at the missions than the moral counterparts. The system of total control implemented by the Franciscans allowed them to create a new sense of social structure and, with it, a new culture that was slowly making itself known within the missions. One example of the new social structure implemented by Franciscans was the emergence of an elite group that was focused on the proficiency of Christian religious practices, “Within the mission compound priests created a new Indian elite group, the choir, the ability to join depending solely upon the ability to replicate European sound in song... They also learned Spanish well and formed an important bonding unit between priest and congregation.”³¹ It was no coincidence that the determining factors in qualifying a Native person as elite were directly reflective of the two main objectives of the Franciscan missionaries. The Franciscans used their power to manipulate the social hierarchy to set the precedent that any Indians who personified the civilization and Christianization of their race would subsequently be better off in life. With the emergence of an elite group among the Native populations of the missions also came a shift in the way that the Indians presented themselves. In another showcase of the cultural impact of the presence of a socially elite group, Indians began to alter their fashion, “The dress of Indigenous people at the mission sometimes reflected a rise in their status and a certain modernization of their

³⁰ Kent G. Lightfoot *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants : the Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers*, p. 20.

³¹ James A. Sandos, *Converting California Indians and Franciscans in the Missions*, p. 10.

appearance.”³² Indians living at the missions began to demonstrate their social status through their clothing. This practice was not unique to the Missions as it had existed in various forms across Native societies; however, it was the new standard for the demonstration of a superior social status that reflected the level of impact that the Franciscans were having on the Natives. As a demonstration of their social status, “The Indigenous political elite often wore attire that looked more Spanish.”³³ The message that the Spaniards were superior to the Indians was intrinsic to the very fabric of the new culture emerging within the walls of the missions. The Franciscans had successfully instilled in the minds of the Indians that the emulation of the Spaniards and their practices would ultimately benefit the Natives themselves and thus created a visual acknowledgment from Natives that Spanish customs were superior to their own. Although the cultural impact that the process of civilization had on Indians was much more visible, the moral impacts were ultimately more beneficial to the missions, effectively educating, civilizing, and Christianizing the Indian people.

The Franciscans now faced the challenge of instilling an entirely new moral code into the Native population to both humanize and Hispanicize the race. One of the best examples of a clash between the morals of the Indians, or what the Spanish perceived to be the lack thereof, and the morality of the Franciscans was the issue of sex. While there were some Native communities whose moral codes limited the amount of sex a person may have, the opinions of Indians on sex before marriage and the number of sexual partners that a person may have were vastly different from the opinions of the friars who controlled the daily lives of Native peoples.³⁴

³² Lisbeth Haas, *Saints and Citizens: Indigenous Histories of Colonial Missions and Mexican California*, p. 71.

³³ *Ibid*, 68.

³⁴ Sherburne Friend Cook. *The Conflict Between the California Indian and White Civilization*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 102. Idea paraphrased from the quote, “In the aboriginal state very definite laws and customs prevented the unlimited indulgence

These differences in the morality of sex and sexual actions were a major source of tension between the Franciscans and Indians. The Franciscans ensured via their domination of the Indians' daily lives that "Native people quickly learned about the importance the missionaries attached to sexual abstinence outside of marriage, and about the significance of the marriage ceremony in legitimizing monogamous sexual contact."³⁵ Abstinence from sex outside of marriage was essentially a foreign concept to the Native populace, and there were many issues over what to do if an Indian man had many wives in his own culture before moving to the mission. Through various methods, such as locking girls over the age of nine in a room all night as well as inspections to make sure intercourse was being carried out appropriately and for its designed purpose of procreation, the friars made sure that Indians understood the Franciscan standpoint on the morality of sex. Franciscans were able to weave many ideas of religion into the implementation of strong moral guides during the civilization process that was necessary for the Christianization of Native peoples. With Christianity being woven into the new code of morals being taught to the neophytes, it should come as no surprise that the Franciscan friars would have such a strong commitment to the religious education of Native peoples.

Religious Education

While the goals of the Franciscans and the Spanish during the initial foundation of the mission system overlapped in the forms of education that would be provided, it cannot be ignored that a majority of the Franciscans' focus was devoted to the conversion of Indians. As a result, it can be determined that, at the very least, each Indian who lived at any of the California missions would receive some religious education. Juínpero Serra is an embodiment of the

in and satisfaction of the sex instinct. These are not considered in detail here, because they concern the cultural aspect of the problem."

³⁵Randall Milliken, *A Time of Little Choice : the Disintegration of Tribal Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1769-1810*. (Menlo Park, CA: Ballena Press, 1995), 70.

Franciscan dedication to the religious edification of Native peoples, “Thus with apostolic zeal and the grace of God, it seems to me that we may work to our hearts’ content, and our Lord God will accomplish the promise... the gentiles will be converted.”³⁶ Serra’s assertion that the Native people will be converted both represents the underestimation by the Franciscans as to what challenges they may face in attempting to convert Native people and the dedication that they will be willing to put in to achieve the Christianization of the Indians. This dedication would come at a price for the American Indians residing in California, for the Spaniards were willing to pay any price for the souls they would save through conversion,

...as they invaded the Indian lands and founded each of their twenty-one missions... believed they were creating a civilization from a wilderness, and in their prayers as well as their diaries and treatises, gave thanks for the opportunity to serve their Spanish monarch, and God.³⁷

The suffering of the Natives would not end when the Franciscans formalized their efforts of conversion behind the walls of missions. With such a dramatic oversimplification by Serra of the complexity involved in the conversion of the Native peoples of California and his oversight of the suffering may cause the target population, it comes as no surprise that the missionaries would encounter many roadblocks in their path to providing the Indians with religious schooling, part of which was the failure of the missionaries to provide the Natives with a well-rounded education. One of the issues that Franciscan priests had was getting the Indians to attend mass; this issue had been addressed in the Itinerary presented to the missionaries with this solution,

In regards to the concept of attending Mass, I say that you obligate their attendance after they have enough fluency to discuss sins and the capacity to commit them... The greatest difficulty is in finding out when young boys are capable of rational reasoning. Doctors commonly say that it begins at the age of seven... This general rule has many exceptions,

³⁶ Serra, Junípero, and Antonine Tibesar. *Writings of Junípero Serra*. Volume . (Washington: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1955), p. 137.

³⁷ Rupert Costo and Jeannette Henry, *The Missions of California : a Legacy of Genocide*. (San Francisco: Published by the Indian Historian Press for the American Indian Historical Society, 1987), p. 1.

because there are some who master the use of reasoning quickly, and others that take longer, as is commonly experienced in the Indians...³⁸

This suggestion provides multiple insights into other areas of concern within the religious education of the Indians throughout the mission system. First, the issue of only requiring the attendance of Natives after they “have enough fluency to discuss sins” could imply that the sermons are being delivered in Spanish, or possibly Latin, which the Natives cannot understand. This could also imply that Indians are not “fluent” enough in their religious education to understand all the ecclesiastical concepts addressed in the sermon. Both of these concerns are addressed later in the guidebook when it dictates what must be taught to the Indians regarding religion and how it should be taught,

The doctrine that the Priest has to teach the Indians...all the Priests teach the Indians, men and women, and boys, ...in their language, Our Father, Hail Mary, the Creed, and the Commandments of God and of the Church, so that they have it in their memory, and the adults before being baptized [if possible] and also that they understand what has been said, according to their capacity, and often recite the Prayers, especially the Creed and Our Father in the times who gather in the Church, and when they go to bed and wake up.³⁹

The doctrine states that the Indians were to receive religious instruction in “their language” and also set a standard for what should be taught to Natives. A problem arises from the phrasing in this passage, more specifically from the term “their language”. Should this term be referring to

³⁸ Alonso de la Peña Montenegro, *Itinerario Para Párrocos de Indios*. (Ediciones Corporación de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1985), 62-63. The original quote from Section 10 of the book is as follows, “En quanto al precepto de oír Misa, digo, que los obligas luego que tienen suficiendo te discurso y capacidad para pecar... La mayor dificultad está en averiguar quando comienza el uso de razón en los muchachos. Comunmente dicen los Doctores, que à los siete años cumplidos... Esta regla general tiene muchas excepciones, porque hay algunos en quienes se acelera el uso de razón, y otros que les viene muy tarde, como de ordinario se experimenta en los Indios...”

³⁹ Ibid, 69. The original quotes read, “La Doctrina que ha de enseñar el Cura à los Indios” and “...todos los Curas enseñen à los Indios, varones y mugeres, y muchachos, ...en su lengua, el Padre nuestro, y el Ave Maria, el Credo, y los Mandamientos de DIos y de la Iglesia, de modo que lo tengan en la memoria, y los adultos antes de ser bautizados (si es posible) y tambien que entiendan lo dicho, conformed à su capacidad, y recen à menudo las Oraciones, especialmente el Credo y Padre nuestro en los tiempos que se juntan en la Iglesia, y quando se acuestan y levantan de dormir.”

the language of Natives at the missions, it becomes harder to understand why this passage seems to make references to the fluency and comprehension skills of Native peoples. There is also a chance that the phrase “their language” is referring to the language of the priests. In this case, the instruction for priests to ensure that Natives understand what is being recited in the prayers that they are taught becomes a matter of Native comprehension of the Spanish language as well as their comprehension of ecclesiastical concepts. Regardless, this phrase used in conjunction with the arguments about the age at which Natives are capable of rational reasoning suggests that perhaps the Franciscan Friars were referring to fluency as a Native’s ability to follow and understand mass. If this is the case, then the detriment is likely caused by age, a combination of language barriers, and a lack of understanding of the principles of Christianity on the part of the Indians. These issues are exemplified in the claim that “Religious instruction given to neophytes was rudimentary, limited to repeating ‘in Spanish and Latin the offices of the church’ from memory without understanding their meaning...”⁴⁰ This suggests that the issues of fluency are related to both language barriers as well as confusion among the Natives about the fundamental concepts of both and Christianity as a whole. The issues about language pertain not only to the deliverance of mass but also to all types of education within the missions. If Natives were unable to understand the education being provided to them due to a language barrier then the efforts of the Franciscans would be fruitless. This matter was further complicated by concerns that delivering sermons and instruction in Native languages might hinder the Hispanicization of the Indians.

Language within the Missions

⁴⁰Jon A. Reyhner & Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History*. (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 2017), 26.

Despite these language concerns, there is much evidence to suggest that the Indians and Spaniards spoke enough of each other's languages to communicate with one another and, in some cases, led to the development of a language unique to the missions themselves. Spanish was taught to Indians with varying levels of success throughout the missions. One strong proponent for the examination of the “catechetical practices, such as the language of instruction for the Indians...” was Fray Horra.⁴¹ Horra was an advocate for better treatment of the Indians within the mission system, which included determining what language would provide the Indians the best chance of understanding what was being taught to them. While there were debates over what language instruction should officially be given, which raised concerns that perhaps Indians were not able to understand sermons and instruction being given in Spanish, there was and is evidence that at least some Natives understood Spanish, “...They, especially the younger generation, also understand and speak our Spanish...”⁴² This proof that Indians could both understand and speak Spanish implies that problems understanding religious instruction were not language-based but rather an issue of simply not understanding what was being discussed. This does not mean that all Indians struggled to understand the concept of the Franciscan faith, nor that all Natives could speak and understand Spanish. There was some evidence that while providing sermons to Natives in Spanish would not immediately lead to Indians understanding both the language and the religion of the Franciscans, it may lead to an eventual understanding of both, “For the last four months, certain Indian boys have been selected to read the catechism. They offer hope that it will not be long before they read it perfectly. This may lead to their understanding and reading

⁴¹ Rose Marie Bebee, and Robert M. Senkewicz. *Tensions Among the Missionaries in the 1790s*, p. 27.

⁴² Maynard J. Geiger and Clement W. Meighan. *As the Padres Saw Them : California Indian Life and Customs as Reported by the Franciscan Missionaries, 1813-1815*. (Santa Barbara, California: Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library, 1976), pp. 19-20.

Spanish. Generally speaking, these neophytes have neither spoken nor understood Spanish.”⁴³

This concept is similar to the idea that the moral education of Indians would not be an instantaneous process but rather one that facilitated the need for repetition and reinforcement to gain a gradual understanding of the ideas. While there were cases of Indians being unable to understand or speak Spanish, there were also cases where the Natives were able to learn, speak, and understand Spanish with high levels of proficiency.

In cases where there were high levels of Spanish fluency among the Natives, interactions between Indians and Spaniards increased, leading to a unique culmination of cultures within the missions. Some missions reported high levels of Spanish fluency among their Native populations, claiming, “Commonly the Indian population understands a great deal of Spanish and speaks it with quite some fluency especially those who were born at this mission. Those who have learned best had the opportunity of dealing more with Spaniards...”⁴⁴ The precedent established in the new cultural and moral life within the missions that the emulation of the Spaniards raised the social standings of Natives also expanded to an Indian’s capability of speaking Spanish. The better an Indian’s mastery of the Spanish language was, the more opportunities there were for the individual to deal with Spaniards. This then, bettered the Indian’s chances of elevating their status within the societal structure of the missions and the closer that individual came to being deemed ready for independent life beyond the walls of the mission as a citizen of Mexico. The increased interactions between Natives and Spaniards resulted in,

The vernacular Spanish that Indigenous people learned at Mission La Purísima in 1800 was spoken by the troops in California and contained elements of other Indigenous languages in Mexico. Fray Gregorio Fernández wrote that the common Spanish vernacular spoken by the missionaries, soldiers, and Indians consisted of ‘a mixed language of Otomite, Mexicano, Apache, Comanche, Lipan.’ The vernacular, he

⁴³ Ibid, 36.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 20.

emphasized, ‘is what is used by the troops.’⁴⁵ The result was a version of Spanish unique to the colonial conquest of America, which continued to be shaped by further understanding of Native languages on the part of the Spanish and Spanish on the part of the Natives. This language, which combined a variety of Spanish and Native languages, facilitated more accessible modes of contact between missionaries, soldiers, and varying Native communities throughout the continent. The development of a language that could be more universally understood by the various regions that Spain colonized allowed for more efficient education of the Native populations within the missions. Without an understanding of the language in which lessons are taught, regardless of the structure, there can be no learning. The opportunities that Indians obtained through their knowledge of Spanish would not be their only options for social advancement outside of the realm of religious elitism.

Lessons in Trade Skills, Labor, and Agricultural Practices

The Spanish would teach Natives new trade and labor practices to establish a self-sufficient economy for the missions and to prepare the Natives for independent life after the secularization of the Mission System. The book *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis* provides one example of how the Franciscans were able to categorize the labor of Indians as a means to an end in the fulfillment of creating independent citizens out of the Indians, “Baptized Indians worked principally at missions where, from the Franciscans’ perspective, their labor constituted a morally enriching disciplinary activity that hastened their conversion from savagery to civilization.”⁴⁶ This passage suggests that teaching the Natives new agricultural practices and training them to work in skilled trades was not merely an act of the missionaries to

⁴⁵ Lisbeth Haas. *Saints and Citizens: Indigenous Histories of Colonial Missions and Mexican California*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 62.

⁴⁶ Steven W. Hackel, *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California, 1769-1850*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2005), p. 280.

force the Indians to labor for the benefit of the mission alone. Instead, instruction on different types of labor and a structured work environment were integral steps in preparing Natives for the day that the missionaries would leave, and the Indians would have to behave as productive members of Spanish society without the guidance of the Franciscans. This is not to say that the Franciscan missionaries did not profit from the labor of the Indians under their care, for they surely did. Alan Hutchinson describes the reality of labor production within the missions, “The Indians, who performed most of the manual and skilled work in Upper California, were actually the economic mainstay of the province.”⁴⁷ While Indian labor was the primary source of self-sufficient production and revenue should the mission have any leftover goods to trade or sell, the labor practices were still justified as being for the benefit of the Native people. A quotation from Fermín Francisco de Lasuén explains how the missionaries were able to expand their duty of converting Native peoples into implementing a structured form of labor and labor practices, “...the missionaries... being charged with the conversion of the Indians... it is their duty to procure for them a suitable and profitable way of making a living.”⁴⁸ By reinterpreting the intended goals of the mission system, California missionaries were able to justify their right to control the labor and economic affairs of the Native peoples of their mission. The lessons of agricultural and skilled labor practices taught to the Indians would serve educational and economic purposes in the lives of the Indians.

The introduction of European forms of agricultural and trade practices had taught the Native populace skills they would have otherwise not learned while also providing the Indians economic freedoms not usually available to colonized peoples. The Franciscans’ reasons for

⁴⁷ C. Alan Hutchinson, “The Mexican Government and the Mission Indians of Upper California, 1821–1835,” *The Americas* 21, no. 4 (April 1, 1965), p. 335.

⁴⁸ Fermín Francisco de Lasuén and Finbar Kenneally, *Writings Vol. 1*. (Washington: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1965), p. 377

providing Natives with the possibility for economic growth of the Indians is explained in the passage, “The Humanists... believed that teaching Indians a trade and allowing them to live in villages planned ‘in the manner of Castilian towns,’ would alone be sufficient to raise their level of civilization within a short period of time and ‘quickly bring them riches.’”⁴⁹ The Franciscans favored the idea of providing Natives with opportunities to learn a trade as it would speed up the process of civilization outlined by their Spanish benefactors. They were also quick to provide the newly independent Natives with economic success to maintain their new way of life after the missionaries left. Padre José Señán would share his thoughts on the matter,

It is my opinion that the formation of settlements and their prosperity would be greatly enhanced if the inhabitants were permitted, through certain advantages and privileges, to enjoy the fruits of their own labor and make some profit therefrom. Thus the heavy tasks of agriculture would be made less burdensome and their application to other industries encouraged.⁵⁰

It was hoped that by providing Indians with the means to establish profitable trade and agricultural practices for themselves, the Natives would be more willing to maintain the manner of labor necessary for the maintenance of the secular villages after the goals of the missionaries were realized, resulting in the withdrawal of the Franciscans and the closure of the missions. Unfortunately, the profit margin provided by agricultural endeavors and skilled labor practices was insufficient to continually encourage newly independent Indians to work⁵¹. Ultimately, the Franciscans would not be successful in the actualization of the cities of Hispanicized Indians or show any real progress in the creation of the envisioned villages. For this reason, the newly

⁴⁹ Daniel J. Garr, “Planning, Politics and Plunder: The Missions and Indian Pueblos of Hispanic California,” *Southern California Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (January 1, 1972), 292.

⁵⁰ José Francisco de Paula Señán, *The Letters of José Señán : O.F.M., Mission San Buenaventura, 1796-1823*. (San Francisco: Published for the Ventura County Historical Society by J. Howell-Books, 1962), p. 2.

⁵¹ Paraphrased from C. Alan Hutchinson, “The Mexican Government and the Mission Indians of Upper California, 1821–1835,” *The Americas* 21, no. 4 (April 1, 1965).

independent government of Mexico would drive the Franciscans from the land and spell the downfall of the California Mission system.

Legacy and Impacts of the Mission System

While the goals of the missionaries were not achieved on a large scale, there were a few instances of successful conversion and civilization among Indian individuals; one such individual was the infamous Pablo Tac. Pablo Tac attended school at Mission San Luis Rey. A book entitled *Native American Perspectives on the Hispanic Colonization of Alta California* contains a fragment of Tac's writings. The book describes the events that led to Tac's global education, "In the mission school, Pablo seems to have been a diligent student, showing considerable promise for more advanced work."⁵² Pablo Tac's success in the Mission School at San Luis Rey would lead him to be selected to first travel to Mexico and then be sent to Rome to continue his studies. The social climate at the College of Propaganda in Rome would shape his worldview, giving his works a unique and curious tone. The aforementioned book, which described Pablo's journey to school in Rome, also provides an explanation for what sort of effect Pablo's experience at the Roman school had on Tac, "He studied with young men who similarly came from distant empires and new nations in political turmoil. This context may have reinforced the sense of Luiseño equality and dignity that he conveys..."⁵³ The sense of equality instilled into Pablo Tac in his time studying among a very diverse body of students would lead to his work in retelling the history of life at Mission San Luis Rey being particularly unique as it was not only written by an indigenous person in his Native language but also because it lacks any of the belief that Luiseño's ranked lower on the social ladder than the Spaniards which was

⁵² Edward D. Castillo, *Native American Perspectives on the Hispanic Colonization of Alta California*. (New York: Garland, 1991), p. 36.

⁵³ Lisbeth Haas and Pablo Tac, *Indigenous Scholar Writing on Luiseño Language and Colonial History, c. 1840*. (Edited by Lisbeth Haas. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 3.

the norm for this period of history. During his time in Rome, “Tac devised a way to write Luiseño from his study of Latin grammar and Spanish, and in so doing he captured many of the relationships that existed between Luiseños during his youth. Drawing on local knowledge, traditions, and ideas, his writing leaves traces of Luiseño spiritual practice and thought, while also revealing the relations of power and authority that existed within his indigenous community.”⁵⁴ Pablo Tac’s knowledge of Latin and Spanish grammar, enabling him to create a written system for the Luiseño language, speaks wonders of the language lessons he must have received from the mission school at Mission San Luis Rey. Pablo Tac would go on to write an account of the history of the Luiseño people’s conversion and experience living at Mission San Luis Rey. In describing the arrival of missionaries in his people’s country in Alta California Tac wrote, “The god who was aired at that time was the sun and the fire. Thus we lived among the woods until merciful God freed us of these miseries through Father Antonia Peyri...”⁵⁵ In his description of the first meetings between the Luiseño people and Father Antonia Peyri, a Franciscan missionary, Tac’s total acceptance and conversion to the Christian faith can be observed. Not only does Tac use a lowercase ‘g’ to denounce the credibility of the Native God of sun and fire, but he speaks of the Christian God mercifully freeing the Luiseño from the misery of their uncivilized lives. Pablo Tac was truly an extraordinary result of the optimal conditions of the mission schooling system. His story does not reflect the average education obtained within missions but is definitive proof that education, to some academic degree, did exist in at least a few mission schools.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 3.

⁵⁵ Pablo Tac, Minna Hewes, and Gordon Hewes. *Indian Life and Customs at Mission San Luis Rey : a Record of California Mission Life*. (San Luis Rey, California: Old Mission, 1958), 94.

While Indians within the California mission system were not attending arithmetic courses or discussing classic works of literature, unless one counts the Bible, Natives were certainly receiving various forms of education that would ultimately reshape the social values of culture and morals, the religious beliefs and practices, as well as the type of work and economic opportunities available to the average Native person in their day to day life within the mission system. With the scale of reform that the mission system inflicted not only upon the Native peoples living within the missions as well as the Indians who evaded being entrapped by the missionaries but also upon the general ecology and economy of California, many modern Native communities in California still feel the impacts of the missions. Some of these communities lost their unique culture and histories to the oppressive forces within the missions and, as a result, are unable to meet the standards to be Federally recognized as a tribe by the United States government. In this way, the missions were eventually successful in their oppressive goal of forcibly assimilating Native peoples, to a certain extent, into broader society. Despite being unable to receive federal recognition, California Indians have put much effort into recovering their cultures, histories, and traditions from the shambles in which the missionaries left their communities. This is not a unique experience to the missions; many tribes subjected to other colonial education systems also find themselves continuing down a path of healing and recovery.

IV. COLONIAL SCHOOLS

Introduction

Upon encountering Natives in the Americas, nearly every colonial force came to the same conclusion that Native peoples were of an inferior class and needed education. The question, of course, then became what would be the best way to go about educating Native peoples. Attempts were made to educate the Natives within their own communities, but the colonists did not find this method to be effective. Instead, the Colonial School System would prioritize bringing Indigenous peoples into the European societies within the colonies in order to properly educate the Natives. The education that the Natives would receive was almost always religious in nature because most of the colonies at this time had been established with some variation of religious goals. The form and goals of colonial education varied depending upon which country the colonists providing the education were from and the religious practice they adhered to. Due to the United States' development out of primarily English colonies, instances of colonial education within the British colonies of New England will be the primary focus throughout this chapter. However, some commonalities bridged the gap between most Colonial Schooling efforts for Native peoples.

Most Colonial Schools for Indigenous peoples were established with the intent of creating a competent labor force while also converting as many Native peoples to Christianity as possible. These school systems, as discussed earlier, were founded upon the belief that Natives needed to be civilized and Christianized so that they would no longer be a threat to the European

ways of life that existed within colonial societies. Wesley Frank Craven, a history professor who was considered an expert on Colonial America, surmised that the attitude of the English in seventeenth-century Virginia was that they “had no solution for an accommodation of the two peoples that did not depend upon an assumption that the Indian in time would adapt to a European pattern of life.”⁵⁶ This suggests that members of colonial societies at this time, for the most part, agreed that Native peoples needed to either be assimilated into European cultures or gotten rid of. In most cases, the colonies resolved to try to provide the Natives around them with an education that would allow them to be absorbed into colonial life. These schools were creating a system that would replace Native culture with that of the Europeans, effectively making white people out of these Native individuals in hopes that they would disappear into the foreground of the colonial frontier rather than being such an obvious contrast to a European or “civilized” way of life.

Colonial Justification for Assimilation Tactics

Religion was often crucial to colonists' understanding of why they were entitled to treat Natives in the manner that they did. No matter the religious affiliation of a given colonial group, all seemed to determine that Natives were inferior to Christian Europeans. A Puritan missionary by the name of John Eliot expressed his view of Natives in the words, “[T]hese poor Indians, have no principles of their own nor yet wisdom of their own.”⁵⁷ Thus, many of these religious

⁵⁶ Wesley Frank Craven, *White, Red and Black*, p. 52.

⁵⁷ As quoted in Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University), p. 106.

figures determined it would be their duty to instill wisdom, moral principles, and religion into the “savage” peoples they encountered. Roy Harvey Pearce, a professor of American literature who studied the history and accounts of Native Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, states, “...in Virginia, reasoning went: For giving God and civilization to the Indian, the colonial Englishman was to receive the riches of a new world.”⁵⁸ The individuals who established these institutions to educate Native peoples did so out of the belief that what they were doing was for the betterment of humanity and an act of moral obligation, as well as believing it was an act worthy of reward. It seems that many colonists felt that the resources and land of the New World were the price that Natives should pay for the education that they were paying. Such viewpoints were common among white colonists of the time; from this perspective, the colonists were saviors to an otherwise doomed race. In this mindset, colonists believed that their intentions were good and that their efforts were honest as they tried to assimilate Indians into European society. These colonists believed that Native peoples would either heed the education offered to them or fade away into oblivion, as extinction was the eventual fate of all things primitive. Beyond common mindsets that allowed colonists to morally and religiously justify their attempts at schooling Natives, there were also many common patterns in the formats and intended goals of various colonial schools.

Commonalities within Colonial Schooling Efforts

⁵⁸Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization* (Baltimore and London, 1965; 1953), p. 8.

The form that colonial schooling efforts took was specific to each instance; however, there are several commonalities among these attempts that deserve analysis. These patterns and characteristics that were common across many early colonial schooling attempts would continue to echo throughout Colonial America even as the goals of Native education began to change. The presence of these patterns speaks to a common ideology regarding the treatment and education of Native peoples across multiple colonies, religious groups, and European countries. By examining these commonalities, one can gain a better understanding of not only the goals of colonial education for Native peoples but also how some of these goals have been able to persist throughout centuries of various institutions devised for Indigenous education.

The most obvious pattern that emerges from the Colonial School System is that “In each instance, the given colony established a policy to encourage Christianity and civilization among the Native people.”⁵⁹ This commonality is not surprising given that almost all educational attempts for Native people were carried out by missionaries and religious laymen. These colonists intended to introduce literacy to Native populations so that they would be able to read the bible and learn from the teachings within the scripture. This sort of literacy required teaching alphabetic principles to Native peoples who often had never encountered such forms of written language before, let alone English or other European languages. The colonists soon realized that

⁵⁹ Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University), p. 59.

the conversion and civilization of Native peoples would require further training and education than simply teaching the Indians to read and write.

Thus, a pattern of training Natives in trade skills also emerges from these educational systems. Teaching Native peoples basic skills would allow them to be more easily absorbed into colonial societies. With these rudimentary skills and primary education, Native peoples were meant to be able to fill any job that required manual labor or menial tasks that did not require much education or any social affluence. Native peoples who successfully acquired high levels of literacy from colonial institutions or instructors often found themselves working as printers or translators. Colonists were also quick to determine that their teachings could not be retained by Native peoples who remained within Indigenous communities. Thus, it was decided that Natives should be brought into colonies and housed among colonial families while being educated.⁶⁰ This format for schooling Native Americans required cooperation from the colonial public and those back in England who tended to possess the economic affluence required to fund these educational endeavors.

Another common factor in these schools is the way that they were funded. These schools were then maintained through financial support from chartered companies, most often English companies such as the New England Company and East India Company. In some cases, schools were funded by particularly affluent members of the colonial society, but this circumstance was

⁶⁰ This sentence and the one prior are paraphrased from chapters 3, 4, and 6 of Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University).

less common. This structure for funding and establishing schools allowed for the benefactors and founders of these schools to play the role of a hegemon, or a group who has the dominant authority of society and knowledge. This hegemony allowed for the most affluent and often most religious members of colonial societies to determine exactly what should be taught within colonial schools and how it should be taught to the Native pupils there. This level of control over the education that Native people received would prove to be paramount to the assimilation of Native people and the destruction of Native cultures. By controlling Native education, the affluent white men within the hegemon, in a sense, also had control over the lives of Native peoples and their communities.

Changes in Colonial Schooling

The Colonial Schooling efforts of the early 1600s began to fizzle out toward the end of the century as tensions between Native communities and colonial settlements grew. The arrival of more and more colonists had continued to displace Native peoples and caused unrest among tribes who had once lived in relative peace alongside their colonial neighbors. This unrest led to a decrease in the number of Indigenous children participating, by choice or by force, in colonial schooling efforts due to mistrust on both sides of the divided American frontier. The colonial schooling system weakened as “A number of conditions combined to sap the strength of the impulse for Indian education in seventeenth-century New England. The most obvious difficulties stemmed from the students’ lack of resistance to European disease and the shattering effects of

King Philip's War."⁶¹ By some accounts, nearly eighty percent of Indigenous populations had died off by the end of the seventeenth century from a variety of causes. During this period, the largest causes of death for Native peoples were disease and warfare against European colonies. With such high death tolls, there were fewer and fewer Native peoples who were willing to participate in colonial experiments in Native schooling. King Philip's War exacerbated the death rates of Native peoples as well as the distrust between Indians and colonists.

Throughout the duration of King Philip's War, efforts at schooling Native people were nearly abandoned as colonists and Indians alike were increasingly wary of one another. During the conflict, any Indians who had been living within European colonies were relocated to prevent any acts of treachery. These acts of relocation and skepticism toward Native people nearly spelled the end of Colonial Schools for Native peoples. Rather than closing their doors, some schools adopted new techniques for educating Natives. Thus, "The period of King Philip's War served as a rough dividing line between two eras in New England Indian schooling."⁶² Efforts for educating Natives after the end of this war would encapsulate the new attitudes that colonists had toward Indians. These attitudes were more skeptical and hostile in nature than the attitude of colonists toward the Indigenous population before the war. This shift in attitude resulted in the restructuring of colonial schools and the revision of their curriculum.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 127.

⁶² Ibid, p. 173.

Colonists were now coming to the conclusion that they needed to make efforts toward a more complete assimilation of Native peoples with a stronger emphasis on the erasure of Native cultures. This evolution of this system began when

...the early 1700s had brought a shift in the attitudes toward bilingualism. Whereas Eliot [a figurehead of Indian schooling in the mid-seventeenth century] had seen the necessity of reaching out to the Algonquian in their own tongue, the eighteenth-century commissioners viewed language as an integral expression of culture, arguing that ‘the best thing we can do for our Indians is to Anglicize them in all Instances.’⁶³ This shift in the attitude of those in charge of the Colonial Schooling system would result in schools that were much more strict. Colonial Schools that endured through this evolution would shift away from offering education in Native tongues and would instead force Natives to learn English and, in some cases, French. Colonists at this time came to believe that most, if not all, aspects of Native culture were a hindrance to the education of Indigenous people. The most common target of erasure toward aspects of Native culture is Native language. Colonial school masters theorized that “‘They [the Native Americans] can scarce retain their Language,’ the commissioners asserted, ‘Without a Tincture of other Salvage Inclinations, which do but ill suit, either with the Honor or with the design of Christianity.’”⁶⁴ Colonists believed that allowing Native people to retain their language would also allow their “savage” natures to persist. By this line of reasoning, schoolmasters determined that they would need to discourage their Indian pupils from speaking their Native languages.

This new design for colonial schooling required that Native pupils be removed from their communities rather than just suggesting it. In this manner, Native youth lived in dorms, in the homes of their schoolmasters, or in the homes of other colonists. As part of the new curriculum in these schools, the infamous colonial schoolmaster Eleazar Wheelock suggested “that if the

⁶³ Ibid, p. 178 and Kellaway, *New England Company*, pp. 149-150.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 178 and Kellaway, *New England Company*, pp. 149-150.

Indians were ‘brought up in a Christian manner..., instructed in Agriculture, and taught to get their Living by their Labour,’ they would no longer ‘make such Depredations on our Frontiers.’”⁶⁵ These new additions to curricula for Native people expanded much further than the primarily religious instruction they had received before King Philip’s War. The skills taught to Native peoples within colonial schools were thought to be the solution to getting rid of what was considered the “Indian problem”. The skills taught to Native people would allow them to fill into the lowest rungs of the colonial social ladder and thus disappear into the background of society rather than being blatant reminders of “barbarism”, which conflicted with the civilized ways of colonial life.

This new form of colonial schooling system showed promise as several Natives were able to achieve literacy and were then trained to be missionaries and schoolmasters for their own communities. The religious laymen and schoolmasters who ran these schools were celebrated for their efforts. As these systems continued, “These dedicated individuals progressed toward their goal through the successes of one or several ‘exemplary’ Indians, whose conversion and educational achievement demonstrated the potential of the project.”⁶⁶ The most noteworthy part of this quote is the phrasing “the success of one or several ‘exemplary’ Indians” for, as much as these schools were called successes, they were not effective or practical on a large scale.

Colonial schools were not fully assimilating their classes of Native students into colonial society. They were instead having one-off successes. A few Native individuals would emerge from these institutions, having taken full advantage of their opportunity for a European-style education.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 220 and Wheelock to General Thomas Gage, February 22, 1764, file 764172.2, DCA.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 59.

Native Reactions to Colonial Education

Despite this lack of overall success, the colonial system of educating Natives endured for many centuries. This system saw little uniformity from place to place and thus was subject to much variation, which likely also contributed to what at the time was considered the success of these efforts at educating American Indians. This system was able to endure through a combination of multiple factors. This statement describes one such factor, “Indians in the colonial period were pressured to attend school, and they responded generally in one of several ways to the educational opportunities offered by Euroamericans.”⁶⁷ Many American Indians were given little to no choice in whether their children were sent to these colonial schools or if they were forced to go themselves. This scenario is not unique to the colonial schooling style and is a common factor throughout various attempts at educating Native peoples. While many of the attendants of these schools were there by force or because of societal pressure, there were attendants whose families chose to send them to these schools because of the opportunities they would provide the community.

Many students who found themselves willingly attending or being mindfully sent to these schools by their families would turn out to be the few “exemplary Indians” who emerged as success stories. These individuals were proof that educating Native people was possible and that Indigenous peoples were capable of adopting civilized ways of life. Some students were sent to these schools as their parents saw it as their best chance for a good life in a changing world with

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 6.

an economy that was skewed against Native people. Szasz also explains the situation of the families who chose to send their children to schools because of economic pressures, “Widespread economic changes, compounded by the impact of disease and alcohol, forced many Indians into increasing poverty, and such conditions occasionally dictated the necessity of choosing the free board and room available in a charity school, a solution which offered the only hope for some families that their children would survive.”⁶⁸ Despite the often poor conditions and harsh punishments that a Native child may face at a colonial school, this life was sometimes still better than the life that their parents could afford to provide for them. A combination of societal pressure, perceived advancement opportunities, and economic necessity allowed the Colonial Native Schooling System to endure until the 1870s, when the American Government determined this system was outdated and a more modern system should be adopted.

Legacies of Colonial Schools

The Colonial Schools themselves did not leave an overwhelming legacy of violence or devastation as many other forms of Native Education did. Many of the goals of Colonial Schools mirrored that of California’s Missions despite being carried out on opposite ends of the continent and by entirely different colonial powers. These similarities suggest that this form of education is the result of the racist and xenophobic attitudes that Europeans tended to have rather than the result of a carefully thought-out design for the beneficial education of Native peoples. The Colonial School Systems saw their legacy carried out in the foundation of the subsequent system

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 6.

of Native Education. Many of these colonial attempts at educating Native people included boarding Native students at the homes of the schoolmasters, such as the case at Moor's Charity School. The systems also focused on erasing Native language and culture in order to replace them with that of Europeans, just as the boarding schools would in the nineteenth century. To surmise the colonial schooling experience and the following institutions, "The story of this initial experiment in Indian schooling in the American colonies contains the classic features of colonial ventures in Indian education. All of the later experiments repeated a modified pattern of the characteristics of these early schools."⁶⁹ Colonial schooling would establish a framework for Native education that would echo throughout nearly every other institution for Native education that would follow.

Perhaps the most important legacy of colonial endeavors in educating Native peoples was the creation of an intermediate class of Native peoples. Native Americans who emerged from colonial schools found themselves in an odd state of liminality between the Native and Colonial worlds. These individuals were now too "Anglicanized" to properly fit into the communities they once called home, but they were still too Native to properly fit into colonial societies. This state of being would be a point of contention during periods of conflict, as was the case for John Sassamon. Sassamon was educated during the first era of colonial schooling and achieved a high level of literacy. Sassamon would work as a printer and translator between Native communities

⁶⁹ Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University), p. 59.

and the colonies of New England. Sassamon soon found out what the harsh consequence of literacy and liminality could look like. The piece “Dead Men Tell No Tales: John Sassamon and the Fatal Consequences of Literacy” by Jill Lepore explains that Sassamon was killed due to his literacy and position within both Colonial and Native societies. Receiving an education painted dual targets on the backs of Native individuals, including Sassamon, who were then thrust into the periphery of both Indigenous communities as well as European communities.

This marginalization of Native people resulted in a dramatic shift in the way that these individuals identified themselves and led them to make decisions to aid whichever group suited them more at that moment. Due to this liminality, these Indigenous individuals often found themselves as the target of violence. Whether it be the suppression of how Natives could utilize their education, acts of retaliation because of their actions that could be interpreted by either side of the “American frontier” as traitorous, or being killed in order to silence them, literate Indigenous people faced many threats. John Sassamon was likely murdered due to his action of warning Governor Josiah Winslow of the attack that Natives were planning, which would ultimately be King Phillip’s war. Sassamon was able to interpret between these groups as well as read and write in English thanks to the education he had received upon being adopted into Puritan society at a young age. This education would lead to Sassamon losing his Native identity and his life.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Paraphrased from Lepore, “Dead Men Tell No Tales: John Sassamon and the Fatal Consequences of Literacy.” *American Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (1994): 479–512. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2713381>.

Natives in the same position as Sassamon would find that their entire understanding of themselves, their identity as an Indigenous person, and their roles within society had been altered. These new positions of liminality would lead to Native communities attempting to utilize these individuals as bridges between the Native world and the world of the colonizers. This was done with varying degrees of success. Some of these intermediaries would face fates similar to Sassamon's. In contrast, others might face a fate similar to Pocahontas's, forever remembered as an example of the successful civilization and conversion of Native peoples. In either case, this legacy would forever reshape the structure of Native societies and their relationships with the colonial forces who were encroaching further and further upon the Native world.

V. BOARDING SCHOOLS

Introduction

The end of the nineteenth century brought about change within American Indian Education efforts. The Colonial System of schooling was growing old and no longer seemed as effective in assimilating Native Americans into mainstream American society as it once had been. The federal government began searching for more effective options. The federal government had been playing a role in the education of Native Americans since the early nineteenth century, but as Margaret Szasz explains in her book, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928*, when the federal government began playing a more active role in the education of American Indians rather than simply providing funds. Szasz's book begins with the statement, "The Bureau of Indian Affairs became involved in Indian education in the late nineteenth century when the United States government first accepted its responsibilities for educating the Native American."⁷¹ The federal government began seeking out new systems for educating Native Americans, and a system created by Richard Henry Pratt caught the attention of the United States Education System. Pratt concluded that "... there was only one way for the Indians to survive the onslaught of progress: they would have to be swallowed up in the rushing tide of American life and institutions."⁷² Richard Henry Pratt had

⁷¹ Margaret Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928*, 3rd ed.

⁷² David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (University Press of Kansas, 1995, 2020), p. 44.

devised a new model for the education and forced assimilation of American Indians, one more strict and repressive than the Colonial Schooling system that existed in the past.

Objectives of the Boarding School System

Pratt's new school model led to him founding the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in 1879; this school echoed the educational goals of the educational attempts of Colonial times in that this educational system aimed to assimilate American Indian youth into American society and culture. A pamphlet handed out at the first showing of the documentary *These Are Not "Stories": American Indian Boarding Schools in Southern California* describes Pratt's goal when opening Carlisle Indian Industrial School and establishing the foundation of the boarding school system, "His objectives matched those of the nation to 'civilize' and 'Christianize' Native American students. The schools sought to destroy Native cultures and languages while making 'useful' Americans through trades, agricultures, and domestic sciences."⁷³ Once again, American society was facing the issue of the best ways to introduce proper civilization to the Native Americans. It was determined that "...the school needed to strip away all outward signs of the children's identification with tribal life- that is to say, what school authorities saw as their savage ways."⁷⁴ By doing away with Native culture, these institutions would make room for a more civilized way of life while also teaching Indian children to be ashamed of their old way of life. Pratt's system for educating Native children emphasized that "...the children needed to be

⁷³ Lorene Sisquoc et al., *These Are Not "Stories": American Indian Boarding Schools in Southern California*,

⁷⁴ Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928*, 109.

instructed in the ideas, values, and behaviors of white civilization.”⁷⁵ It had been the belief among society until this point that this was the type of education that Native peoples would require in order to survive in the changing world around them. However, with the emergence of a new system of American Indian Education, American society began to pay more attention to the education and treatment of Native people. The past treatment of Native Americans became a hot topic in the late 1870s leading into the early 1880s.

Desire for Change within Systems of Native Education

American society seemed to agree with the heads of the United States Education system that American Indian Schooling efforts needed reform. Just as society’s view of Native Americans influenced the treatment and education tactics of the Colonial Era, changing opinions toward Native people at the end of the nineteenth century played a critical role in defining the new educational system. David Adams explained society’s changing mood in regards to American Indians in the statement,

By 1880, something approaching a consensus was emerging on the Indian question. Public discussions of the issue now increasingly concluded with the judgment that the government’s treatment of its Indian wards had been unnecessarily shortsighted, harsh, and even cruel. It was time for a change. And not surprisingly, as discussion turned to the future, an old and familiar theme reasserted itself: Indians not only needed to be saved from the white man, they needed to be saved from themselves.⁷⁶

Although Americans believed that the prior treatment of Native Americans may have been too harsh, this did not stop American society or the Federal government from believing that American Indians needed to assimilate into broader American society. The belief that Native

⁷⁵ Ibid, 109.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 8.

peoples needed to be saved from themselves fostered a curriculum in the emerging boarding school system that mandated the erasure of Native culture to convert American Indian youth into model American citizens. All the while, newspapers around the country echoed this belief that for American Indians to survive in mainstream society, then Native cultures would have to be erased. George Wilson published an article in *Atlantic Monthly* entitled “How Shall the American Savage Be Civilized” and can be quoted as having said, “The kind of education they are in need of is one that will habituate them to the customs and advantages of civilized life... and at the same time cause them to look with feelings of repugnance on their Native state.”⁷⁷ It seemed that society was calling for the very system of American Indian Schooling that Richard Henry Pratt had devised. Thus, the Native boarding school system spread throughout the country, with 350 schools following Carlisle’s model established in the 1880s. It seemed that the boarding school system was successful, and Margaret Szasz demonstrates the hope that many invested in this new model, “Bureau educators in this decade were optimistic about the new directions being taken by Indian Service education.”⁷⁸ Despite concerns about the previously harsh treatment of American Indians, the federal government mandated that the Native American children be sent to boarding schools, sometimes referred to as residential schools.

Like its predecessor, the Colonial Schooling System, the Boarding School system appeared to be created to benefit Native American Communities. This system would also operate under the presumption that Native youths would return home to their reservations and utilize their civil education to assist their tribe and get them started on the path to assimilation. The system’s founder expressed the goal of this educational system at the National Conference of

⁷⁷ George Wilson, “How Shall the American Savage Be Civilized?” *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1882, 604.

⁷⁸ Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928*, 1.

Charities and Correction in 1892, “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.”⁷⁹ Pratt reiterated that the boarding school system had been intended to strip Natives of their culture for the belief that American Indians could be converted into civilized American citizens if they were educated appropriately. Pratt’s speech, as well as the perceived success of Carlisle Indian Industrial School, bolstered feelings of optimism toward these new schooling attempts among American Society and Native American Communities. The Carlisle School Project, a modern movement dedicated to telling the true history of the Carlisle Indian School, exhibits the way that the boarding school system was represented at its beginning, “The school was presented to the tribes as an opportunity for children to learn English and be better able to protect the tribe’s interests in the future. Many parents and tribal leaders initially embraced the opportunity for their children to learn, while others remained skeptical of any efforts by the US government.”⁸⁰ It seemed as though Americans and Native Americans were looking forward to seeing the effects of the boarding school system. It appeared as though Native Americans were being provided with an excellent opportunity to learn how to survive in the ever-changing mainstream American society. Unfortunately, not everything was as positive as it seemed, and the coming years would reveal the true nature of this educational endeavor.

As the Boarding School System grew, Native American communities began to feel its impact. Boarding Schools endured well into the twentieth century, not officially shutting down until the 1960s. By the early twentieth century it became clear that more often than not the impact of Boarding Schools on Native communities was overwhelmingly detrimental. The

⁷⁹ Richard Henry Pratt, “The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites,” ed. Isabel C. Barrows, *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction*.

⁸⁰ Carlisle Indian School Project, “Past,” Carlisle Indian School Project, 2020, accessed March 19, 2023.

Boarding School system was proving to be oppressive as well as abusive and was being used as a weapon of cultural genocide against Native American communities. The conditions of boarding schools were often deplorable, dorms were often overcrowded, and as a result, disease ran rampant. Even so, many Native American families had no other option but to send their children to these boarding schools, as attendance was federally mandated. *Education for Extinction* details many of the ways that the Natives attempted to resist this educational institution, “Resistance to the annual fall roundup took a number of forms. Most dramatic were those instances when an entire village or tribal faction refused to turn over their children. Sometimes parents simply slipped away from the main camp for several weeks until the pressure for students had let up.”⁸¹ Resistance often proved futile as federal agents would travel to reservations and forcibly remove the children from their homes; some families would never find out where their children had been taken and what became of them. The Carlisle Indian project further describes the living circumstances of many Native children, “Government leaders effectively held hostage the children of tribal leaders to try to ensure good behavior of the tribes.”⁸² The boarding school system was forced upon the Native people and used as a tool to ensure the subordination of various tribes. Native Americans were essentially given no choice between educating their children within their community and sending their children to residential schools. Those who attempted to resist could face prison time, revocation of funding for their tribe from the federal government, and harsher means of forced removal of their children. Despite not having a choice, some Native communities saw value in a boarding school education. Some tribes recognized that they would not be able to survive in a society that was clearly trying its best to erase them, so they invested their hope in the younger generations. If their youth received a boarding school

⁸¹ Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928*, 211.

⁸² Carlisle Indian School Project, “Past.”

education, they would be able to return home to their tribes and serve as liaisons between American society and their tribal communities. For this reason, some Native families chose to willingly send their children to boarding schools in hopes that despite the suffering they may face, they may be able to secure a better future for their community. Hope for tribal liaisons was not the only factor that led Native parents to voluntarily send their children to boarding schools; another factor was financial struggles.

Financial struggles were common among Native American communities and often left Native families wondering how they would support their children. The Meriam Report, published in 1928, brought to light the poor living conditions of American Indians living on reservations and thus brought the treatment of Native Americans back into the minds of the public and consequently generated much backlash for policies and legislation regarding Native peoples. The opening statement of chapter one of this report is as follows, “The Conditions Among the Indians. An overwhelming majority of the Indians are poor, even extremely poor, and they are not adjusted to the economic and social system of the dominant white civilization.”⁸³ Economic instability drove American Indians of the colonial system to send their children to boarding schools as a means of survival; this tactic was used again in the twentieth century when the Great Depression forced families of all races across the nation into financial ruin. With their limited employment options becoming even more limited, Native families sent their children to boarding schools in hopes that this would provide their children with better living conditions than they would be able to provide them. Boarding schools promised children food and a place to stay, even if it came at the price of the loss of culture, brutal punishment, and, in some instances, the loss of life. Despite some families now using boarding school systems to raise their families

⁸³Lewis Meriam, “Meriam Report: The Problem of Indian Administration (1928)”.

in times of economic hardship, it was becoming clear that the general American public was beginning to grow dissatisfied with the system.

The Evolution of Boarding Schools

As they had done with the Colonial Schooling System, the United States Board of Education began to question the efficacy and, in some cases, the morality of Pratt's model of the Boarding School System. The late 1920s and early 1930s brought about changes in legislation regarding schools. The government was forced to face the failure of this education model. In an act of resistance, The Meriam report revealed, "The work of the government directed toward the education and advancement of the Indian himself, as distinguished from the control and conservation of his property, is largely ineffective."⁸⁴ With evidence that the educational efforts of boarding schools were ineffective, support for the schools from both the government and the public began to dry up. Native American culture and communities continued to endure even despite the harsh punishment for tribal practices within boarding schools. As boarding schools lost support, acts of resistance by Native American parents and even the children attending boarding schools began to have more of an effect.

As resistance to the boarding school systems grew, so did the educational opportunities provided to the American Indian community. Many states had been struggling to determine how to deal with the education of Native children when no federally operated Indian schools were readily available. California resorted to implementing the segregation-era practice of providing American Indian children with education in "separate but equal" schools. The education at these schools was often subpar, and many Native families felt that if the state could mandate school attendance, then their children should be able to attend state-run public education schools. This belief led to seven Native children attempting to enroll in a public school rather than the Indian

⁸⁴Meriam, "Meriam Report: The Problem of Indian Administration (1928)," 8.

day school in Inyo County, including one Alice Piper, in 1923. This act of resistance would spark a legal debate over whether or not public schools should be required to accept Native American students. A journal article detailing the resulting supreme court case *Piper v. Big Pine School District of Inyo County* thoroughly analyzes the court case and its ruling; it reveals that “The state Supreme Court, in *Piper v. Big Pine School District* (1924) ruled in their favor. This case was central to ending segregation in California’s public schools.”⁸⁵ Not only was the *Piper v. Big Pine School District* integral for ending the segregation of California public schools, but it was also a new educational opportunity for American Indian children. It would provide Native American communities across the country with a foundation to fight for the right to choose what school their children enrolled in rather than being forced to send them to federally run boarding schools. In 1934, the Indian Reorganization Act was passed and decreased federal control of Native American affairs. This would expand the rights of Native Americans and give them more control over the education that their children received. Many boarding schools closed their doors in the 1930s, and Native children were either enrolled in federally run Indian day schools, allowed to attend schools on their own reservations, or continued to remain enrolled in Boarding Schools that continued operations due to demand created by Native parents enrolling their children in boarding schools during the Great Depression. This was the end of the boarding school system, as it had been known. The remaining boarding schools began slowly but surely closing their doors; only a handful remained by the 1970s. However, it would not be until the passing of the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978 that Native parents would finally obtain the right to refuse to send their children to off-reservation schools.

Legacies of the Boarding School System

⁸⁵Nicole Blalock-Moore. “*Piper v. Big Pine School District of Inyo County: Indigenous Schooling and Resistance in the Early Twentieth Century.*” *Southern California Quarterly* 94, no. 3 (2012).

The Boarding School System carries one of the most devastating legacies of any form of Indigenous education. To this day, the death tolls of the Boarding Schools have yet to be determined. Native communities and families are still left wondering about some of their family members, whose names, fates, and burial sites have been lost to negligent records. Native communities continue to fight for the return of their family member's remains. Without these remains, these communities are unable to give their loved ones proper burials, which leaves their wounds open and raw. Native communities will not be able to fully heal or move on from this dark moment in United States history until more is done to not only return the remains of Native children who have yet to return from the Boarding Schools but also to tell the true history of these events. By continuing to sweep these stories under the rug and leave them out of history curriculums, the damage done to Native communities is perpetuated.

Even so, some boarding schools remain open to this day and have adopted more positive legacies. These schools have overcome their tragic pasts and reformed themselves into institutions that serve Native communities. These schools now celebrate Native cultures and languages rather than trying to stomp them out of existence. Students who attend these boarding schools no longer have to consider themselves "survivors" of the system but can instead partake in a system that has been carefully revised through the hard work of their own communities so that they have a place to learn about their cultures and histories in a safe space.

VIII. CONCLUDING NOTES

This project was started with the intent of tracing a triumphant path of success and progress in the educational opportunities offered to Native peoples. However, there was an apparent lack of progress and drastic reform. This is not to say that there has been no progress or reform of these educational systems at all. The format of educational opportunities for Native peoples has certainly changed throughout history. Over time, education for Native peoples has begun to look more like systematic and academic-based forms of education to which modern society is accustomed. Despite this, the goals of Native education appear to have changed very little. From the early seventeenth century until the early to mid-twentieth century, the goals of Native education were civilization, Christianization, and assimilation. In more recent times, the goal of Christianizing Native peoples has been slowly phased out or simply faded into the subtext of curricula. However, every educational institution devised for the education of Native peoples has served to “civilize” and assimilate Native children to a certain extent. While the analysis of various forms of Native education revealed that there has been less evolution than might be expected, this project did reveal some striking similarities between these systems.

Colonial Schools in Comparison to the California Missions

The Colonial Schooling Systems and the education provided to Native peoples within the California missions followed remarkably similar patterns while maintaining several vital differences. The similarities in these systems are fascinating to note since these institutions were

established on opposite sides of the countries by entirely separate colonial powers, who famously were opposed to one another. In both instances, education was a means of converting and assimilating Indigenous peoples into European communities. Both of these styles of education emphasized literacy for the sake of being able to read the bible. They incorporated other aspects of schooling as a means of forced assimilation rather than for the sake of academia. Both the missions and colonial schools would teach Natives basic principles for economically supporting themselves while instilling a new set of moral codes into the minds of Native peoples.

The main difference between colonial schools and the missions was the end goals that they were established for. The forms of education that were developed within the colonies in the East were meant to assimilate Natives into European society but maintain a certain level of division between races. The English, who were the most prominent colonial presence on the East Coast, had no intentions of allowing Natives to become full-fledged citizens within their colonies, let alone the empire. The colonial schools were attempting to train Native peoples to be a subordinate labor class who were never intended to be left unsupervised. Meanwhile, the Spanish Missions were designed as a temporary system of education to shape Native peoples into proper Spanish citizens. The missions were meant to integrate the Natives so deeply into Spanish society that the Franciscan missionaries and Spanish forces could eventually withdraw their presence and leave the Indians to continue operating as an extension of the Spanish empire. The Spanish had no qualms about the interrelationships between Native and Spanish peoples. They did maintain a level of social and racial separation through a strict caste system. However, there

was social mobility within this system. Unlike the colonial schools, Native peoples who successfully assimilated into Spanish society could move up the social ladder and be regarded on nearly the same level as full Spanish citizens.

Colonial Schools in Comparison to Boarding Schools

In examining the processes that led to the eventual downfall of the Colonial Schooling System and the creation of the Boarding School System, it begins to seem as though the colonial schools served as a prototype for Richard Henry Pratt to model his educational institution after. Colonial schools, such as Moor's Charity School, operated by Eleazar Wheelock, could be considered the first boarding schools for Native students. The critical difference between these boarding schools and those operated by Pratt was the lack of federal funding and endorsement. The colonial boarding schools did not have large enough organizations behind them to cause the same level of large-scale devastation that Pratt's system would bring to Native communities.

Possibly, the most shocking similarity between these educational systems can be found in some of the reasoning for their establishment. This reasoning was that educating Native peoples was the best solution to the "Indian problem" because it was ultimately less expensive than policies of extermination. When describing the purpose of boarding schools, Eleazar Wheelock argued that "The money spent on education... would serve New England as a better defense against Indian assaults than expensive forts."⁸⁶ This quote is proof that Colonists at the time

⁸⁶ Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University). P. 220 and Wheelock, *Narratives*, 1763, p. 11.

believed that educating Native peoples was the best and most cost-effective defense against threats from Indian peoples. This was not because colonists had any qualms about actually killing the Native Americans, but rather due to continued military action against the Indians being too expensive. Centuries later, “In 1885, [the] Commissioner of Indian Affairs Hiram Price described the new federal Indian policy of assimilation by saying, “it is cheaper to give them education than to fight them,” a policy that began in the late nineteenth century and would continue into the twentieth.”⁸⁷ It is appalling to think that in both of these instances, Native education was the preferred solution to the issue of how to deal with the existence of Indian communities simply because it was the less expensive option. This notion is proof that the United States government and the European governments who funded the colonial schools would have had no issues with committing a full-scale genocide against Native peoples had it been affordable to do so. Instead, out of economic necessity, these governments chose the much slower route of cultural and statistical genocide, which kills Native peoples and their ways of life at a rate so slow that it is almost imperceptible. This has allowed for many of these principles to ensure to this day and continue to harm Native communities under the radar of the public, who does not know what signs of genocide to be looking for.

The California Missions in Comparison to Boarding Schools

⁸⁷ Booth, “Cheaper Than Bullets: American Indian Boarding Schools and Assimilation Policy, 1890-1930,” p. 46.

The similarities in these institutions become apparent when one examines the founding histories of both of these educational systems, the similarities in their founding purposes and intended curriculums and the way these lessons were reinforced. Both of the institutions cite their intentions as the “civilization”, “Christianization”, and “education” of Native peoples. Beyond their nearly identical objectives, the establishments began the education process similarly. Natalie Diaz, a Mojave and enrolled member of the Gila River Indian Tribe, described the way that boarding schools stripped Indigenous identities away from the children who attended them, “The government didn’t simply ‘teach’ us English in those boarding schools - they systematically and methodically took our Mojave language. They took all the words we had. They even took our names.”⁸⁸ The boarding schools banned all expressions of Native identities. They punished students who dared to speak their mother tongues, participate in dances or songs, and, in some extreme cases, even individuals who associated with other children from their same tribe. Indians within the mission system endured similar restrictions, “Franciscan priests also prohibited initiation ceremonies, dances, and songs in the mission system. They sought to destroy the ideological, moral, and ethical systems that defined native life.”⁸⁹ The mission school also prohibited Indigenous peoples from engaging in cultural and religious activities that, in the eyes of their instructors, would have inhibited the Natives’ educations. In both institutions, breaking these rules by engaging in cultural practices was often met with harsh consequences such as physical and corporal punishment, periods of repentance, or even being forced to physically labor as punishment. The similarities in these establishments extend beyond their goals and curriculum to the kinds of abuse that Natives may have faced within their walls.

⁸⁸ Davis and Wesley. “Resisting Rhetorics of Language Endangerment: Reclamation through Indigenous Language Survivance.” p. 50.

⁸⁹ Castañeda. “Engendering the History of Alta California, 1769-1848: Gender Sexuality and the Family.” p. 235.

When reviewing the similarities between the boarding school system and the California Missions, the notion that Richard Henry Pratt revolutionized schooling for Native people seems inaccurate. It seems more accurate to conclude that Richard Henry Pratt modernized the attempts being made at educating Native people while taking inspiration from former methods of Indigenous schooling. However, whether or not Pratt was aware of the history of the California mission system is not necessarily imperative to the conclusion that the two schooling systems bear a striking resemblance. These similarities can also be attributed to the lasting effects of settler-colonial mindsets as well as racist ideologies that led the general public to believe that American Indians would not be able to survive in modern society. This mindset, also fueled by ethnocentrism and Eurocentrism, allowed for the justification of the forced assimilation of Native peoples. The superiority and savior complexes of the majority of American society made it seem as though the death of some Natives, as well as their traditional ways of life, was a small price tag to pay for the survival of the race, which could only be accomplished through “civilization” and assimilation. While blatant attempts to educate the Nativeness out of children have ended, systemized forms of cultural genocide still affect American Indians in modern society via more covert methods such as blood quantum for tribal recognition, refusal to acknowledge a majority of small Indigenous tribes, as well as legislation that continues to heavily control Native people’s every day lives.

Modern Impacts

Public schools today still teach primarily in English, which forced non-English speakers, including Native peoples, to begin the assimilation process by learning English. This lack of change suggested that public opinion of Native Americans has not changed much due to harmful stereotypes of Native people. These stereotypes often lead society to believe that Native people

are a thing of the past rather than living communities, which allows for the perpetuation of ethnocentrically constructed schooling systems and still affects school systems today.

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