

2014

Rethinking the American High School History Textbook: An Analysis, Critique, and Reformation of American History-Telling in the Classroom

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**RETHINKING THE AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY
TEXTBOOK: AN ANALYSIS, CRITIQUE, AND REFORMATION
OF AMERICAN HISTORY-TELLING IN THE CLASSROOM**

Hannah Beth Ruderfer Ellman

A thesis submitted to the faculty at Vassar College in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the American Studies
Department

Vassar College
2014

First Reader: Professor James Merrell
Second Reader: Professor Molly McGlennen

ABSTRACT

The textbook is the most commonly accepted sourcebook for teaching American history in secondary education classrooms in the United States. While convenient and easily aligned to the growing standards movement, the most widely adopted textbooks for teaching high school history have many issues. These issues relate to the rhetoric of colonization used to discuss Native peoples, the process of hero-making that defines white American history-telling, the pigeonholing of Native history through what seems to function as a set list of characters and scenes, and finally, the marginalization, belittling, and dehumanization of Native women. This project's purpose is fourfold: it seeks to illuminate and complicate these and other issues through centering Native American women, to serve as an accessible and employable source to supplement the mainstream American history textbook, to provide students with an introduction to Native American Studies, and to create a platform for developing critical history-learning techniques in adolescents.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible were it not for the unending support and guidance that I received from my two readers, Professor Merrell and Professor McGlennen. I cannot thank you enough. I would also like to thank my parents, family, and friends for their willingness to listen, for their continued encouragement, and, of course, for their love.

And to the teachers and mentors – both those I have had and whom I may never meet – who continue to ask questions, who challenge their students as they challenge themselves, and who dedicate themselves to their work: thank you. You are important.

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Preface: The Teacher Who Threw Away the Textbook

At fourteen years old, I entered Daniel Hand High School in Madison, Connecticut. I felt unprepared in all facets except for one: my abilities in the classroom. I was assigned to Mr. Peter Nye's "Global History I" course; we met during last period, so by the time I arrived to his classroom on the first full day of school, I was already prepared for the day to be over so that I could shrink back into my skin and return to the comforts of my own home. Most of my courses were tracked, as was much of my middle and high school education; Cell Biology, Honors Geometry, and Honors English, were filled with same set of students who were placed on the highest-level track from a young age. I fought my way onto that track at age twelve and remained there until I graduated from high school.

Global History I, however, was integrated, as the school district required that every student take the course; therefore, I knew even before I met Mr. Nye that this class would be different. When I entered the room on that first day, I felt immediately intimidated. The lighting was dim, the desks were arranged haphazardly, and pictures of Daniel Hand High School's victorious football teams from the mid-1990s and early 2000s hung on the walls. Mr. Nye sat in his chair with his foot resting upon his desk. I slunk over to a desk in the corner, conscious of the social boundaries that prevented me from sitting anywhere else. The bell rang.

"Welcome freshmen! You should have all assumed by now that I am your teacher, Peter Nye. You can call me Mr. Nye, Nye, or Coach Nye."

It was at this moment that I figured out why he had so many Daniel Hand High School football pictures hanging on his wall. And why he was tossing around a football while talking to us.

"This is Global History I. Obviously, all of you have taken history classes before, right?"

There was a resounding yes, mostly from the extroverted corner of the room. I was not sitting in that corner.

“Well, this isn’t going to be anything like those classes. They expect me to teach you Global History in two trimesters. That’s crap. How the hell am I supposed to fit all of those random dates and wars and events and white people in one hundred and twenty days of school?”

Silence.

“Oh, I guess we can just use these textbooks, right?”

Mr. Nye gestured emphatically to a pile of textbooks labeled “Global History” that sat in the corner of the room. They looked precarious sitting upon the ridiculously undersized desk. He then proceeded to walk over to them, picked up approximately four at a time, dropped one upon each of our desks, and then tossed us each an index card. “Write your name, the date, my name, the textbook name, and the textbook number on these cards, and then bring them up to my desk.”

After a few errant questions including, “wait, what do we write?” and “what’s the textbook number?” everyone followed instructions and soon Mr. Nye had a small stack of index cards on his desk.

“Now, what I want everyone to do is to take their textbook, leave the classroom, place it in their locker, and then come back. We won’t be needing these for the rest of the trimester.”

Nobody moved. Some people mumbled in confusion. I remained at my desk, convinced that this was a trap. Mr. Nye seemed completely unpredictable. Frankly, he terrified me.

“Seriously. Go! Be back in five minutes.”

We all stood up quickly, anxious to make a decent first impression on our potentially psychotic teacher.

When we had all returned to the classroom and then to our seats, Mr. Nye stood in the center of the room and announced:

The reason that I had you put your textbooks in your lockers is because I know what history classes usually look like. I know that if we use those textbooks to learn about "Global History I," whatever that means, you will leave this class in 120 days remembering close to nothing of what I have supposedly taught you. Instead, we are going to base our class around two concepts that will come up every single class. You will get sick of me saying them out loud probably by next week, but you'll have to deal with it because it will end up being central to the way we look at history in this room. Empathy and Self-Knowledge. That's how we are going to look, critically, at history.

Empathy and Self-Knowledge. Silence. Empathy and Self-Knowledge. I replayed those words in my head. Again, I had absolutely no idea what he was talking about. But any teacher who had so candidly criticized that which I disliked most about history courses, the textbook, certainly had my attention.

Looking Back

I learned more from Mr. Nye's Global History I course than from any other course I took during high school. Truthfully, I have no recollection of the content of the course; it seems that in the contemporary American public school system, content understanding is only important until the moment the test has been taken. Once the pencils have been placed on the desk and the test turned in, so to speak, the information is free to go. What I do remember from those two trimesters is that I began to see historical figures as people. I remember reflecting critically on the relationships between those people for the first time. And perhaps most importantly, I remember thinking and writing about issues of power.

Mr. Nye taught me to be a critical learner and interpreter of history. This lesson was made explicit on that first day of class through his rejection of the mainstream textbook, which had, up until that point, functioned as the Bible equivalent in every history class I had ever taken.

Mr. Nye challenged and resisted the assumption that the textbook functions as the repository for that which is worth learning.

So What?

The relative effectiveness of Mr. Nye's approach, in comparison with that of nearly every other primary and secondary school social studies teacher with whom I took a class, poses a series of crucial questions, one that this project will work to explore and complicate: why did Mr. Nye refuse to use the textbook? Should every teacher try to do the same? What is the point of the textbook as it stands, and is there an alternative? While, indeed, I gained more experience as a critical learner of history from Mr. Nye's symbolic discarding of the textbook than from any other teacher's adherence to it, one must also think critically about the potential value of the textbook as a teaching tool. What if the average history textbook did not reflect a specific set of predetermined, must-know facts about history? What if 'The Textbook' could become 'a textbook,' written with a certain self-awareness of the eyes through which it sees history? What if a textbook could come in various forms, each with varied perspectives, each offering a different methodology for critical learning that would be beneficial to the student even when the course is finished and the book is closed?

This Project: Critical Pedagogy, Multiculturalism, and a Summary

My aim in this project is not to place blame upon the contemporary historians who are working within the confines of the education system in the United States; I recognize the value of their work and their efforts to produce thorough and readable textbooks for middle school and high school students across the country. Rather, in the first part of my text, I aim to critique the

very systems in place, within which those historians operate, which determine what knowledge and whose knowledge is considered important enough to be included in the textbook. As will be later explored through the specific lens of Native American Studies, that determination serves a specific purpose: to uphold the hierarchies that serve the white male citizen of the United States.

Thus, there are a number of angles through which one could approach this 'rewriting' process of the textbook's proposed singular version of history. The contemporary discourses surrounding the issues with the American History textbook today present a series of keywords, highlighting some of the many directions in which this project might have gone: Discrimination, Racism, Gender, Colonialism, Expansion, Hero-Making, Collective Memory, Whiteness, Singularity, the list goes on and on.

Admittedly, however, I came in fully aware of the lens through which I would approach this reworking. Based on my major areas of focus at Vassar College, Native American Studies and Education, as well as my more recent reflections upon my own experience in high school history classrooms and in the classrooms I have observed at Poughkeepsie High School, the critical lens with which I seek to create an alternative approach to history will be driven by Native American Studies and an investment in multiculturalism and critical pedagogy.¹

¹ I must, therefore, present my own understanding of multiculturalism in education in addition to why and how this has informed my project. For these purposes, I have relied on the work of two respected scholars of education and multiculturalism: Sonia Nieto and Christine E. Sleeter. Sonia Nieto is a Professor of Language, Literacy, and Culture at the School of Education at University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She has been teaching for over 35 years, has served on several national advisory boards, and has received numerous awards for her work as an advocate and activist for educational equity through multiculturalism. Christine E. Sleeter is a Professor in the College of Professional Studies at California State University. She served as the Vice President of Division K of the American Educational Research Association and has both led and participated in a variety of other committees. Sleeter has also received numerous awards for her work. (See "NAME [National Association for Multicultural Education] Scholars" for more information.) As Nieto writes:

Multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers reflect (Sonia, Nieto, *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education* (2nd ed.), White Plains, New York: Longman, 1996).

My text will pull focus away from the normally centralized, white, EuroAmerican men, and, instead, explicitly concentrate on Native peoples and, more specifically, Native American women. My decision to focus on Native American women in this reworking is multi-faceted, harking back to my intentions in taking on this project. At the foundation of that decision is my desire to bring out the voices of those who are most marginalized by contemporary mainstream history telling. My goal is not to replicate the textbook with the simple substitution of Native women for white men. Rather, I hope that my text will exemplify an alternative approach to thinking about United States history altogether, and in doing so, present an operational model that can serve as a template for understanding, writing, and studying history through the voices and stories that have been largely skewed, reduced, or ignored.

The project consists of two parts. The first is an exhaustive analysis of the sections from four of the most widely adopted textbooks in the United States today – *The American Journey*, *The Americans*, *The American Vision*, and *America: Past and Present* – that relate to Native American peoples. The second is my attempted reworking of the textbook: a supplementary, three-part miniature textbook for beginning to teach Native American Studies in the high school history classroom. The chapters incorporate Native American Studies and are centered on an attempt to understand U.S. history through a lens of *decolonization* as opposed to *colonization*.

This definition is intended to illuminate the ways that multiculturalism can be employed in schools and classrooms more broadly. However, some of the key aspects of this theoretical definition can also be applied to multiculturalist curricula. Sleeter further highlights the possibilities for multiculturalist curricula in the first chapter of *Un-Standardizing Curriculum*. “I do not mean to suggest replacing one set of standards with another...rather, I am advocating for attending to, valuing, learning from, and passing on a much wider array of knowledge than that which resides in traditional bodies of school knowledge only” (Christine E. Sleeter, *Un-Standardizing Curriculum: Multicultural Teaching in the Standards-Based Classroom*, (New York, New York: Teachers College, Columbia University), 2005, 8). This statement and its message are reflective of the work that I aim to do in this project; these concepts and aims will be explained in further detail in Chapter 4: The Bigger Picture, and in the Introduction to Part 2: An American History of Decolonization when I present the goals of my alternative text.

The purpose of this is to guide readers so they may be reoriented to the reality of mainstream historical denial of America's history of colonization, manipulation, and genocide of Native peoples. With regards to my readers who are invested more specifically in education reform, my hope is that through this source (and the extensive bibliography that accompanies this project) they may gain access to alternative sources for beginning to teach Native American history to adolescents.

Part One: Analyzing the Textbook

In this part, I aim to address and problematize the way that some of the most commonly used American high school history textbooks treat Native American peoples, issues, and relations with the United States. My claims are based on my own observations as a student and prospective high school social studies teacher, as well as, perhaps most crucially, the observations and research of other scholars on the subject. The evidentiary support for these claims is drawn from the work of those who have studied the textbook before me – its intentions and its effects – as well as my own in-depth analysis of four of the most widely adopted middle-school and high-school history textbooks, as determined by the American Textbook Council’s study.²

Introduction

The teaching of history, “more than any other discipline, is dominated by textbooks.”³ This statement, made by James Loewen in the introduction to his text, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, inherently presents a question that must be addressed before I move forward with my deconstruction of the text: why the textbook? Why, if there continues to be debate about the textbook’s importance, as well as heated discourses surrounding the necessity for a multiplicity of methods of teaching and learning, do schools continue to implement the textbook as the main source of information in the United States History classroom? Gilbert T. Sewall, Director of the American Textbook Council, responds to this question in his piece, “History Textbooks at the New Century,” published for the Council itself in 2000.

² For the specific study done by the American Textbook Council, refer to the ATC article, “Widely Adopted History Textbooks,” at <http://www.historytextbooks.org/adopted.htm>.

³ James Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, (New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2007,) 2.

American students typically encounter the subject of history in fourth or fifth grade. Between the eighth and twelfth grade, an estimated 85 percent take one or two years of United States history...Textbooks are the draft horse of this social studies curriculum. They are familiar, efficient, portable, and relatively cheap. In many or most classrooms they are the sole source of information about the subject for teachers and students alike...the standard history textbook creates sequentially organized episodes divided into lessons. In history courses, it imposes order on the past.⁴

Familiar. Efficient. Portable. Cheap. Order.

These key terms that emerge from arguments like that of Sewall, regarding the continued adoption of textbooks, are also suggested in other scholars' reflections on the subject. Mike Bruner, a Chanute, Kansas, world history and United States history teacher of twenty-four years, weighs in on the subject. As one of the writers for the Kansas Curricular Standards for Civic-Government, Economics, Geography, and History, and one of the reviewers for "the State Assessment written to those standards," Bruner has developed an appreciation for the textbook as a tool for the standardizing the U.S. history curricula.⁵ As he argues in a segment published on the *Prentice Hall* corporation's website, "The standards movement has resulted in state standards for United States history and world history which are quite content specific, requiring students to develop higher-order understanding based on a foundation of factual knowledge. Textbooks are an important source for that content."⁶

Admittedly, the concepts that emerge from these arguments might be appealing for students and teachers alike. There is a certain level of comfort that extends from knowing exactly what the history classroom is going to look like, regardless of which public school classroom one enters. With regards to physicality and cost, while undeniably bulky and cumbersome on its own,

⁴ Gilbert T. Sewall, "History Textbooks at the New Century: Why History Textbooks are Important," (*American Textbook Council*, 2000), 4-5, <http://www.historytextbooks.org/2000report.pdf>. See the other sections of Sewall's text for more information and arguments for the use of textbooks in the classroom, as well as for more information on Sewall's interpretation of the arguments against that traditional use.

⁵ Prentice Hall: eTeach, "Mike Bruner," *Pearson Education, Inc.*, http://www.phschool.com/eteach/social_studies/2001_05/teacher.html.

⁶ Mike Bruner, "Efficient and Effective Use of the Textbook: Introduction," *Pearson: Prentice Hall eTeach*, http://www.phschool.com/eteach/social_studies/2001_05/essay.html.

the textbook is drastically less expensive and space consuming as compared to the number of other primary or secondary texts that would be required to teach the content covered in the textbook.

In other words, the textbook is convenient. That convenience, which comes from a one-book storyline that tells thousands of years of history in one thousand pages, however, is also tied to certain inevitable ill effects. “The ways that history textbooks affect how students see themselves, their nation, and the world cannot be quantified. But their civic impact is uncontested. American history textbooks are the official portraits of our country’s past,” writes Sewall.⁷ Without contestation, therefore, that storyline impacts American students in crucial ways.

Sewall’s observation is echoed in the discourses surrounding textbook teaching and learning. Presented as *the* story – the singular method through which American students are taught to see and understand their nation – as opposed to *a* story, it is not only understandable but also predictable that students search for some connection to that portrait. Thus, it is imperative that the “our” in Sewall’s phrase, “the official portraits of our country’s past,” be explicitly defined.

In the second chapter of *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, James Loewen reflects on this definition, in the context of his discussion on America’s history of conquest. “If crude factors such as military power or religiously sanctioned greed are perceived as reflecting badly on us,” he writes, “who exactly is ‘us’? Who are the textbooks written for (and by)? Plainly, descendents of the Europeans.”⁸ Written by and for white America (and therefore, white American students), the textbook itself functions as a site for rendering invisible the lives, voices, and stories of those

⁷ Sewall, “History Textbooks at the New Century: Preface,” 2.

⁸ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 35.

whose line of ancestry did not arrive on the continent on 1492. This is particularly true with regards to those who were already on this continent when Europeans first arrived, or, to use a phrase coined by historian Daniel K. Richter, those who were “facing east from Indian country” as opposed to pushing west.⁹ As will be later explored, this exclusion of certain perspectives leads to the dissemination of skewed information, misinformation, or a lack of information in the classroom about that which is not included in the “official portraits” of U.S. history.

Thus begins my analysis and critique of the ways in which the textbook approaches Native American peoples and history, as well as the most specific, U.S./Native American relations. I did not have the means, the time, or the desire to read every textbook that is currently in circulation in the United States; however, I have selected four textbooks from the American Textbook Council’s study of the most widely adopted textbooks in the nation as of the 2012-2013 school year. Those texts that I have carefully analyzed are as follows: McGraw Hill: Glencoe’s textbook, *The American Journey* (most recent edition, 2012), written for eighth grade, Holt: McDougal Littell’s *The Americans* (most recent edition, 2009), written for eleventh grade, McGraw Hill: Glencoe’s *The American Vision* (most recent edition, 2010), written for eleventh grade, and Pearson: Prentice Hall’s *America Past and Present* (9th edition, most recent edition), created for Advanced Placement high school students.

I recognize that there are certain limitations to my study and project. First, this analysis is based solely on four textbooks; there are, of course, a vast number of textbooks in circulation for public, not to mention private, schools. However, I made a number of decisions in this selection process to attempt to remedy, to some extent, this limitation. These four textbooks are from a list that, cumulatively, comprises nearly eighty percent of public school textbook adoption in the

⁹ See Daniel K. Richter’s *Facing East from Indian Country*.

United States. Additionally, together, the four represent three of the most highly represented publishers in the national supply of history textbooks. Their varied academic levels, ranging from an intended eighth grade level to an Advanced Placement text, also include a wide scope of possible methodological approaches, writing styles, and comprehension techniques.

I must also explicitly and openly acknowledge two facts: first, textbooks are continually changing and, arguably, improving, and second, all textbooks are not created equal. With regards to the changes and improvements being made to textbooks, based on the secondary research that I have done, it seems that as a general trend, the textbook's treatment of marginalized groups of all kinds, including (but certainly not limited to) women of all different racial and ethnic groups, African American, and Native American peoples, has vastly improved in the past four decades. Particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, these improvements were a product of the larger civil rights and social justice movements occurring in country. As Christine Sleeter writes, "Through the 1970s and early 1980s, textbook publishers in the United States addressed many concerns regarding omissions and stereotypes that had been raised by communities of color and women."¹⁰ However, Sleeter continues, "then, with a few exceptions, efforts gradually subsided... Teachers often assume that publishers have 'taken care of' most forms of bias."¹¹ Since my research for this project did not include longitudinal studies of specific textbooks, I cannot justly argue one way or the other as to whether or not there has been a marked improvement in specific textbooks in recent decades. However, based on my secondary research, I am convinced that while noticeable and noteworthy updates and additions to textbooks have been made, there is still a lot of room for improvement.

¹⁰ Sleeter, *Un-Standardizing Curriculum*, 85.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

With regards to the differences between textbooks, I must admit that I had some difficulty navigating my analyses. It would have been easier for me to condemn all of the textbooks in every capacity, but having thoroughly read each of the texts and thought through the intentions and effects of the authors' approaches, I have found that each textbook has its shining moments with regards to its presentation of U.S./Native American relations. Interspersed throughout my critiques, therefore, I include praise for the moments during which specific textbooks disrupt the stock narrative of American history and center Native voices and perspectives on issues, events, and themes and have affected and continue to affect Native peoples.

Admitting that the textbooks are not all bad, what I found was that, with regards to each text's treatment of the Native American peoples in approach, intent, and result, the similarities between the texts and, namely, the problems, outweigh the differences. These similarities were connected specifically to the stereotyping and myth making that tends to predictably characterize the white American popular and academic discourse (or lack thereof) surrounding Native American peoples. As I read, certain systematic issues arose that cut across all of the textbooks, regardless of the supposed difficulty level, publisher, or author. Or, as Sleeter explains, "although some individual textbooks are quite good, collectively texts produce patterns that teachers should be aware of."¹²

I will explore these issues in the next three chapters; respectively, the chapters will deal with early Native societies, the episodic nature of the textbooks' treatment of Native American history post-1492 (exemplified through an analysis of two of those episodes), and finally, an in-depth analysis of the two women who appear in every textbook: Pocahontas and Sacagawea. These analyses will each incorporate a focused study of individual textbook sections,

¹² Sleeter, *Un-Standardizing Curriculum*, 85.

presentation of the themes that seem to be present in multiple textbooks, and consideration of the implications of those trends. And I will begin where the textbook begins, with a study of the chapters of history on this continent that two of the four textbooks title, "Prehistory."¹³

¹³ As will be later illuminated, the textbooks that use the term "Prehistory" are McGraw Hill: Glencoe's *The American Journey* and *The American Vision*. I found it intriguing that the term was only employed by the McGraw Hill company textbooks, but I did not do any further research on the subject to confirm or deny a trend.

Chapter 1: "Prehistory"

Each of the four textbooks deals in some capacity with the thousands of years on this continent prior to 1492. Two specific textbooks, *The American Journey* and *The American Vision*, intended for middle school and high school students, respectively, utilize a term that remained with me as I continued my reading and analyses of the rest of the texts: "prehistory." In *The American Journey*, the term first appears on the introductory page of "Chapter 1: The First Americans, Prehistory to 1492."¹⁴ The authors of the textbook never define the term for their readers. One might conjecture, therefore, that the authors presume that their readers know the most commonly accepted definition of the term: the period of human existence before the implementation of written records. While widely understood, the term poses a set of problems; a literal interpretation of the term reveals a conceptual framework for understanding American history that is present in all four of the textbooks.

The "pre" in "prehistory" seems to signify "that which occurred before" history. When I came across this word for the first time in *The American Journey*, I spent some time thinking about the implications of the terminology as part of the U.S. textbook. Based on the signification of the term, perhaps the textbook does not define "history" as the study of past events, particularly with regards to human affairs, but rather, the study of a *specific* set of events, or a *specific* set of human affairs. I am not arguing that the authors of *The American Journey* do not consider the thousands of years prior to colonization on this continent to be part of human history; however, the employment of the term "prehistory" on the first pages of the textbook inherently places lesser value upon the individual and communal experiences, lives, and, yes, history, of those who lived on this continent before European arrival and those who subscribed or

¹⁴ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 4.

continue to subscribe to non-Western methods of recording history.¹⁵ This sets a precursor for the way that “history,” as both a term and a method through which to consider humanity and human interaction is presented in the rest of the text, beginning with the authors’ conjectures about the origins of the first people to live on this continent.

Section 1.1: Creation and Migration

Based on the four textbooks I am most closely studying, the average number of pages dedicated to what the authors of the textbook believe to be nearly 30,000 years of history is less than eleven pages. This insufficient number of pages is immediately indicative of the weight (or lack thereof) that the United States history textbook places on the importance of early history on this continent.

This concept is furthered through the terminology used to label and describe these sections. The chapter and section titles in these pages of the four textbooks that I studied include: “Colonizing America: Prehistory to 1754,” “North America Before Columbus,” and “The First Americans: Prehistory to 1492,” among others.¹⁶ While these chapter titles are varied, they are all indicative of a singular conceptual framework through which the textbook seeks to define life on this continent before European arrival. This attempted definition harks back to my previous consideration of the term “prehistory,” which defines history itself as inherently based on a

¹⁵ When I say “non-Western methods of telling or recording history,” I am referring not singularly but particularly to oral histories. The employment of the term “Prehistory” indicates the Western prioritization of written over oral texts, particularly with regards to history, whereas many Native American histories have been remembered and projected by means of oral history telling. Both before and after the beginning of European presence on this continent, aside from the obvious issues inherent in devaluing certain forms of communal memory and sociocultural reproduction, this prioritization poses a specific set of problems that Daniel K. Richter highlights in Chapter 4 of *Facing East from Indian Country*. He writes, “records composed by Europeans for Europeans provide virtually our only sources of written information about how Native people may have seen the world and understood relationships between their communities and the colonizers, and, for the most part, these records tell us much more about their authors than about the Indians whose lives they purport to describe” (Richter, 110).

¹⁶ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision*, 2; Holt: McDougal Littell, *The Americans*, 1; Pearson: Prentice Hall, *America Past and Present*, 1; McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 4.

EuroAmerican timeline and a EuroAmerican presence. Through this technique, the textbooks can simultaneously acknowledge that while evidently “societies and cultures ...existed on both sides of the Atlantic” before 1492, this existence requires relatively less focus and attention from teachers and students alike, as it can be contained in a period of time known as “prehistory.”¹⁷

In terms of the content, the textbook begins its exploration of “prehistory” with a brief description of Native Americans’ supposed arrival to this continent. “Based on DNA tests and other evidence, some scientists think the earliest Americans came from northwest Asia,” write that authors of *The American Vision*.¹⁸ This theory is repeated in other the other textbooks. *The Americans*, for example, includes the statement: “The first Americans may have arrived as early as 22,000 years ago. Ice Age glaciers had frozen vast quantities of the earth’s water, lowering sea levels enough to expose a land bridge between Asia and Alaska. Ancient hunters trekked across the frozen land, now called Beringia, into North America.”¹⁹ This depiction of Native peoples arriving in America via the Beringia Land Bridge as a fact of science is inherently Eurocentric in nature. From whom and from where does this information present itself as fact? Are there other sets of beliefs regarding the “beginning” of Native life in the Americas?

In his text, *Red Earth, White Lies: Native American and the Myth of Scientific Fact*, Vine Deloria Jr., esteemed scholar, historian, theologian, and activist, answers these questions through his exploration of the disparity between Native-held beliefs regarding Creation and those held by non-Natives. In one section, specifically, he complicates the Bering Strait theory. Deloria Jr. explains, “there are “immense contemporary political implications to this theory [the Bering

¹⁷ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 37.

¹⁸ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision*, 4.

¹⁹ Holt: McDougal Littell, *The Americans*, 4.

Strait theory] which make it difficult for many people to surrender.”²⁰ These political effects stem from the fact that the theory justifies colonialism on this land; the story is one of immigration, therefore characterizing Native peoples as newcomers, on the same plane as Europeans. “If Indians had arrived only a few centuries earlier, they had no *real* claim to land that could not be swept away by European discovery,” Deloria Jr. emphasizes.²¹ As a “science-based” claim, the Bering Strait theory affects, even in the contemporary moment, the way in which non-Native peoples view the “claims for justice made by Indians.”²²

In his essay “Is That All There Is: Tribal Literature,” published in the anthology *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories*, Basil Johnston, Anishinaabe scholar, also explores this issue. “Creation stories provide insights into what races and nations understand of human nature,” he writes, “[and] ours is no different in this respect.”²³ Here I will present parts of the Anishinaabeg Creation and Recreation stories, as told by Johnston as well as Thomas D. Peacock, author and scholar from the Fond du Lac band of Lake Superior Chippewas, in their respective works, and then will follow with a description of the migration story as told by Anishinaabeg peoples as opposed to European scientists.²⁴ Johnston begins:

This is our creation story. Kitchi-manitou beheld a vision. From this vision, the Great Mystery – for that is the essential and fundamental meaning of Kitchi-manitou, and not spirit, as is often understood – created the sun and the stars, the land and the waters, and all the creatures and beings, seen and unseen, that inhabit the earth, the seas, and the skies. The Creation was devastated by a flood. Only the manitous creatures, and beings who dwelt in the waters were spared. All other perished.

²⁰ Vine Deloria Jr., *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*, (New York, New York: Scribner, 1995), 81.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Basil Johnston, “Is That All There Is: Tribal Literature,” in Doerfler, Jill, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, eds, *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories*,” (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press,” 2013), 7.

²⁴ The Anishinaabe Creation and Migration stories are not representative of the experience or beliefs of other Native American nations or communities in the United States. The purpose of highlighting this one account is to emphasize the ways in which the presentation of human origins differ between that which a specific Native group believes – the Anishinaabe – and that which the textbook highlights as invariable truth.

In the heavens dwelt a Manitou, Geezhigo-quae (Sky-woman). During the cataclysm upon the earth, Geezhigo-quae became pregnant. The creatures adrift upon the seas prevailed upon the giant turtle to offer his back as a haven for Geezhigo-quae. They then invited her to come down.

Resting on the giant turtle's back, Geezhigo-quae asked for soil. One after another, water creatures dove into the depths. To retrieve a morsel of soil. Not one returned with a particle of soil. They all offered an excuse: too deep, too dark, too cold, there are evil manitous keeping watch. Last to descend was the muskrat. He returned with a small knot of earth.

With the particle of mud retrieved by the muskrat, Geezhigo-quae recreated an island and the world as we know it. On the island she created over the giant turtle's shell, Geezhigo-quae gave birth to twins who begot the tribe called the Anishinaubaeg.²⁵

This Creation Story has been passed down through generations of Ojibwe peoples, shaping Ojibwe ideologies. Peacock confirms and expands upon this foundation. He explores the history of Ojibwe Migration that followed in the path of history from Creation and Recreation; "there is some comfort in believing we have always been in the places that we now call home," he writes. "We do know that much of contemporary Ojibwe country was covered with a sheet of ice several miles thick nearly twelve thousand years ago during the last glacial period."²⁶ "Many of the stories that explain our migrations to these contemporary places remind us that we may have been here once before, in a time now hidden somewhere in our ancestral memory...The ancestors of the Ojibwe were the Lenni Lenape...the Grandfathers who migrated across this great continent from the west to the east."²⁷ This migration story is supported by what Peacock cites as a record of the journey; "recorded on bark tablets and song sticks, this written record is the oldest recorded account of people in North America, dating back before 1600 B.C."²⁸

What may seem like a passing moment in each of the four textbooks, a main idea statement such as, "the first Americans were hunters and gatherers who came from Asia and

²⁵ Basil Johnston, "Is That All There Is: Tribal Literature," 7.

²⁶ Thomas Peacock and Marlene Visuri, *Ojibwe: Waasa Inaabidaa, We Look in All Directions*, (Afton, MN: Pettit Network Inc., 2002), 22.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 23.

spread throughout the Americas,” included in *The American Journey*, sets a precedent, tone, and perhaps most importantly, an expectation for the lens through which Native peoples will be understood for the rest of the textbook.²⁹ This expectation is that the Native American experience can be explained, categorized, and mastered through Western concepts of science. Native beliefs are not countered here because they are invisible, speaking volumes about the value that the textbook places on Native Americans’ view and understanding of their own histories.

Section 1.2: The Early Native American: The Basic Means of Social Reproduction

At this point, three of the textbooks diverge from the fourth in terms of their treatment of the earliest Native American societies; *The American Journey*, *The Americans*, and *The American Vision* move forward in a similar manner, while *America: Past and Present* approaches the next concepts slightly differently. I will treat the former three textbooks in the following sections, and then move into a discussion of the fourth.

The American Journey, *The Americans*, and *The American Vision* address early Native American peoples in two overarching groups, separated into subgroups by their geographical location. The two groups are the Mesoamericans, including with the Olmec, the Maya, the Aztec, and the Inca, and the early Native North Americans, referring to the Hohokam, Anasazi, and later, the peoples of the Northwest, Southwest, Great Plains, and Northeast.³⁰ While I will not

²⁹ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 7.

³⁰ Each of the four textbooks utilizes some form of a map as a means through which to illustrate the perceived layout of the continent. The names of these maps include “Native American Cultures” (*The American Journey*), “Native American Cultures c. 1500” (*The American Vision*), “North American Cultures in the 1400s” (*The Americans*), and “The First Americans: Location of Major Indian Groups and Culture Areas in the 1600s” (*America: Past and Present*); see *The American Journey*, 20; *The American Vision*, 10; *The Americans*, 11, and *America: Past and Present*, 8 for these maps. As James Axtell highlights and James Merrell affirms in their respective texts, “Columbian Encounters: Beyond 1992” and “Second Thoughts on Colonial Historians and American Indians,” maps have long been considered “creations and implements of imperial power” (James Merrell, “Second Thoughts on Colonial Historians and American Indians, *William and Mary Quarterly: 3d ser.*, 69, no.3., July 2012, 466, footnote no. 72). In the context of early history on this continent, the textbook authors’ decisions about which tribes to

focus specifically on the Mesoamerican societies (as my purpose is to deal mainly with North American Native peoples), many of the methods through which the textbooks explore early North American Native societies overlap with those used to describe those of Mesoamerica.

The authors acknowledge, in some capacity, the complexity of early Native North American societies through statements such as the following from *The Americans*: "...no one doubts that Native Americans have recorded a very long history in North America. Their social and cultural development over the period was as complex as any encountered in the so-called Old World."³¹ Unfortunately, however, this statement does not continue to truly shape the ways in which early North (and Meso) American societies are described and discussed. In terms of similarities between the ways in which the different groups are described, generally speaking, the text written about these peoples can be understood through a few categories. The first is a presentation of their relationship to food: the food cultivated, hunted, gathered, and eaten by Native peoples. This focus transcends time period; regardless of whether the authors are discussing groups such as the Hohokam or their descendents who live in the Southwest, the Anasazi, the Mississippian Culture of the 700s-900s, or any of their respective descendents, the peoples of the Northeast, or those of the Great Plains, food is one of the central methods of description. Some examples of these descriptions include: "the Inuit were hunters and fishers,"

include on their respective maps speaks volumes about that implementation of power. As Merrell notes, "obviously there are limits to what any cartographer can do; it is impossible to convey the sheer number of Native polities and populations when putting even one-third of a continent on a page" (Merrell, "Second Thoughts on Colonial Historians and American Indians," 468). However, whereas the dated maps presented in *The American Vision*, *The Americans*, and *America: Past and Present* highlight the presence of a vast number of Native tribes from coast to coast – with some of the maps, such as that in *The Americans*, highlighting trade routes between groups – *The American Journey* presents a drastically less populated continent without any date in sight. What is the significance of this difference? A less populated continent signifies open land, and open land functions as a preemptive justification for the impending colonization of the continent by Europeans.

³¹ Holt: McDougal Littell, *The Americans*, 4.

“The Hohokam grew corn, cotton, beans, and squash,” and “...the Hohokam and the Anasazi introduced crops into the arid desert of the Southwest.”³²

However accurate these descriptions of food sources and food collecting methods are, they simply overtake the sections dedicated to early Native communities and peoples. Johnston highlights the potential issues of this type of focus on the basic means of social reproduction for societies of peoples:

Books still present Native peoples in terms of their physical existence, as if Indians were incapable of meditating upon or grasping the abstract. Courses of study in the public school system, without other sources of information, had to adhere to the format, pattern, and content set down in books. Students studied *Kaw-lijas*, wooden Indians who were incapable of love or laughter; or Tontos, if you will, whose sole skill were to make fires and to perform other servile duties for the Lone Ranger – an inarticulate Tonto, his speech lited to “Ugh!” “Kimo Sabe,” and “How.”³³

In a metaphorical sense, Johnston’s quotation is applicable to this moment. The focus on Natives’ basic needs, particularly without explicit acknowledgment that this method for depicting people does not reflect their complex sociocultural and *human* ways of being, creates an underlying assumption that that complexity, that humanity, is minimal.

The physicality of the descriptions of early Native societies does not end with the depiction of food sources; the remaining print in these sections is generally dedicated to the environment in which the groups lived, the climate associated with that environment, the “crafts” left behind, the housing, and for very few groups (namely the Iroquois and Algonquin) a brief acknowledgement of the nature of the political structures that organized the societies. In more encouraging moments, the authors make mention of the connections or disconnections between those groups; however, throughout these sections, Johnston’s quote remains applicable.

³² McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 19; McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision*, 6; Holt: McDougal Littell, *The Americans*, 7.

³³ Johnston, “Is that All There Is: Tribal Literature,” 4.

While the authors of *America: Past and Present* offer much of the same information regarding early Native Americans peoples' basic means of social reproduction, they do so in a manner that more thoroughly acknowledges the complexity of those peoples' sociocultural experiences. After a brief discussion about the environmental challenges and food-source transformations that early societies faced and experienced, the authors move into a place-based analysis of the social, political, and economic systems that connected individual Mesoamerican communities and then, in the following section, a values-based depiction of the connections between Eastern Woodland communities.³⁴ Therefore, while *America: Past and Present* is not without issues, the authors' treatment of the societal frameworks and individual and communal life offer a more three-dimensional depiction of early Native American experiences.

Section 1.3: The Eve of 1492 in America

Along with some consideration of the early Native Americans' physical experience, all four of the textbooks early history sections deal in some capacity with what many contemporary historians refer to as the "eve of colonization," or the period of time on this continent that immediately preceded the arrival of Europeans. The issue with the content of these sections on pre-1492 Native peoples lies not only in the lens through which the textbook depicts early societies, but also in the way that they are situated on the timeline of American conquest. This lens is created in mostly subliminal ways, namely, through images, rhetoric, and content.

³⁴ Pearson: Prentice Hall, *America: Past and Present*, 5-8. One example from this place-based analysis of the Mesoamerican societies is a description of the Mississippian people, "a loose collection of communities dispersed along the Mississippi River from Louisiana to Illinois that shared similar technologies and beliefs," by means of Cahokia, "a huge fortification and ceremonial site in Illinois that originally rose high above the river," built by the Mississippian people (Pearson: Prentice Hall, *America: Past and Present*, 6). With regards to the values-based depiction of the connections between Eastern Woodland communities, one example appears on page 7: "however divided the Indians of eastern North America may have been, they shared many cultural values and assumptions. Most Native Americans, for example, defined their place in society through kinship. Such personal bonds determined the character of economic and political relations" (Pearson: Prentice Hall, *America: Past and Present*, 7).

The American Journey, the middle school textbook, and *The Americans*, one of the two eleventh-grade textbooks, are similar in terms of the way that they situate “prehistory” in the context of colonization on this continent. To begin, the two textbooks open with the same image: a reproduction of a painting, *The Landing of the Pilgrims (1825)* by Samuel Bartoll. The painting is an imagined depiction of the arrival of thirty Plymouth colonists from Cape Ann to Naumkeag harbor in 1626, led by one colonist, Roger Conant.³⁵ In addition to a painted boat carrying approximately twelve white men to shore, the painting also depicts a small family whom, based on their skin color, dress, feathers, and set of bow and arrows, are presumably Native American peoples looking over the rocks at the arriving crew of European men.

The decision of the authors of both *The American Journey* and *The Americans* to use this image as the first entry point into studying human history on this continent is unsettling for two specific reasons. First, as the 2003 Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks: 5.6, 3.2, 3.3 Educator’s Guide for the Peabody Essex Museum explains, “what is represented [in this painting] is a romantic myth about the arrival of Pilgrims and their relationship with the Native Americans who already lived in the region.”³⁶ The inclusion of this image (without any note of the romanticized nature of the imagined history it depicts) primes students to begin thinking about European arrival on this continent in a distorted manner.

Another blatantly apparent issue regarding the inclusion of this image at this moment in the textbook is better stated in the form of a question: why is an imagined scene of Pilgrims landing on this shore included as a *precursor* to a section of the text that is supposed to treat the experiences and histories of peoples who lived on this continent for the thousands of years *before*

³⁵ “Fireboard: Landing of the Pilgrims, 1825,” 2003 Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks: 5.6, 3.2, 3.3: Educator’s Guide, *Peabody Essex Museum: Salem in History*, 2006, <http://teh.salemstate.edu/educatorsguide/pages/pre-contact-pdfs/Landing-Pilgrims.pdf>. The East India Marine Society commissioned the painting in 1825 for the 200th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

European arrival? In both textbooks, the inclusion of this image sets the tone for colonization and nation-state building as foundational in studying American history.

The rhetoric of colonization also pervades the early chapters of the textbooks, namely, *The American Journey*, *The Americans*, and *The American Vision*. For example, in describing groups of North American civilizations, *The American Journey* opens with a “Main Idea” section, intended to influence the way in which the student understands the rest of the section. “Main Idea: The Hohokam, the Anasazi, and the Mound Builders were among the **most advanced** of early North American civilizations.”³⁷ The use of this phrasing – **most advanced** – to describe one Native society in comparison with another favors a Western sense of advancement, leaving little space for the potentially drastically different Native-centered sense of “progress.”

The American Vision also highlights this narrative of progress, specifically as linked to colonization and nation-state building. Unit 1 of *The American Vision* is titled, “Creating a Nation: Beginnings to 1789,” with the first chapter title, “Colonizing American, Prehistory to 1754,” and the first section, “North America Before Columbus.”³⁸ These titles are indicative of the discourse with which *The American Vision* approaches its own “prehistory” exploration; the continent is defined by the moment when the building of the nation-state begins.

Daniel K. Richter, author of *Facing East from Indian Country*, a text that seeks to reimagine European arrival from the perspective of those already on this continent, highlights the inherently destructive nature of this structure, with regards to the way that it shapes one’s perception of Native peoples and the supposedly unstoppable trajectory of Western ideologies and peoples. “The emergence of an aggressively expansionist Euro-American United States from

³⁷ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 17. Please note that the phrase “most advanced” was not bolded in the textbook itself.

³⁸ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision*, 1, 4.

what used to be the Indian country of eastern North America is a problem to be explained,” emphasizes Richter, “not an inevitable process to be traced from the first planting of English seeds on Atlantic shores to their flowering in the trans-Mississippi west.”³⁹ In the textbooks, from even before the moment that Europeans arrive “on-shore,” Native peoples are defined in terms of their relationship to European ideologies and colonization efforts. As Richter observes:

Words like “invasion” and “conquest” may now trip more easily from our tongues than quaint phrases like “the transit of civilization,” yet the “master narrative” of early America remains essentially European-focused. While American Indians might make “contributions” to the dominant culture – corn, moccasins, snowshoes, or even, some wishfully tell us, constitutional democracy- Native people remain bit players in the great drama of a nations being born and spreading, for better or worse, westward across the continent.⁴⁰

This concept and the effect that it has both in shaping the textbook and shaping our understanding of U.S./Native American relations must be analyzed and complicated. The textbook’s predictable move from ten pages of description – of the food, land, and art of the early Native civilizations – to the discourse of colonizer/colonized (with the false assumption that Native peoples were colonized beginning in 1492), creates a foundation for the ways in which Native peoples are represented throughout the rest of the textbook.

America: Past and Present, the textbook written for advanced placement high school history courses, seems at first glance to begin its discussion of early history on this continent in a similarly troubling manner: with a Chapter titled, “New World Encounters.”⁴¹ However, the first section is dedicated to illuminating a specific incident that took place in the early 17th century in Maryland when, as the authors write, “the struggle over cultural superiority turned dramatically on how best to punish the crime of murder, an issue about which both Native Americans and

³⁹ Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 7-8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴¹ Pearson: Prentice Hall, *America: Past and Present*, 2.

Europeans had firm opinions.”⁴² Immediately, therefore, the initially presented focus on colonization – with regards to the chapter title and the decision to begin that chapter intended to explore early life on this continent by talking about the European experiences – is subverted when the authors use a specific clash of cultures in order to illuminate the fact that “the colonizers insisted they brought the benefits of civilization to the primitive and savage peoples of North America... [but that] Native Americans never shared this perspective, voicing a strong preference for their own values and institutions.”⁴³

The authors continue by complicating the expected narrative of European “heroic adventures, missionaries, and soldiers sharing Western civilization with the peoples of the New World and opening a vast virgin land to economic development” by stating, “this narrative of events no longer provides an adequate explanation for European conquest and settlement.”⁴⁴ Rather than beginning an examination of human history on this continent with an idealized or romanticized image of Native groups or their imminent conquest by Europeans, the authors of *America: Past and Present* offer a opportunity for their readers to think critically about the way that the “eve of 1492,” or the beginning of European presence on this continent, is typically approached.

This brings us to the next sections in the textbooks, where the “eve of 1492” becomes “1492” and colonization becomes a reality.

⁴² Pearson: Prentice Hall, *America: Past and Present*, 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

Chapter 2: An Episodic History

Without fail, each of the four textbooks that I studied, as a representative sample of many of the textbooks used in American history classrooms moves beyond its “prehistory” sections to the moment Columbus that arrived on this continent. This transition from pre-Columbus to post-Columbus is anything but seamless; the textbooks seem to characterize this as one of the single most pivotal moment in the study of American history.⁴⁵

This transition also marks a change with regards to the treatment of Native peoples in a more structural sense. Based on my reading of the four textbooks, it seems that that, after Columbus’s symbolic arrival to this continent, the textbook authors utilize a method of history-telling usually is largely reminiscent of a television series. This metaphor may be particularly useful for a critical reading of the textbook’s treatment of the Native American experience over the past 500 years.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Many textbooks paint a picture of Columbus as “a great navigator and sailor,” who “led 90 sailors on a voyage into the unknown.”⁴⁵ And while all tell of his story and role in the supposed founding of the nation in 1492, some, for example, *The American Journey*, even go so far as to narrate the scene of his arrival: “At about 2 A.M. on October 12, 1492, a lookout aboard the *Pinta* caught sight of two white sand dunes sparkling in the moonlight. In between lay a mass of dark rocks” (McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 39, 34). Another textbook, *The Americans*, continues this dramatization of Columbus’s arrival by surmising what he might have uttered upon seeing this continent for the first time: “‘*Tierra! Tierra!*’ he shouted. ‘Land! Land!’” (Holt: McDougal Littell, *The Americans*, 26). This sort of elaborated narration and, in many ways, fictionalization, of Columbus’s arrival as a hero’s journey is directly in line with the story that the textbook aims to project. As James Loewen writes, the average textbook dedicates approximately 2.5 pages or 800 words dedicated to Columbus and his journey. Using these pages, the textbook works to humanize Columbus by relying on historical inaccuracies and exaggerations (Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 29, 48). He is constructed as “America’s first great hero,” symbolizing the birth of America, canonized to “reflect our national culture,” and made to symbolize themes of discovery and courage (Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 38). He is depicted and explained as the metaphorical embodiment of and physical perpetrator of a “major turning point in world history,” as *The American Vision* claims, and, in the case of all four of the textbooks that I read, serves as the figure that represents the beginning of American history itself (McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision*, 19).

⁴⁶ The metaphor of the “episodic history” may also be useful in considering the way that the four textbooks’ treat U.S. minority histories – including African American history, and American women’s history among many other – more generally. I will not look specifically at these histories in the context of this project, but it is important to note that while the relationship between the United States and Native American peoples is unique, some of the methods with which the four textbooks that I read treat Native American peoples is mirrored in their treatment of other non-white, non-male groups on this continent.

The main characters of this series are white EuroAmerican men; the narrative of U.S. history follows their experiences, explores their relationships, and develops their characters. Native American peoples appear only when their storylines intersect with those of these main characters. They appear in episodes. They hold minor, supporting roles. And they only exist on the pages of the texts as a means to further develop and complicate the main characters' lives.

To explore this method of history telling and its implications with regards to the sense of understanding (or lack thereof) that a high school reader might gain from the textbooks, I will look at two exemplary "episodes": the legend of Squanto and the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Each of the four textbooks handles these episodes in a different manner. Therefore, I will explore each of the textbook's presentation of the episodes individually and then discuss both the implications of those treatments and the issues that cut across all four texts.

These episodes do not (and are not intended to) represent every section dealing with Native peoples in the textbook, and they certainly are not all-inclusive with regards to centuries of U.S./Native American relations. Rather, I selected them because they are particularly illuminating with regards to certain patterns, themes, and approaches through which the four textbooks are both similar and dissimilar, and because they speak to wider misunderstandings about Native American experiences.

Section 2.1, or Episode 1: The Textbooks Present: Squanto and the First Thanksgiving

After the arrival of the first European colonists in the mid-15th century, the four textbooks move to the 1600s, entering the first phase of Puritan arrival. Following a section dedicated to Jamestown and highlighting the difficulties that the colonists faced in the first phase of life on this continent, most of the four textbooks move into the section in which Squanto emerges.

The American Journey, begins with a section titled, "Help from the Native Americans" and the phrase, "During their first winter in America, almost half the Pilgrims died of malnutrition, disease, and cold." The text then slips into a telling of the Squanto legend.⁴⁷ "In the spring, two Native Americans, Squanto and Samoset, befriended the colonists,"⁴⁸ the authors of *The American Journey* explain. They continue by emphasizing that it was only because of these two friendly Natives that the Pilgrims learned how to grow vegetables, where to hunt and fish, and how to keep peace with the local Native Wampanoag people with whom they then lived in harmony. "Without their help, the Pilgrims might not have survived," the authors stress.⁴⁹

The Squanto story, as portrayed in *The American Vision*, one of the two mainstream high school textbooks, is similar to the version of the story presented in *The American Journey*. Squanto enters the scene after a description of the plagues that affected the Pilgrims and left only fifty alive. "Even the surviving Pilgrims might have perished were it not for the help of Squanto, a Wampanoag man...[who] directed them how to set their corn, where to take fish, and [how] to procure other commodities...the following autumn, the Pilgrims joined the Wampanoag in a three-day festival to celebrate the harvest and give thanks to God for their good fortune. This celebration later became the basis for the Thanksgiving holiday."⁵⁰

While perhaps this centering of Squanto in *The American Journey* and *The American Vision* seems to indicate a move away from Eurocentrism, the reality is, in fact, quite the opposite. The textbook does not center (or even attempt to highlight) Squanto as a human being, but rather, as a glorified one-dimensional player. Squanto is underdeveloped and celebrated as a

⁴⁷ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 66.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 29.

figure of acquiescence; he sympathizes with the Pilgrims' plight, therefore giving grounds for the continued land theft and conquest from that moment onwards.⁵¹

The Americans, the other mainstream high school text, on the other hand, makes no mention of Squanto, nor of the role that Native peoples may have played in aiding the Pilgrims when they first arrived. In fact, the authors of *The Americans* do not highlight the difficulties that the Pilgrims faced in the early stages of building a colony. Rather, emphasis is placed on the reasons that they fled England in the first place.⁵² Rather than using Squanto's presence and acquiescence as a means to justify colonial expansion, as do *The American Journey* and *The American Vision*, *The Americans* simply ignores the presence of Native peoples completely at the site of Pilgrim arrival. The complete absence of Native peoples at that moment functions as another form of justification for European settlement.⁵³

How might the arrival of the Pilgrims and those sharing the arriving ships read if Squanto's story was further explicated? *America: Past and Present*, the advanced placement textbook, presents a version of the Squanto legend that is most accurate. The text explores Squanto's story *before* the arrival of the Pilgrims, offering a historical backdrop for his actions and relationship with the colonists. "Almost anyone who has heard of the Plymouth Colony knows of Squanto, a Patuxt Indian who welcome the first Pilgrims in excellent English," write the authors.⁵⁴ The textbook then offers a summary of his experiences before that "welcoming." Squanto was kidnapped and sold in Spain as a slave; "somehow this resourceful man escaped bondage, making his way to London, where a group of merchants who owned land in

⁵¹ Notes from Professor Molly McGlennen (Second Reader), January 2014.

⁵² Holt: McDougal Littell, *The Americans*, 50.

⁵³ The fact that the authors of *The Americans* did not include Squanto at all in their writing of American history calls into question *The American Journey* and *The American Vision* authors' inclusion and emphasis of Squanto's role in the development and success of the Pilgrim's colonization.

⁵⁴ Pearson: Prentice Hall, *America: Past and Present*, 37.

Newfoundland taught him to speak English.”⁵⁵ The authors bring the story full circle, stating that he returned to the Plymouth area “just before the Pilgrims arrived.” He and “Massasoit, a local Native American leader,” taught the Pilgrims certain techniques for survival. “Although evidence for the so-called First Thanksgiving is extremely sketchy, it is certain that without Native American support the Europeans would have starved.”⁵⁶ *America: Past and Present’s* authors attempt to fill in the account of Squanto’s life and, in doing so, three-dimensionalize his experience for readers.

However, while certainly the best account, *America: Past and Present* remains imperfect, as the authors still do not answer the crucial question: *why* might Squanto have decided to offer his support to the Pilgrims?

Section 2.2: Another Look At Squanto

To understand Squanto’s circumstances at the arrival of the Pilgrims, one must first understand the context within which that arrival occurred. As Richter explains, European arrival, particularly in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, created an equally “new world” for Native peoples as for European colonists on this continent. Even before the physical arrival of Europeans to the communities deeper into this continent, “intercultural commerce flourished... [and] expanded trade not only reordered economies but dramatically reshaped Native cultures in ways beyond European control or comprehension.”⁵⁷ The factors affecting Native communities were not simply material, however; the transformations that occurred were also ecological and epidemiological.⁵⁸ As Richter explicates, “The arrival of substantial numbers

⁵⁵ Pearson: Prentice Hall, *America: Past and Present*, 37.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 41.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

of colonists also sparked complex changes in the natural environment, with serious implications for Indian farmers and hunters everywhere.”⁵⁹ He continues, “Europeans unwittingly imported microbes that scythed through one Native community after another and reshaped the human landscape in the most potent way of all.”⁶⁰

It was these epidemiological forces that shaped Squanto’s life and that are excluded from his story as presented in the four textbooks. Before Pilgrim arrival, specifically at the very beginning of the seventeenth century, “diseases entered a new phase...when for the first time substantial numbers of European families – including the youngsters most likely to carry viral ‘childhood diseases’ – began to settle in eastern North America.”⁶¹ While unidentifiable by name, the string of epidemics were deadly; they drastically cut down eastern Native populations.

Here we return to Squanto. In the years immediately preceding Puritan arrival, Squanto’s village bore the brunt of a particularly murderous epidemic or series of epidemics. The disease(s) “killed perhaps 75% of the coastal Algonquian population.”⁶² One (or perhaps a combination) of said diseases wiped out Squanto’s entire village. As does *America: Past and Present* to some extent, Loewen offers a brief history of Squanto’s life in the early 17th century, as part of his own critique of the Squanto legend presented in the textbook: Squanto may have been stolen by a British captain in 1605 and brought to England for nine years, and was undoubtedly sold into slavery in Spain in 1614 by a British slave raider. After years, Squanto found passage back to Massachusetts via a colonist.⁶³ Loewen continues:

It happens that Squanto’s fabulous odyssey provides a “hook” into the plague story, a hook that our textbooks choose not to use. For now Squanto set foot again on Massachusetts soil and walked to his home village of Patuxet, only to make the

⁵⁹ Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 41.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 60.

⁶² Ibid., 61.

⁶³ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 83.

horrifying discovery that “he was the sole member of his village still alive. All the others had perished in the epidemic two years before.” No wonder Squanto threw in his lot with the Pilgrims.⁶⁴

If the textbooks were to acknowledge that one of the primary reasons that Squanto helped the Pilgrims was due to the destruction that colonization caused, they would be forced to call into question the EuroAmerican right to be on this continent in the first place. This lack of acknowledgment of Squanto’s reality therefore serves a specific purpose: to justify EuroAmerican presence and continued colonization.

Section 2.3: The Textbooks Present: The Indian Removal Act of 1830

Regardless of age group or leveling, all four of the textbooks studied for this project also include a section or even a chapter on the waves of Indian removal (under Andrew Jackson’s presidency) that left an indelible mark on the early 19th century American history. Aside from certain variations in initial approach, each textbook includes extensive descriptions, supplementary questions, and some type of image or map to illuminate these policies.

Generally speaking, the texts offer similarly misleading information about what actually occurred leading up to Jackson’s policies. In *The American Journey*, the first introduction to the Indian Removal Act that the authors present is a painted depiction of the Cherokee moving along the Trail of Tears and a quote: “In the 1830s, many Native Americans were forced to move west along what became known as the Trail of Tears.”⁶⁵ The text continues with a summary of the moments leading up to the enactment of the Indian Removal Act. The authors state that many Native peoples lived in the East and that the majority of the settlers wanted the national government to relocate Native Americans from the Southeastern part of the continent, as a means

⁶⁴ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 83.

⁶⁵ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 334.

to “end national conflict” with Native peoples.⁶⁶ As Lawrence Hauptman, Professor of History, author, and scholar focusing in Native American history, writes in his book, *Tribes and Tribulations*, “language affects our mental images and helps create and/or further misconceptions about American Indians.”⁶⁷ Here, the employment of the terms “settlers” and “relocate”—as opposed to terms such as “colonizers” and “displace,” which would more accurately depict what occurred—allow the textbook to skirt around the issues at hand.

The American Journey continues, “In 1830, President Jackson pushed the Indian Removal Act through Congress. The Act allowed the federal government to pay Native Americans to move west...[then in 1834], Congress created the Indian Territory. This was an area in present-day Oklahoma that was set aside for the relocation of Native Americans from the Southeast.”⁶⁸ In addition to being plainly misleading in terms of content (as a reasonable form of compensatory action did not accompany the forced displacement of Native peoples), here again, the rhetoric and phrasing used paints readers a distorted image of the violent land theft as a fair “purchase” and “move.”

The Americans, *The American Vision*, and *America: Past and Present* approach the Indian Removal Act slightly differently. Rather than a focus on justification for the expansionist policies, these textbooks center Andrew Jackson in their discussion of Indian Removal, removing the focus completely from the implications of his policies and the effects of those policies on Native peoples. In *The Americans*, the section begins with an insert titled “Key Player,” focusing on Andrew Jackson’s role as a “man of the people.”⁶⁹ “Jackson thought that assimilation could not work... [and that] another possibility—allowing Native Americans to live in their original

⁶⁶ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 343.

⁶⁷ Lawrence M. Hauptman, *Tribes and Tribulations: Misconceptions About American Indians and Their Histories*, (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), xiii.

⁶⁸ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 343.

⁶⁹ Holt: McDougal Littell, *The Americans*, 226.

areas – would have required too many troops to keep the areas free of white settlers. Jackson believed that the only solution was to move the Native Americans from their lands to areas farther west.”⁷⁰ In these statements, Jackson is heroified through his decisions. An earlier section presents an idea that further supports this heroification. “many Americans assumed that the United States would extend its dominion to the Pacific Ocean and create a vast republic that would spread the blessings of democracy and civilization across the continent.”⁷¹ Thus, Jackson is depicted not progenitor of a destructive policy, but rather, as a leader committed to fulfilling the expectations and hopes of American citizens.⁷²

This image-making is mirrored in *The American Vision* and *America: Past and Present*. *The American Vision* highlights that “Andrew Jackson’s commitment to extending democracy did not benefit everyone. His attitude towards Native Americans reflected the views of many westerners at that time”...“he thought that if they moved Native American to that region, the nation’s conflict with them would be over.”⁷³ In *America: Past and Present*, the authors make a similar claim: “Jackson’s support of removal was no different from the policy of previous administrations. The only real issues to be determined were how rapidly and thoroughly the process should be carried out and by what means.”⁷⁴

Section 2.4: Mapping Colonization

⁷⁰ Holt: McDougal Littell, *The Americans*, 226.

⁷¹ Ibid., 280.

⁷² At the end of the section, *The Americans* does include an encouraging insert titled, “Now and Then.” While, unfortunately this segment is not the focus of the section (and exists alongside a section of main content that presents a lot of issues, the “Now and Then” brings land conflicts into the present moment in a way that would, at the very least, cause high school students to think about the ways in which the Indian Removal Act may continue to affect the lives of people that are still living in the United States (Holt: McDougal Littell, *The Americans*, 229).

⁷³ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision*, 226.

⁷⁴ Pearson: Prentice Hall; *America: Past and Present*, 246.

As James Axtell writes in his article, "Columbian Encounters: Beyond 1992," "maps were and still are 'active instruments of power,' particularly in the hands of those with power who aspire to more."⁷⁵ With regards to the textbooks' depiction of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, Axtell's quote is particularly on point. With the exception of *America: Past and Present*, which offers a map titled, "North America 1819," with "New Spain," "Oregon County," "United States," and "British North America" marked in different colors, each of the four textbooks uses the map as a means of depicting the effects of the Indian Removal Act.⁷⁶ The authors use a set of arrows, marked by color and correlating with a key, to depict the movement of Native peoples.

The issues with these maps extend not only from the terminology used in them – specifically, for example, *The American Journey's* use of the term "ceded" as a means to describe the actions taken by Native American peoples in leaving their land – but from their implications with regards to Native American presence. Through the maps in *The American Journey*, *The Americans*, and *The American Vision*, which delineate between U.S. states, highlight original locations of the tribes, and indicate through arrows and labels the tribes' move to "Indian Territory," seem to imply that Native peoples were intruders in a rapidly expanding United States. The tribes not affected by the Indian Removal Act? They are nowhere to be found. The continent is depicted as essentially unoccupied, leaving geographical space for continued expansion and the readers of the textbook under the impression that, by 1803, the continent was completely in the hands and under the control of the United States' jurisdiction. Thus, the map itself functions as a justification tool for colonization and, specifically, land theft.

⁷⁵ James Axtell, "Columbian Encounters: Beyond 1992," *The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series*, Vol. 49, No. 2, (April 1992), 341.

⁷⁶ Pearson: Prentice Hall, *America: Past and Present*, 215.

Section 2.5: The Textbooks Present: Native American Reactions and Resistance to the Removal Policies

Equally as illuminating as the textbooks' treatment of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 – through text and through maps – is their treatment of the Native American response and resistance to the enactment of the policy, particularly with regards to the Seminole and the Cherokee.

The textbooks depict the Seminole and Cherokee responses as drastically different from one another. The Seminole are described as the only people to “successfully” resist removal.⁷⁷ However, based on the textbooks' descriptions, that success came through their use of radical, violent, and disorganized “guerilla tactics.” *The American Journey*, for example, highlights the Dade massacre of 1835 when the “Seminole guerilla army” and “some escaped slaves” killed a number of soldiers.⁷⁸ While recognized for their success in the majority of the textbooks, the Seminole are certainly not celebrated for their resistance; rather, they are depicted as barbarous in their actions.

The Cherokee, on the other hand, are painted in a very different light. The authors of *The American Vision* state, “most Native Americans eventually gave in and resettled on the Great Plains, but not the Cherokee of Georgia.”⁷⁹ The textbook highlights the legal actions taken by the Cherokee peoples as a means of organized resistance and then move into a discussion of the ways in which the Cherokee “adopted many aspects of white culture” that is mirrored in all four of textbooks.⁸⁰ The section celebrates the Cherokee's adoption of a written language, explains that they had a constitution based on the constitution of the United States, and highlights that

⁷⁷ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 342, 346-347.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 347.

⁷⁹ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision*, 226.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

they sent their children to missionary schools.⁸¹ Rather than demonizing the Cherokee for their refusal to leave, the textbooks celebrate that resistance. Why? Based on the description, perhaps it is because their efforts were largely organized – following the rules set forth by government for acceptable forms of resistance – and thus seen as unthreatening. Or perhaps it is because the Cherokee were eventually unsuccessful in their efforts to remain in Georgia. Therefore, the textbook can safely exhibit nostalgia for the Cherokee efforts to remain on their land.

Regardless of the intention, the presentation of the Cherokee and Seminole resistance efforts fit into the larger framework of the textbooks' treatment of the Indian Removal Act. On one hand, the textbook centers Native peoples as victims, acknowledging only a small segment of the Native peoples who pushed back against the removal policies, and beginning the process of slowly erasing Native peoples through discourses of colonization. On the other, throughout the relatively extensive focus on this period of European American expansion, the textbook maintains a Eurocentric focus, emphasizing the thought processes, decisions, and experiences of key European figures as they carried out what is depicted as the inevitable push from East to West.⁸²

⁸¹ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision*, 226.

⁸²Throughout my own experiences both as a student and a college-age observer in a number of middle and high school level classrooms, I witnessed a series of lessons created in tandem with and aimed at directly supplementing the textbook's presentation of the Jacksonian Era and policies affecting Native American Removal. One specific lesson in a seventh grade classroom at Poughkeepsie Middle School in Poughkeepsie, New York, which included a worksheet that the students (and I) received, illuminates certain key factors relating to the presentation of this episode in the textbook and the classroom more generally. While it did not come directly from the textbook, the emphases of the worksheet and their intended elicited responses function as an accurate reflection of the issues with the textbook's presentation of this period. "In 1830 President Jackson pushed the Indian Removal Act through Congress. The act allowed the federal government to pay Native Americans to move West...what would be the advantage to white settlers if Congress forced Native Americans off their Eastern lands?" one textbook asks of its readers.⁸² This particular class finished reading a comparable section in their textbook that described the Indian Removal Act of 1830, and began their independent work. The worksheet was structured and worded exactly as follows – spelling errors and all:

"Today's Activity: The U.S. government has a shortage of members in the Department of Native American Affairs. The is a growing issue as the country expands. The Native American population is getting in the way of the country's growth westward. We are asking you to brainstorm solutions with a partner, to a growing problems we are facing during our expansion.

Section 2.6: The Episodes Tell One Story

Squanto and the Indian Removal Act are only two of a number of episodes in the textbook that focus on or involve Native peoples. I will not explore all of the additional episodes; however, I feel it necessary to, at the very least, draw attention to some of the specific moments that arise in all four of the textbooks. Another notable moment that is highlighted all four texts and that exemplifies the textbooks' treatment of Native peoples in the 17th century is the Pequot War (1634-1638).

A quote from *The American Vision* elucidates the four textbooks' treatment of the Pequot War: "In 1637 war broke out between the English settlers and the Pequot people of New England. This conflict ended with the near extermination of the Pequot people."⁸³ All four of the textbooks present the Pequot War in a similar manner, emphasizing the that the nature of this war as a "conflict" – implying an equal playing field when, in reality, the Pequot War involved attack like the massacre of 300-700 women, children, and old men on the eastern front along the

Questions:

- 1) How do we convince them to leave?*
- 2) Where can we move the Native American population to?*
- 3) Who is your solution going to affect?"*

This activity incited suggestions for question #1 from the children that included, "we could scare them into it," "we could lie to them," and "we could assimilate them."⁸² The second question incited a conversation between the teacher and a student:

Boy: "We could move them to Louisiana."

Teacher: "What about the tribes that are already there?"

Boy: "They'll make amends"

The class ran out of time for the activity before we could even approach the third question. As the student responses (in addition to the teacher's worksheet itself) indicate, the textbook's European American centered approach to removal affects both the way that teachers perceive of U.S./Native American relations, and the way that those perceptions are projected in the classroom. The resulting conversations and learning processes are both ineffective and disturbing in terms of the students' understanding of the material and perception of Native peoples.

⁸³ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision*, 31.

Mystic River – and the resulting “near destruction” of the Pequot peoples.⁸⁴ The rhetoric and methods of presentation used seem to work to alleviate European anxiety and guilt surrounding this and other key moments in U.S./Native American history. Not only do the textbooks simplify or ignore the *reasons* for this and other issues that arose between the colonists and Native nations, they present the violence that resulted as an inevitable result of, as James D Drake, professor and historian, writes, “Indians who...annoyed the frontiers.”⁸⁵ The discourse surrounding the Pequot War is exemplary of that which surrounds many of the clashes between the colonists and Native peoples – particularly in the 17th and early 18th centuries – that are presented in the four textbooks.

Certainly with some exceptions at varied points in the different texts, as the textbooks move closer to beginning of the 19th century and then the Indian Removal Act, Native peoples begin to appear in less and less episodes. They materialize in relation to William Penn and then make a brief appearance in the French and Indian Wars section. After the Indian Removal Act, these emerges become even less frequent; when they do, it is often in sections with titles such as, “The Government Restricts Native Americans.”⁸⁶ Native American peoples are therefore defined by their conflict with the centralized nation-state; this seems to come to a head at the Battle of Wounded Knee, which, as the authors of *The Americans* argue, “brought the Indian Wars – and an entire era – to a bitter end.”⁸⁷ The other textbooks create a similar sense of finality surrounding the effects of Wounded Knee; in fact, *The American Journey* goes so far as to say that “Wounded Knee marked the end of armed conflict between the United States government

⁸⁴ Lawrence Hauptman, *Tribes and Tribulations*, 18-19; See Chapter 2 of *Tribes and Tribulations* for a closer look at the Pequot War.

⁸⁵ James D. Drake, *King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676*, (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts press, 1999), 35-56. Some of the other key episodes presented from the 17th century in the four textbooks include Bacon's Rebellion of the 1660 and Metacom's (or King Philip's) War in the 1670s.

⁸⁶ Holt: McDougal Littell, *The Americans*, 410; McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 571.

⁸⁷ Holt: McDougal Littell, *The Americans*, 414.

and Native Americans.”⁸⁸ Regardless of intention – and regardless of the fact that Native Americans do continue to appear randomly throughout the rest of the texts that brings the reader to the 21st century – the textbooks’ imposed definitiveness of this moment, with regards to Native peoples in the United States, permits readers to then tune Native peoples out of that which follows Wounded Knee.

This brings us to the final section of the history textbook critique, in which we will hone in on the textbooks’ treatment of what I have named “the token two”: Pocahontas and Sacagawea, the textbooks’ favorite Native American women.

⁸⁸ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 571.

Chapter 3: Pocahontas and Sacagawea, or The Token Two

As Christine Sleeter writes in her book, *Un-Standardizing Curriculum*, “most textbooks reflect an additive approach to multicultural curriculum: The ‘look’ of the curriculum is changed, but not the substance.”⁸⁹ In other words, the inclusion of these groups does not effectively alter or complicate the singular version of history; instead, the brief nods to otherness are placed in parallel with the mainstream story, adding “content, concepts, an themes to otherwise unreconstructed lessons, units, and courses of study.”⁹⁰ For example, with regards to the four history textbooks that I studied, the additive technique results in the inclusion of brief sections of text, no longer than a paragraph, with titles such as “Women Workers,” “Native American Struggles,” or “The African American Response,” thrown into chapters that center the narrative of the *real* American: the white male with European ancestry.⁹¹ Sadly, even in comparison with the textbooks’ minimal inclusion of women more generally, Native American women are nearly absent altogether from the textbook’s presentation of American history.⁹² The exceptions to this rule are the expected cast of characters – Pocahontas and Sacagawea and one or two characters – thrown into a “people in history” blurb or a post-chapter “additional information” section.⁹³

⁸⁹ Sleeter, *Un-Standardizing Curriculum*, 87.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 567; McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision*, 480.

⁹² While this statement is true, as Native American women are some of the least represented peoples in the textbooks, this is not to say that the textbooks’ depiction of EuroAmerican, African American, or really *any* women in American history is thorough. While I will not explore the treatment of women more generally in the textbooks in a thorough manner, many of the methods through which Native women are depicted and presented in the textbooks extend to the depiction and presentation of other women. It seems as though every racialized category of women has certain tokenized players; Anne Hutchinson, for example, “a devout Puritan [who] began causing a stir in Boston” in the 17th century, and Ida B. Wells, a 19th century suffragist and activist, described as “a fiery young African American woman from Tennessee,” are two of the key EuroAmerican and African American tokenized women, respectively, who both appear in and are essentialized by all four of the textbooks (McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision*, 30, 480).

⁹³ One of these “additional” characters who receives one-line mentions or an image in a couple of the textbooks is Zitkala-Sa (or Gertrude Bonnin), a Dakota activist and writer who lived in the last 19th and early 20th centuries and

This chapter will complicate that cast of characters through a consideration of Pocahontas and Sacagawea, specifically, and then use those analyses as a means through which to explore the wider trends that arise from a Euro-American treatment of Native American women in history telling. Admitting that there are certain moments of clarity and efforts made on the part of the textbook authors to demystify some of the myth-making that has surrounded both Pocahontas and Sacagawea, there remains a long way to go for all of the textbooks that I analyzed to undo those one-dimensional narratives.

Section 3.1: The Pocahontas Myth

The American Journey presents a highly romanticized and fictionalized version of the Pocahontas myth. The section opens with an “American Diary” entry, a staple of the middle school textbook. These entries appear at the beginning of each chapter and offer either a primary source or what is intended to be key concept, applicable to the rest of the chapter. The entry that precedes the section relating to Pocahontas reads as follows:

Captain John Smith, a leader of England’s Jamestown colony, told an amazing tale of his capture by Native Americans. According to Smith, the Native Americans were prepared to ‘beat his brains out.’ Just then, Pocahontas, the 11-year-old daughter of Chief Powhatan, ‘got his head in her arms and laid her own upon his to save him from death.’ This gesture moved the chief to spare Smith’s life.⁹⁴

This entry validates the story that has been accepted by mainstream American society; Pocahontas is presented as the courageous and self-sacrificing Indian princess. The only further mention of Pocahontas occurs in two places: the opening sentence that follows the presentation of the Pocahontas stock character, when *The American Journey* makes a casual reference to the

attended an Indian boarding school, part of a U.S. assimilation project. Zitkala-Sa’s story will be illuminated and discussed at length in Chapter 6: Native American Boarding Schools.

⁹⁴ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 58.

potentially questionable nature of the story of Smith and Pocahontas, and later through the statement, "Relations with the Native Americans improved after a colonist, John Rolfe, married Pocahontas."⁹⁵ Therefore, after the initial presentation of the myth, there are no additional points at which the authors further question or complicate the Pocahontas myth. *The American Journey* also includes a painted image of Pocahontas as a young, feminine, exotic looking woman. This image is placed directly next to and seemingly paired with the dramatized description of the events leading up to John Smith's rescue.

In *The Americans*, Pocahontas enters in a section titled, "The Settlers Clash with Native Americans."⁹⁶ While the section *does* recognize the violence between the European intruders and Native peoples at Jamestown, that violence is presented through rhetoric that implies an equal playing field and the absence of a wrongdoer. For instance, phrases such as "in retaliation" are used to describe the colonizers' decision to use force and violence in establishing colonies on land that was not their own.⁹⁷ When Pocahontas enters the scene, *The Americans* describes her as one of the children kidnapped during a raid at Jamestown. Immediately following this momentary recognition of the volatile nature of her childhood, the textbook presents Pocahontas as the wife of a European. "She married John Rolfe in 1614...this lay the groundwork for a half-hearted peace."⁹⁸ Simply stated, *The Americans*, therefore, presents Pocahontas almost exclusively through her marriage to Rolfe, and implies that, via her entrance into the European sphere, she played some sort of role in affecting positive change in the Jamestown colony.

America: Past and Present approaches the Pocahontas myth in a similar manner though to an extreme, presenting Pocahontas solely through the European men that were either directly

⁹⁵ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 58, 61.

⁹⁶ Holt: McDougal Littell, *The Americans*, 46.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

or tangentially involved in her life. The section begins, "Virginia might have gone the way of Roanoke had it not been for Captain John Smith. By any standard, he was a resourceful man."⁹⁹ Using this characteristic of "resourcefulness" to transition to the statements, the authors continue, "if Smith is to be believed, he was saved from certain death by various beautiful women," and "recent scholarship...has affirmed the truthfulness of his curious story."¹⁰⁰ Without citing this scholarship that affirms Smith's account, *America: Past and Present* places Pocahontas in this supposed group of "various beautiful women" who saved Smith's life. The description continues, "[Pocahontas] bore little relation to the person caricatured in the film."¹⁰¹

The authors of *The Americans* and *America: Past and Present* both present the same painted image of Pocahontas that seems to support this claim. The image is drastically different from that which is offered to readers in *The American Journey*; with regards to the whiteness of her skin, her demeanor, and her dress, Pocahontas looks European. *America: Past and Present* even notes beneath that Pocahontas was married to a "settler," John Rolfe, converted to Christianity, and became, by her own volition, Europeanized. The effects of this image and caption, whether intentional or not, become clear: Pocahontas's life is depicted as reflecting not only a complete transformation and Europeanization, but as having a notable impact on European-Native American relations in the Jamestown community, as reflecting a larger trend of favorable Europeanization.

It is thus through the links fashioned between the young girl and the European forces that affected her life and the lives around her – John Rolfe and, even more so, John Smith – that Pocahontas has become, "an Anglo-centered legend," a romanticized and commercialized

⁹⁹ Pearson: Prentice Hall, *America Past and Present*, 37.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

heroine who is simultaneously remembered both for her supposed willingness to protect the European men in her life and her decision to become a Euro-Indian princess.¹⁰²

The American Vision paints a portrait of Pocahontas that does not fit neatly into this aforementioned binary of acquiescence and Europeanization. In the chapter of text dedicated to Jamestown and highlight John Smith, *The American Vision* offers a similarly skewed look at Pocahontas's experience in Jamestown and relationship with John Smith as do the other three textbooks. After describing Smith's explorations, the authors write, "it was on one such expedition that Smith later claimed he was taken prisoner by Chief Powhatan and that Pocahontas saved him from being killed."¹⁰³ There is no further complication of or elaboration upon Pocahontas's story in the main text. Three hundred pages later, however, in a "TIME Notebook" insert titled, "Rebuilding The Nation: 1865-1877," *The American Vision* offers an elaboration on the Pocahontas story. "Reexamined, 1870. The Romantic Story of Pocahontas, based on the written account of Captain John Smith," the section continues:

The London Spectator, reporting on the work of Mr. E. Neils, debunks Smith's tale of the young Pocahontas flinging herself between him and her father's club. The young girl was captured and held prisoner on board a British ship and then forcibly married to Mr. John Rolfe. Comments *Appleton's Journal* in 1870: "all that is heroic, picturesque, or romantic in history seems to be rapidly disappearing under the microscopic scrutiny of modern critics."

First, it must be noted that the evidence suggesting that Pocahontas's marriage to John Rolfe was "forced" does not exist. Aside from that potential skewing of the facts, this excerpt, inserted hundreds of pages out of sequence in *The American Vision*, in an added section that is not included into the main part of the text, offers a more critical look at the Pocahontas myth than do any of the sections dealing with Pocahontas in any of the other four textbooks. Why this

¹⁰² Pearson: Prentice Hall, *America Past and Present*, 37.

¹⁰³ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision*, 26.

critical approach is not included in tandem with the initial presentation of Pocahontas's story is puzzling, to say the least. I would posit that the inclusion of this subsection allows the authors to theoretically present various perspectives without interrupting or detracting from the expected national narrative that is offered in the official text.

Section 3.2: Pocahontas's Life

The American Vision's "TIME Notebook" insert begins to illuminate some of the theories surrounding Pocahontas's true colors. While there exist many of these speculations – about Pocahontas's nature, character, and experiences – the reality is that contemporary scholars do not know very much about her short twenty-two years of life. This is not to say that there does not exist any knowledge or interpretation of Pocahontas; historians such as Daniel K. Richter and Helen C. Rountree work to unravel the intricacies of her life. As Richter states, "little is known about her life prior to the establishment of Jamestown... [however,] enough information is available to reveal how [she] confronted the forces of material change and tried to incorporate Europeans into an Indian world on indigenous terms."¹⁰⁴ Along a similar vein, Rountree writes, "in her own lifetime, Pocahontas was not particularly important. In fact, very few Virginia records dating from her lifetime even mentioned her. No writer left us with more than little snippets about her, suggesting that she did not loom very large in the English scheme of things."¹⁰⁵ The fact that contemporary historians do not know much at all about Pocahontas's

¹⁰⁴ Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 70, 69.

¹⁰⁵ Helen C. Rountree, "Pocahontas: The Hostage Who Became Famous," Perdue, Theda, *Sifters: Native American Women's Lives*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2001), 14; The real Pocahontas was born sometime between the years 1595 and 1596 and given the "public" name Amonute and the "private, very personal" name, "Matoaka" (Rountree, "Pocahontas," 15). Daughter of Chief Powhatan, Matoaka lived with her mother (one of Powhatan's many wives) and many other relatives for the majority of her early childhood because of the matrilineal nature of the Powhatan society. When she moved to her father's capital, she "exhibited a combination of toughness among peers and vivacity in dealing with her father," and was thus given the nickname Pocahontas, meaning "little wanton" or "little mischievous one" (Rountree, Pocahontas, 14-15).

life and that all four of the textbooks include a description of her story support the idea that her story serves a specific purpose in the narrative-building that takes place in the textbook.

More evidence of this is revealed through a further exploration of Pocahontas's story. In an attempt to end the alliance forming between the neighboring Chickahomines and the English, Powhatan's peoples attacked the English and took John Smith hostage in 1607.¹⁰⁶ Smith proceeded to write three accounts of his capture, spanning nearly the next two decades; it wasn't until the last account that Pocahontas was even mentioned.¹⁰⁷ It was in this account that Pocahontas was described in a detailed and "probably highly colored" account of "her contributions to his welfare and that of the English at James Fort" as Paula Gunn Allen, Laguna Pueblo poet, novelist, scholar, and activist hypothesizes in her text dedicated to elucidating the life story of Pocahontas.¹⁰⁸ Not only were the stories inconsistent with one another, they were also inconsistent in terms of their content. Smith's descriptions of his interactions with Powhatan and the tribe did not accurately reflect cultural norms or practices of Powhatan peoples. While historians do not agree upon whether or not Pocahontas worked to save John Smith's life, it is unlikely given the facts presented by Smith himself, describing his relationship with Powhatan.

As Paula Gunn Allen also states, "the figure frozen in history bears the child name: Pocahontas...That modern peoples know her only as a child says a great deal about white-American Indian relations, and it reveals volumes about Anglo-European consciousness."¹⁰⁹ Unlike the widely accepted understanding of her one-dimensional character, Pocahontas continued to grow and change after John Smith departed for England. Around 1610, Pocahontas married a man, Kocoum; they had a child in 1611. Continued tensions and war between her tribe

¹⁰⁶ Rountree, "Pocahontas," 17-18.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰⁸ Paula Gunn Allen, *Pocahontas: Medicine Woman, Spy, Entrepreneur, Diplomat*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper Press, 2003), 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

and the English and in 1613, Englishman Samuel Argall took Pocahontas hostage.¹¹⁰

Negotiations occurred, but after her father ignored the English's ransom requests, Pocahontas remained in the colony and became subject to English missionary-infused colonial tactics, married John Rolfe, converted to Christianity and took the name Rebecca, and gave birth to a son, 1616. She passed away on the ship returning to Virginia in 1617 at the young age of 21.¹¹¹

While many sources, including but not limited to the American high school history textbook, continue to depict Pocahontas's marriage and adoption of certain European lifestyles as causally related to a period in Jamestown during which U.S./Native American relations were slightly improved, in fact, as Paula Gunn Allen writes, "Pocahontas's marriage symbolized [a] truce...but it did not cause it."¹¹² Therefore, while perhaps Pocahontas's story offers a fascinating lens through which to consider Native American syncretization of European practices, religious beliefs, and lifestyles with Native value systems, Pocahontas was not the Indian princess who *caused* a shift in Native/European relations; rather, she was a *product* of that shift.

Section 3.3: The Sacagawea Myth

Sacagawea, the Shoshone woman who accompanied Lewis and Clark on their expedition across the nation, is a Euro-American icon. Similarly to Pocahontas, all four of the textbooks refer to Sacagawea's life, specifically focusing on her role in the Lewis and Clark expedition. Once again, I will explore the implications of each textbook's treatment of Sacagawea as a person and a supposed heroine, and then look at the points and methods of overlap between the four texts and the themes that emerge from those points.

¹¹⁰ Rountree, "Pocahontas: The Hostage Who Became Famous," 21.

¹¹¹ Paula Gunn Allen, *Pocahontas*, xii.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 23-24.

The American Journey presents Sacagawea by means of a “People in History” insert, a method through which the textbook highlights certain key players that come from or relate to a specific section. The insert includes a painted image of Sacagawea’s full body; she is dressed in what one might assume to be Native American dress. She looks heroic and womanly.¹¹³

Accompanying this image is a brief description of Sacagawea’s life; “[she was] kidnapped by the Hidatsas...[and later] sold to a French Canadian fur trader who married her,” the text reads.

Other information included in this “People in History” section includes that she and her husband were hired interpreters “by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark for their expedition to the Pacific Ocean,” and that she “made herself invaluable...[as she] negotiated purchases of horses, found edible wild plants, and made moccasins and clothing. Clark wrote that her presence alone calmed fears among Native Americans.”¹¹⁴

The American Vision does not include such an extensive description of Sacagawea or her role on the journey. In the body of the text, the authors only briefly indicate her presence; “Along the way,” they write, “they [the ‘Corps of Discovery’ members] met Sacagawea, a Shoshone woman who joined the expedition as a guide and interpreter.”¹¹⁵ Other than this one sentence description, the authors highlight her existence on the journey through a painted image of Sacagawea standing next to Lewis and Clark. The three look off in one direction, assumed to be West, and the drawing sits as a subset to a map titled, “The Louisiana Purchase, 1803.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Journey*, 284.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision*, 170.

¹¹⁶ While I will not treat the maps presented in the four textbooks at this moment as an entity (as was done in the section on the Indian Removal Act of 1830), I feel that it is important to make note of the work that this map in *The American Vision*, as well as the maps in the other three textbooks depicting the Lewis and Clark expedition. The maps in the four textbooks relating to this moment have the following titles: “Louisiana Purchase and Westward Expansion” (*The American Journey*), “Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806” (*The Americans*), “The Louisiana Purchase, 1803” (*The American Vision*), and “The Louisiana Purchase and the Route of Lewis and Clark” (*America: Past and Present*). While the maps differ in look and size (among other characteristics), they all overlap in terms of the method through which the country is labeled. Each map is divided by color categories that signify different

In *The Americans*, the presentation of Sacagawea is slightly different. The picture shown is not of an intended depiction of what she may have looked like, but instead is a blown up image of a the U.S. dollar coin, upon which is an imprint of Sacagawea with her face turned forward and an infant on her back, assumed to be her child. In addition to the picture, recognition of Sacagawea comes later in the text when the authors write that, at one point during the journey, the party became smaller but “added a Native American woman, Sacagawea, who served as interpreter and guide.”¹¹⁷

America: Past and Present also makes no mention of Sacagawea’s personal history, but emphasizes her role as part of the Lewis and Clark expedition even more thoroughly than the other texts. “The effort owed much of its success to a young Shoshoni woman known as Sacagawea,” the authors write. “She served as a translator and helped persuade suspicious Native Americans that the explorers meant no harm.”

As Donna Barbie writes in her article, “Sacagawea: The Making of a Myth,” Sacagawea has been memorialized through histories, paintings, novels, statues, landmarks, and even

“territories.” These territories are labeled – either in a key or directly on the map itself – based on the supposed country of ownership. All four maps include “Louisiana Purchase,” “New Spain or Spanish Territory,” “British Territory or British North America,” and some demarcation indicating the “United States.” In *The Americans*, the United States is just a marked area. In *The American Journey*, the United States is both marked and divided along state lines, and in both *The American Vision* and *America: Past and Present*, the United States is not only divided along state lines, but labeled individually by state with one small section of land labeled as “Indian Territory” (See *The American Journey*, 283; *The American Vision*, 169; *The Americans*, 200; *America: Past and Present*, 191). Generally speaking, John R. Short’s work, *Representing the Republic: Mapping the United States, 1600-1900*, and specifically his commentary on “inscribing the landscape” are particularly applicable to the significations of these maps. As he states, “the surveying of the land created a national landscape...a vast grid was placed across the land that imposed mathematical order across chaotic geography and created a national identity on a newly appropriated land. It was the triumph of geometry over geography” (John R. Short, *Representing the Republic: Mapping the United States, 1600-1900*, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 173). Specifically with regards to this particular moment in history when the United States was expanding its ground, the delineation of land possessed by each nation and resulting visual divisions of the land, indicate a false sense of both understanding and control that colonists in 1803 did not necessarily possess over the “chaotic geography,” as Short writes. In addition to the more general prescriptive land markers, the indication of a small, segmented “Indian Territory” as part of the United States in both *America: Past and Present* and *The American Vision*, imply a sense of resignation on the part of Native peoples at that moment. In *The American Vision* specifically, coupled with an inserted image of Sacagawea as a central figure in the Westward expansion mission, the “Indian Territory” label seems to signify a Native acceptance of European jurisdiction over the continent.

¹¹⁷ Holt; McDougal Littell, *The Americans*, 200.

currency (as *The Americans* highlights).¹¹⁸ What is perhaps most significant about the process of heroine-making that has surrounded Sacagawea, is the fact that, similarly to Pocahontas, we actually know very little about her. What little information is available about Sacagawea's life exists in the pages of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Journals in the form of momentary snippets of observation in which Sacagawea is rarely ever called by her name and most often referred to as "his [her husband's] Squar," "the Indian woman," and the wife of the interpreter.¹¹⁹

There are certain moments in which Lewis and Clark highlight the perceived value of having Sacagawea accompany them. On October 13, 1805, Clark wrote, "The wife of Shabono our interpetr we find reconciles all the Indians, as to our friendly intentions a woman with a party of men is a token of peace."¹²⁰ However, regardless of whether or not Lewis and Clark recognized a sense of value in having Sacagawea with them, based on the journals' descriptions of her character, Lewis and Clark did not perceive of her as more than a pawn in the mission. Sacagawea filled the "ignoble savage" stereotype, lacking intelligence, inherently dirty, and unable to feel and experience the world in expectedly human ways. Example of this stereotyping arise in segments of their entries; the following example is taken from Clark's journal entry from July 28, 1805:

Sah-cah-gar-we-ah or Indian woman was one of the female prisoners taken at that time; tho' I cannot discover that she shews any immotion of sorrow in recollecting this events, or of joy in being again restored to her native country; if she has enough to eat and a few trinkets to wear I believe she would be perfectly content anywhere.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Donna Barbie, "Sacagawea: The Making of a Myth," Perdue, Theda, *Sifters: Native American Women's Lives*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2001), 60.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.; *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*, "Lewis - April 18, 1805"; "Clark- May 8th, 1805"; Lewis - May 29, 1805," (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press,)

http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/read/?_xmisrc=1805-08-17&_xslsrc=LCstyles.xsl; Sacagawea was born sometime about 1788 and was taken captive during an intertribal raid by the Hidatsas.¹¹⁹ She married a French fur trader, Toussaint Charbonneau, and gave birth to a child named Baptist. In the spring of 1805, she and her family accompanied Lewis and Clark's expedition (*The Journals of Lewis and Clark*, "Notes on November 4, 1804").

¹²⁰ Barbie, "Sacagawea: The Making of a Myth," 61.

¹²¹ "Clark - July 28, 1805."

This entry is one of the longest presented in the Lewis and Clark Journals. Disregarding language gaps, cultural differences with regards to experiencing and communicating emotion, Clark's words pigeonhole Sacagawea. Many of the other entries involving Sacagawea merely mention her with some version of her name.

From this arises an intriguing and critical question: if the only information about Sacagawea can be found in Lewis and Clark's Journals, and even those sources describe Sacagawea infrequently and paint her as an ignoble savage, *why* does Sacagawea appear on the face of circulation coins, in books, and on paintings? Why does she appear on doll faces, as statues, and on movie screens? And why does her picture and story – highlighting her supposedly bold and nurturing character – appear in all four of the American history textbooks?

Section 3.4: Appropriating Sacagawea's Presence

Donna Barbie speaks to this question, stating, "scholars have often ventured beyond notations in the journals to find meaning in her life and actions."¹²² She continues, "two factors account for the genesis of the Sacagawea legend and for its lasting importance. Inextricably linked to national myths, the legend personified the United States' sacred history and justified continental expansion."¹²³ Sacagawea, the Shoshone woman herself, is therefore lost in the story of the "epic American journey"; she exists as a synonym for "frontier traditions," symbolizing (for mainstream national consciousness) a forged connectivity between Indianness, manifest destiny, and the American dream.¹²⁴ Norman K. Denzin, in his article, "Sacagawea's nickname,

¹²² Donna Barbie, "Sacagawea: The Making of a Myth," 61.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

or the Sacagawea problem,” illuminates the deeply penetrating issues associated with this forged connectivity, made possible by Sacagawea’s presence:

Herein lies Sacagawea’s problem. She can only be recognized from within [a] white male mythology and its signifying apparatuses. This mythology celebrates conquest, and submission. It requires a Native Indian princess who is willing to be complicit with America’s sacred male narratives concerning the frontier, democracy and the inevitable march of civilization across the virginal, violent west.¹²⁵

Thus, Lewis and Clark’s perception of Sacagawea, as well as Sacagawea herself, remains irrelevant, for she exists today as statues and coins and beautiful paintings not as a replica but as an enduring and distorted shadow of herself, appropriated and reappropriated for Western purposes. In the textbook, this purpose is connected to the ever-present themes related to Westward expansion; the mythical Sacagawea character depicts Native American women as being not only complicit in expansion, but also endorsing Western ideas of progress and aiding in colonization of the continent.

This enduring nature of the Sacagawea legend is thus inexplicably linked to the enduring nature of the values to which it speaks. As Barbie highlights, it is for this very reason that the legend has been borrowed and used as a manufactured beacon of hope, to address social issues affecting Euro-American women including “women’s suffrage, miscegenation, and modern feminism.”¹²⁶

Section 3.5: The Problems with Heroine Legend-Making

While it might seem that the very fact that the textbook works to create heroines from persons like Pocahontas and Sacagawea is, in and of itself, recognition of the value of Native peoples more generally, this assumption is false. As Sleeter writes, “adding famous people may

¹²⁵ Norman K. Denzin, “Sacagawea nickname, or the Sacagawea problem,” (*Qualitative Research* Vol. 7, No. 103, 2007), Accessed January 3, 2014, <http://qrj.sagepub.com/content/7/1/103>, 124.

¹²⁶ Barbie, “Sacagawea: The Making of a Myth,” 62.

offer role models, but it does so without questioning ‘the story’s larger themes of freedom, equality, and opportunity’”.¹²⁷ Pocahontas is portrayed as “sexy, but virginal, adjunct to Captain John Smith,” and Sacagawea as the “earth mother embedded in a timeless western landscape”; these images are not role models, but rather, skewed representations that help to create and sustain national narratives.¹²⁸ The textbooks do not only omit aspects of both the Pocahontas and Sacagawea histories, but also to alter, distort, minimize, and embellish on other parts of those histories, in order to effectively construct the expected national narratives.

Additionally, one must ask the critical question: for what reason are these two women the expected characters in the heroine-making role call? Is it because they, as Native women, served as leaders in their communities, represent qualities that were valued or continue to be valued by their peoples, led resistance movements or stood up for what they believed? Or is it because the legends we have created around them serve to highlight Western ideals, to create a rubric by which a Native person is deemed righteous or good in mainstream American history? Based on the sheer lack of other exemplary Native women in the American high school history textbook, and the predominance of American man-made legends in their place, I would argue the latter.

¹²⁷ Sleeter, *Un-Standardizing Curriculum*, 87.

¹²⁸ Paula Gunn Allen, *Pocahontas*, 12; Denzin, “Sacagawea nickname,” 124.

Chapter 4: The Bigger Picture

The question that arises from these issues relating to the textbook is, therefore, *why*? In the textbook, *why* is “prehistory” an acceptable way to describe centuries of human life on this continent? *Why* are nations of people defined by means of their eating habits and housing structures? *Why* is Columbus, a documented killer and founder of the slave trade, painted as this nation’s first and greatest hero? *Why* are millions of Native peoples erased from maps and, instead, replaced with European paintings of the Pilgrim arrival? *Why* do the discourses utilized in these episodes seek to simultaneously define Native peoples as a thing of the past and relegate them to the margins of history? And, in a more all-encompassing sense, *why* does the textbook present a skewed and biased version of American history?

The answers to these questions cannot and should not be simplified to a one-sentence response; there exist a vast number of sociopolitical, economic, and historical, and individual factors that interplay to create the currently accepted story of America. However at the core of these factors is a process of justification; through centering European-American peoples and values and therefore devaluing practically everything else, the textbook participates in a nationalistic attempt to justify the past five hundred years of American colonization and imperialism.

Justification is not history. And for this reason, history is the only discipline that is expected to be retaught after high school. The textbooks “almost never use the present to illuminate the past [and] seldom use the past to illuminate the present.”¹²⁹ They “suppress causation,” create and present myth as fact, and present an image of America that falsely

¹²⁹ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 1.

assumes the inferiority of anyone who is *not* the white Euro-American man. As James Loewen writes in his text, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*,

If textbooks allowed for controversy, they could show students which claims rest on strong evidence, which on softer ground. As they challenged students to make their own decisions as to what probably happened, they would also be introducing students to the various methods and forms of evidence – oral history, written records, cultural similarities, linguistic changes, human blood types, pottery, archaeological dating, plant migrations – that researchers use to derive knowledge about the distant past.¹³⁰

This is the sort of textbook that should be in every high school classroom; one that does not seek to teach a student *the* truth, but rather, *a* truth, and then provides that student with the tools with which he or she can ask the right questions and derive meaningful knowledge from any and every historical texts that he or she may come across.

This is, of course, deeply complicated by a slew of other issues – namely, the standardization movement in education. However, with the access to and presentation of a multiplicity of alternative and supplementary sources that offer some of the many voices that are silenced, twisted, or ignored in what is currently the most widely accepted teaching tool for high school history classrooms, the American high school history textbook, perhaps the high school history classroom could provide a foundation for the development of insightful, compassionate, and, perhaps most importantly, critical lifelong history learners.

¹³⁰ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 37.

Part Two: A North American History of Decolonization: Native American Women

Introduction

The next three chapters of this work are a segment of what I hope will be a long-term academic project. I aim to create a quasi-textbook for a mainstream American high school history course that is centered on Native American women, titled, "A North American History of Decolonization: Native American Women." The textbook's content will span over five centuries, a number of places, and a variety of tribes; the three chapters I have chosen to complete and present as part of this project will concentrate on the Iroquois Confederacy, the Indian boarding school project of the late 19th and early 20th century, and some of the pan-Indian movements of the past four decades. My goal is to take what Sleeter defines as "a transformative approach to curriculum design...changing the canon, paradigms, and basic assumptions of the curriculum and [enabling] students to view concepts, issues, themes, and problems from different perspectives and points of view," and to use that approach to revisit moments in American history while keeping Native American women at the forefront.¹³¹

My decision to center Native American women was made intentionally. As was mentioned in the Introduction to Part One, the primary reason for which I made this decision was to create a work that would give voice to those peoples who have been effectively silenced by the historiographical methods of today's most widely adopted textbooks. As Sleeter highlights, while textbooks have eliminated outwardly sexist language, most include drastically more focus on men than on women. "Topics in texts, particularly in social studies, derive from male more than female experiences, and issues of sexism both today and historically are virtually ignored.

¹³¹ Sleeter, *Un-Standardizing Curriculum*, 89.

In texts in which females have a major presence, females of color tend to be stereotyped.”¹³²

Another, equally as consequential reason for which I decided to center Native American women is tied to what experts on multiculturalism in the classroom highlight as the key concepts of a multicultural or multiethnic curriculum: culture, race, ethnicity and other related concepts, socialization, prejudice, discrimination, race, racism, ethnocentrism, values, perception, historical bias, power, social protest and resistance, among many others.¹³³ Studying the unique history of Native American women on this continent creates a space for the critical pedagogy and, in turn, a context within which students (and teachers) can begin to consider and complicate nearly all of the above concepts.

The chapters will reflect a contemporary, mainstream textbook form, with regards to the layout and structure. However, based upon the analyses presented in Part One, this textbook will diverge from the mainstream American history textbook in a number of crucial ways. To begin, while the moments that are presented in this text fall sequentially on the timeline of American history, the methods through which I explore these moments defy the expectations that history ought to be studied in a purely linear manner. Instead, I aim to not only offer the reader descriptions of what occurred, but to create thematic connections across time and place. Each chapter will include information that situates the moment at hand in a larger, cross-cultural context. This leads me to the next point of divergence between my text and the widely adopted, mainstream textbooks: my intentions. While I do not have any information about mainstream textbook writers’ personal goals for their creations, I have the luxury of specificity (and the ability to work outside of the textbook industry’s expectations); therefore, my intentions can be

¹³² Sleeter, *Un-Standardizing Curriculum.*, 86.

¹³³ These experts in multicultural curricula include Christine Sleeter, Sonia Nieto, and James A. Banks. See James A. Banks, *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies*, 7th ed., (Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon Press, 2003), 58 for a more detailed list.

explicit. In other words, I am not required to create a one-text version of history on this continent and, so, I do not! This text is intended as a starting point for more extensive, critical conversations about not only the histories of Native American peoples on this continent, but also about that which I hope comes across throughout the following three chapters: to truly study human history on this continent, one cannot rely on the history of this nation-state, as, regardless of the veritable efforts of those who aim to write that history as accurately as possible, there will inevitably be voices missing.

Similarly to the critical analyses of the American high school history textbook presented in Part One, I recognize that there are a number of complications, limitations, and issues that affect my work in Part Two. Thus, I aim to give a clear explanation for why I chose these specific moments and this specific method for approach this part of my project. This is not meant to be a comprehensive history of Native American women over the past five hundred years, nor do I hope that this text will replace some of the more widely adopted text materials in high school history classrooms. Rather, I chose these three “moments” as, both individually and collectively, they serve a specific purpose. Individually, each moment is indicative of Native women’s significance, persistence, and resistance in changing contexts, and, as a collective, from these three moments emerge patterns of both continuance and adaptation, inherently pushing back against the textbook’s presentation of Native peoples as one-dimensional victims of American history.

I will begin this part with a quote by Neal Salisbury, a historian and Professor at Smith College, from his text, “The Indians’ Old World: Native Americans and the Coming of Europeans.” “A growing body of scholarship by archaeologists, linguists, and students and students of Native American expressive traditions recognizes 1492 not as a beginning but as a

single moment in a long history utterly detached from that of Europe,” he writes.¹³⁴ This first chapter aims to begin that recognition of pre-Columbian history on this continent, through highlighting one specific, democratic, complex system of gendered governance.

¹³⁴ Neal Salisbury, “The Indians’ Old World: Native Americans and the Coming of Europeans,” Mancall, Peter C. and James H. Merrell, Eds., *American Encounters: Natives and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal: 1500-1850*, (New York, New York: Routledge, 2000), 4.

Chapter 5: The Iroquois Confederacy

Section 5.1: Introduction

While centuries of history telling have perhaps indicated otherwise, Europeans did not discover America. In fact, when European arrived to this continent, it was, as Neal Salisbury writes, “teeming with several million people.” These people were not primitive, nor were their societies undeveloped as early colonists believed them to be. These assumptions extended from the colonists’ lack of knowledge about Native American peoples and a belief in **EuroAmerican Exceptionalism**.¹³⁵

As Daniel K. Richter highlights in his book, *Before the Revolution: America’s Ancient Pasts*, “in both North America and Western Europe, new, often brutal cultural syntheses emerged during the Middle Ages to codify the distinctive forms of power that men and women wielded toward one another and toward the natural world, only to enter a period of crisis when the climate cooled.”¹³⁶ At the turn of the fifteenth century, as Richter writes, Western Europe saw “gradual transformation of medieval monarchies into Early Modern kingdoms and, eventually,

¹³⁵ EuroAmerican Exceptionalism did not appear or develop in a vacuum. Rather, the foundation for this belief in European superiority is historically grounded. Perhaps most consequential are the religious and labor-related roots of European Exceptionalism, stemming from the 15th century and affecting people in both the Americas and Africa. As statement in the Lowcountry Digital History Project from the College of Charleston, “Fifteenth-century Iberian [Iberian meaning peoples inhabiting the Iberian peninsula] legal traditions regulated Christians’ treatment of Jews, Muslims, and other Christians, clearly delineating, for example, who was enslaveable and who was not” (Lowcountry Digital History). In 1452 and 1455, Pope Nicolas V issued a series of papal bulls (or authenticated charter issues by a Pope of the Catholic Church) that essentially defended the Portuguese’s right to enslave, take land from, and even kill sub-Saharan Africans as a Christianizing tactic. Excerpts of the original papal bull from 1455 was translated from Latin to English by Frances Gardiner Davenport in his text “European Treaties bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies to 1648” (See Lowcountry Digital History: African Laborers for a New Empire: Iberia, Slavery, and the Atlantic World). The papal bull gave the Portugese the right “to invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery” (Davenport, “European Treaties,” from Lowcountry Digital History). In the early 16th century, the encomienda system of governance was put it place; the system granted conquistadors (the colonists from the Portuguese and Spanish empire) control over Native people in the Americas. The encomienda system was maintained for the purpose of having a labor force of Native American people (Lowcountry Digital History).

¹³⁶ Daniel K. Richter, *Before the Revolution: America’s Ancient Pasts*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 12.

nation states,” leading up to the beginning of European expansion.¹³⁷ In the desire for land, money, and other resources, tangled with a sense of European and Christian superiority, colonists called upon religiously and philosophically founded justifications for **colonization**. They named this continent the “new world,” when – for the millions of Native peoples on this land – the continent was anything but new. While the rise of the nation-state began to reshape the order of life on the Western side of the Atlantic, on the Eastern side, complex systems of governance that were already in place continued to shape social, economic, and political life on this continent. To better understand these systems, let us look at one particular group of tribes and their democratic system that formed many years before the arrival of the colonists: The Haudenosaunee.

Fascinating Factoid

While the term “Iroquois” refers specifically to the now six nations that are part of the Confederacy, the term “Iroquoian,” is used to describe a language. “Iroquoian” is spoken by not only those six nations, but also a number of other nations including, the Huron and Cherokee.

Section 5.2: The Haudenosaunee

The Haudenosaunee, called the “Iroquois” by Euro Americans, are an alliance of peoples originally from five tribes – the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca nations – who together formed what is known as the Iroquois League or the “Great Peace.”¹³⁸ After 1722, a sixth

nation joined – the Tuscaroras – and the League remains as such today. Representatives from each nation in the League are chosen (in a process that will be further explicated later on); these representatives meet as a Grand Council, and make decisions for the tribes that affect political, social, and economic aspects of all communities.

¹³⁷ Daniel K. Richter, *Before the Revolution: America's Ancient Pasts*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 58.

¹³⁸ William N. Fenton, “Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making,” in Jennings, Francis, William N. Fenton, Mary A. Druke, and David R. Miller, eds., *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League*, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 15.

Section 5.3: The Founding of the

Haudenosaunee League

According to Haudenosaunee tradition, the founding of the League came through the work of a prophet, Dekanawida, who brought a message called the Great Law of Peace to the nations. Dekanawida provided instructions for the formation and practices of the Confederacy, "endowed it with symbols, and supported it with ritual sanctions," enlisting the help of a man named Aionwatha and a woman named Jigonsaseh, who became the speaker to the men and the speaker to the women, respectively.¹³⁹ Anthropologists and historians do not have access to any records of Dekanawida's arrival; however, the efforts of Dekanawida and others like Aionwatha and Jigonsaseh have been passed down through **oral tradition**, and remain integral to the Haudenosaunee's understanding of their own past. Simplified, and based off the work of anthropologist William A. Fenton, "seen as an historical discourse, [the story of the founding] is comprised of three main parts." The parts concern Dekanawida's arrival and initial work, the

A Pause for Critical Thought

Euro American historians, archaeologists, and other scholars have spent decades and even centuries attempting to "date" the founding of the Iroquois League. While contemporary historians agree that the League formed before European arrival, some scholars believe that while written descriptions of the League extend as far back as the 1600s, other forms of evidence indicate that the found was actually closer to the late 1400s (Fenton, 16). Still others, including social scientists, Barbara Mann and Jerry Fields, have recently presented different findings; using a combination of sources, data from solar eclipses, and, perhaps most importantly, Iroquois oral history, they date the Confederacy's founding at around 1142, placing the League as the "oldest continuously functioning democracy on earth (Johansen, 62-63)."

These changing Euro American interpretations of the Iroquois past speaks to an issue that scholar William Fenton puts forth: "the search for historical depth and continuity of political institutions is limited by the perceptions of persons who wrote the early sources" (Fenton, 4). How can history change or be altered based on who is recording or who is telling it?

¹³⁹ Fenton, "Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making," 15; Barbara Alice Mann, *Iroquoian Women: The Gantowisas*, 116.

“conversion of local chiefs to the cause of peace,” and the “principles of the League – its internal structure and rituals.”¹⁴⁰

The story of Dekanawida’s arrival has, therefore, been passed down through generations of Haudenosaunee peoples. A man named J.N.B. Hewitt, born to a mother of the Tuscarora nation and raised on the Tuscarora **Reservation** near Lewiston, New York, and worked as a linguist and an **ethnographer** who focused in Iroquoian languages, attempted to record one telling. This specific telling was done by the then chief of the Reserve of the Six Nations in Ontario, Canada, named Skanawáti, as he gave his account in 1888. The chief’s dictation was in Onondaga-Iroquoian tongue; Hewitt originally recorded the account as it was spoken, and then translated it into English to be published in 1892.¹⁴¹

One passage from this telling, a supposed quote from Dekanawida himself, speaks to that which is at the foundation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and may help an outsider understand both its significance and its implications in terms of Haudenosaunee cultural values. “There must be only one kind of blood in us. At times there will be nothing but peace;

but it is not certain that there may not be one man somewhere among us who will bleed on account of just deeds; it must happen to all alike; we all must likewise bleed. This is in accordance with what we have completed (as to the rules of our Law),” Dekanawida stated.¹⁴²

While it is crucial to remain critical when studying a text that has been translated from its

Up for Discussion

What might the problems be with the process of translation that it took for us to be able to read the quote from Dekanawida and with the time lapse between when Dekanawida spoke and when the text was published?

Analyze Dekanawida’s quote above, thinking about the attributes he wants to see in the Confederacy. Explain what you find as well as where and how you see those attributes presented in the quote.

¹⁴⁰ Fenton, “Structure, Continuity, and Change,” 15.

¹⁴¹ J.N.B. Hewitt, “Legend of the Founding of the Iroquois League,” In Tooker, Elisabeth Ed., *An Iroquois Sourcebook: Volume 1, Political and Social Organization*, (New York, New York: Garland Publishing Inc.), 1985, 131.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 145.

original spoken tongue, certain values that remain at the foundation of the Haudenosaunee League and individual nations – namely **kinship**, unity, respect, and **reciprocity** – can certainly be extrapolated from this and other quotes recorded by Hewitt.

Section 5.4: A Glimpse of Haudenosaunee Society

The Haudenosaunee peoples across the five original tribes shared and continue to share certain values and **philosophies** that both shaped and were shaped by the structure of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and other political, social, and economic systems in place. Much of these systems were deeply influenced by certain key culturally defined concepts that were and continue to be greatly important to the Haudenosaunee people: sequence, duality and reciprocity, continuity, equality, and unity.¹⁴³ This is certainly not to say that the Haudenosaunee peoples were or are impervious to inequality; it is important to remember that the five (and then six) tribes who made up the Confederacy were and are made up of human beings who were not perfect, but who shared value systems that shaped their experience in the world.

With regards to gender, Haudenosaunee men and women took on distinct, yet equally important roles and jobs in their everyday lives. Man and woman relied upon one another, balanced one another with their work; respect was reciprocal. The basic structure of Haudenosaunee society can be understood as units of kinship that build upon one another to

Fascinating Factoid:
“Haudenosaunee”
translates to mean
“people of the
longhouse.”

create the whole. Each of the five nations in the League was divided into what anthropologists call two moieties, meaning two kinship groups that together made up the tribe. The moieties were namely useful for spiritual reciprocity purposes; if a tribe were to have an

¹⁴³ Fenton, “Structure, Continuity, and Change,” 4.

organized sporting event or a burial, the two groups would either play against or work for one another, maintaining a certain balance. The moieties were then divided into two or more clans, named after different animals or birds; the clans “acted together, referring to one another as siblings.”¹⁴⁴ Each clan had and continues to have a Clan Mother, an honor that is passed down; the Clan Mother hold the power Chief for the clan.¹⁴⁵ The clans can be “broken down” into at least one maternal family or lineage, “the building blocks of the social system.”¹⁴⁶ A Haudenosaunee settlement was made up of a cluster of between 30 and 150 longhouses, which were home to extended matrilineal families.¹⁴⁷

For many Native tribes, including those outside of the Haudenosaunee, there exists a “female divine spirit, a cosmology that position Native women in prominent and respected positions.”¹⁴⁸ This cosmology affects more than religion, however. The Haudenosaunee tribes, for example, have always been **matrilineal**; thus, kinship and descent were traced through the mother’s ancestry. Ascending the matrilineal line, the oldest living woman was and is considered the “matriarch” and the final voice in social or political matters affecting the family.¹⁴⁹

The value placed upon women’s roles extended well beyond the familial sphere. With regards one’s political self, the mother figure held a certain significance to any and every gender; as Devon A. Mihesuah, Choctaw historian and author, writes, “Generally speaking, matrilineal clans within societies determined one’s political alignment; furthermore, one received his or her

¹⁴⁴ Fenton, “Structure, Continuity, and Change,” 10.

¹⁴⁵ “What is the Confederacy,” Haudenosaunee Confederacy: League of Nations, Accessed December 29, 2013, <http://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/whatisconfederacy.html>.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 9-10.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴⁸ Devon Abbott Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism*, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 42.

¹⁴⁹ Fenton, “Structure Continuity, and Change,” 10.

social and political rights from clan membership. Because a person's clan was determined by his or her mother, women possessed much political and social power."¹⁵⁰

Section 5.5: What Does the Confederacy Do?

Since its founding, the Confederacy has remained a method of "[uniting] the nations and [creating] a peaceful means of decision making...to live in harmony [through] blending "law, society, and nature [as] equal partners."¹⁵¹ Since the Confederacy is a form of representative government for the six tribes, it has changed and adapted to the times. Today, some of the key points of jurisdiction are as follows: "The Great Law, lands, treaties, international relationships, citizenship, installation of Chiefs, ceremonies, [and] justice/law" affecting the nations more generally.¹⁵² The Confederacy continues to meet at a Longhouse in the Onondaga nation; as the Fire Keepers, the Onondaga begin and end all councils.¹⁵³

Section 5.6: Haudenosaunee Women and the Confederacy

One of the most explicit outlet through which the value of Haudenosaunee women in their societies was exemplified was through the Clan Mothers' duties. Clan Mothers "had the right to choose successors to office among the eligible men in their clans."¹⁵⁴ As Devon Mihesuah elaborates, the Clan Mothers, therefore, were choosing the "tribal leaders that in turn represented the tribe on the Grand Council. [Additionally, they] controlled and divided the agricultural goods, declared and halted war, oversaw burials, and affirmed the agreements

¹⁵⁰ Fenton, "Structure Continuity, and Change," 10.

¹⁵¹ "What is the Confederacy?", 1.

¹⁵² "Confederacy's Role," Haudenosaunee Confederacy: League of Nations, 1.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Nancy Shoemaker, "The Rise or Fall of Iroquois Women," (*Journal of Women's History*, Vol.2, No. 3), 1991, 40.

between the Iroquois Confederacy and the European powers.”¹⁵⁵ Hundreds of accounts from early Jesuits, written as early as the 16th century, indicate a high level of respect with regards to Haudenosaunee women.

One account, written by the Jesuits in French during the 17th and 18th centuries titled *Les Relations de Jésuites*, or *The Jesuit Relations: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit*

Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791, quotes one man as stating that women have “beaucoup d’*autorité*,” which translates to: “a lot of authority.”¹⁵⁶

A translation from the same compilation of Jesuit observations includes a later section in which a Jesuit states, in reference to a particular woman, “Women of this rank are much respected; they hold councils, and the Elders decide no important affair without their advice.”¹⁵⁷

A Pause for Critical Thought
While one cannot rely on the words of colonists or missionaries at face-value for understanding the Haudenosaunee social or political ways of being, records from newcomers like that of the Jesuits offer a unique lens for looking at Native societies. For what reason might the Jesuits be writing? For whom might they be writing?

Contemporary historians do not have access to definitive written records that, from a European perspective, offer evidence that speaks to the powerful role that the Haudenosaunee women played *before* the arrival Europeans. Therefore, there exists some debate about the degree to which Haudenosaunee women held political power in the centuries before European arrival.

Some scholars, such as European American legal scholar Roger Keesing, simply state that “we cannot confidently assess the political role of Iroquois women prior to European

¹⁵⁵ Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women*, 44.

¹⁵⁶ *Relations des Jésuites contenant ce qui s’est passé de plus remarquable dans les missions des pères de la Compagnie de Jésus dan la Nouvelle-France*, (1610-1791; Augustin Côté, 1858).

¹⁵⁷ Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed. And trans., *Les Relations de Jésuites, or The Jesuit Relations: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, (New York: Pageant Book Company, 1959), LIV: 281.

contact” without access to written records.¹⁵⁸ Others take a different approach; Nancy Shoemaker, historian and Native American Studies scholar, for example, argues that too much weight has been placed on the power that Haudenosaunee women had before contact. Shoemaker pushes back against what she refers to as a “declension narrative history,” or a history founded upon the “decline” of Haudenosaunee women’s power. This narrative, she states, is built around the belief that before contact, Haudenosaunee women had the *most* power, and that that power has since dissipated.¹⁵⁹

Shoemaker’s argument seems to stem from a concern regarding the dangers of idealizing the role that Haudenosaunee women played before colonization; that process of idealization, her argument implies, can be equally as damaging as refusing to consider that Native women have ever held power. Others argue that any scholar’s inability to state with confidence that Haudenosaunee women held authority in political and social spheres before colonization stems from a refusal to look at sources and information that are outside of the **Eurocentric** frames. For example, Barbara Alice Mann, member of the Ohio Bear Clan Seneca, writes, “through oral traditions, ‘we’ are perfectly able to assess the political role of Iroquoian women prior to European contact, and with a high degree of confidence.”¹⁶⁰ Mann highlights some aspects of that political role:

The *gantowisas* enjoyed sweeping political power, which ranged from the administrative and legislative to the judicial. The *gantowisas* ran the local clan councils. They held all the lineage wampum, nomination belts, and titles. They ran the funerals. They retained exclusive rights over naming, i.e., the creation of new citizens and the installation of public officials. They nominated all male sachems as well as all Clan Mothers to office and retained the power to impeach wrongdoers. They appointed warriors, declared war, negotiated peace, and mediated disputes.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Robert Keesing, “Case 21: Iroquois Matriliney and the Power of Women,” in Mann, Barbara Alice *Iroquoian Women*, 124.

¹⁵⁹ Shoemaker, “The Rise or Fall of Iroquois Women,” 39-40.

¹⁶⁰ Mann, *Iroquoian Women*, 124.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 117; Mann defines *gantowisas* in her first chapter: No-Face Husk Doll. “An Iroquoian equivalent of ‘woman’ is *gantowisas*, yet the term conveys more than woman. She is political woman, faithkeeping woman,

Mann develops each of these facets of the *gantowisas* political power. She continues by highlighting the significance of the Clan Mother's Council and the clans more generally, stating that the clans themselves, run by women, were "the glue holding the multinational League together," and that this fact has long been "diligently avoided" by EuroAmerican scholars.¹⁶²

Does Shoemaker's defiance of the declension narrative stem from an avoidance or lack of consideration of oral sources, as Mann seems to argue? Or is Mann's firm belief in the sweeping political power of the *gantowisas* an idealization? I tend to think that both are correct, but other historians and scholars continue to disagree.

Up for Discussion

Scholars' beliefs regarding the extent of Haudenosaunee women's power before European arrival vary greatly. What factors do you think would influence a historian? What does this say about studying not only the history of Native peoples, but also history more generally?

Section 5.7: Haudenosaunee Women and Euro-American Women Suffragists

While this chapter has focused mainly on the experiences and roles of Haudenosaunee women before the arrival of Europeans, those women, those experiences, and those roles did not simply vanish at the beginning of colonization. While, undeniably, the Haudenosaunee peoples have been forced to adapt to the presence of European systems that symbolically began with the arrival of Columbus, the integral role that Haudenosaunee women played before that arrival did not disappear. In fact, that powerful role that the Haudenosaunee women continued to play in the early 19th century, actually greatly influenced and shaped white American women suffragists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Lucretia Mott, and therefore, the white women's suffragist

mediating woman; leader, counselor, judge...Her official capacity was public in every way...*Gantowisas*, then, means Indispensable Woman" (Mann, *Iroquoian Women*, 16).

¹⁶² Mann, *Iroquoian Women*, 118.

movement in the United States. "All three suffragists personally knew Iroquois women," as Sally Roesch Wagner, women's rights historian and author, states, "the Native American conception of everyday decency, nonviolence, and gender justice must have seemed the promised land."¹⁶³

The women's heroines that continue to be recognized for the human rights work that they did and incited, therefore, were inspired not simply by a vision of a world they had never experienced, but rather, by a vision of a world that was in front on them. They caught a "glimpse of the possibility of freedom because they knew women who lived liberated lives, women who had always possessed rights beyond their wildest imagination" – Haudenosaunee women.¹⁶⁴

Post Chapter Activities

List three things that you learned about Haudenosaunee peoples that were new, that surprised you, or that you had questions about.

Read this quote from the contemporary Native scholar, writer, and activist, Devon Abbott Mihesuah and answer the following questions:

"Though recorded treaties of the Haudenosaunee have been preserved from as early as 1642, and there are references to even earlier negotiations, their significance has been obscured by European and Euramerican assumptions that Indians had no "real" governments and that the tribes were negligible in the conflicts of empires."

--Devon Abbott Mihesuah, Oklahoma Choctaw scholar (In Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism)

What is the main argument that Mihesuah makes? To what, exactly, is she referring?

In light of this Chapter, what is your opinion on the "Euramerican assumptions that Indians had no "real" governments and that the tribes were negligible in the conflicts of empires?"

What does the phrase "history should be about questions, not about answers" mean to you, in light of this chapter focusing on Haudenosaunee women?

¹⁶³ Wagner, Sally Roesch. "Is equality indigenous? The Untold Iroquois Influence on Early Radical Feminists," (*On the Issues*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Jan. 31, 1996), Accessed December 30, 2013.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

Chapter 6: Native American Boarding Schools

"My mother had never gone inside of a schoolhouse, and so she was not capable of comforting her daughter who could read and write."—Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl"¹⁶⁵

Section 6.1: The Boarding Schools, An Introduction

For many white Americans, the term "boarding school" might bring up images of fresh cut grass, large, finely crafted academic buildings, dining halls and dorm rooms, and fond memories of a middle or high school home away from home. For many Native American peoples who grew up in the early 20th century (or who had parents, grandparents, or other relatives who grew up during that time), however, the words associated with that same term are quite different. For this population, "boarding school" might evoke terms like "trauma," "separation," "rebellion" and "resistance." This dramatic difference in word association stems from a deeply violent history of U.S. government/Native American relations.

Since the intrusion of European peoples on this continent, Native peoples have been subjected to various colonizing tactics, ranging from **missionary** presence to economic and social warfare to outright physical violence. While each of the above tactics wore a different mask, all were aimed at reaching the same end goal: a termination of Nativeness. Beginning at the end of the 19th century and continuing through the beginning of the 20th century, these tactics were manifested into residential school program, initially run by missionaries and supported by the government. Created specifically for Native American children, these boarding schools were used as a tool for **assimilation** policy, with the specific intention of Europeanizing Native children in every way possible and through whatever means necessary. As Brenda J. Child, Red

¹⁶⁵ Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," (The Online Archive of Nineteenth-Century U.S. Women's Writings, Glynis Carr, Ed., Winter 1999), Accessed February 5, 2014, <http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/gcart/19cUSWW/ZS/SDIG.html>, 9.

Lake Ojibwe and descendent of boarding school students writes in her book, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families 1900-1940*, “the boarding school experience spanned several generations and affected dozens of tribes in the United States and Canada.”¹⁶⁶

The following sections of this chapter will focus on the history and development of the Indian boarding school project, the experiences of specific students at those schools, and the methods through which Native American peoples resisted and continue to resist the deep and far-reaching effects of the system, specifically highlighting the experience of female-identifying people in that resistance. Because the American Indian boarding school system was a **systematic** form of **oppression** that spanned this continent, affecting not only the Native American tribes in what is now the United States of America but also the First Nations peoples of Canada, this American history chapter will include peoples, voices, and individuals from across North America.

Section 6.2: A Brief History of the Boarding School Project

The United States’ employment of Western education as a tool for assimilation was by no means unique to the Indian boarding school project. The Spanish, for example, created a boarding school in Havana, Cuba as early as 1568, hoping to transform indigenous peoples,

Fascinating Factoid

After the American Revolution (around 1780), George Washington and Thomas Jefferson both agreed that Native American children should receive a European education, adopt white culture, and fully assimilate, order to be “useful” members of white American society (Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, 9).

whom they viewed as savages, with a European form of education.¹⁶⁷ With regards to the history of the boarding school projects in the United States, governmental and missionary sponsored

¹⁶⁶ Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 8.

education projects were used as early as the 16th century to indoctrinate Native American youth with European values, systems of thought, and religious and culture ideologies. As Russell Thornton, Professor of Sociology and specializing in American Indian affairs, states, “early seventeenth-century European plans for the education of Native Americans included not only mission schools but colleges. The objectives were basically the same; the colleges sought to train an elite group of natives who would then teach their own people ‘civilization and salvation’.”¹⁶⁸ In the mid-seventeenth century, for example, Harvard created an “Indian College,” and in 1723, William and Mary opened the Brafferton Building to “house Native American Students.”¹⁶⁹ As Thornton highlights, Native Americans did not particularly desire this European version of education; “according to Benjamin Franklin,” he writes, “the Iroquois declined a 1744 invitation from the Virginia government to send six young men to William and Mary.”¹⁷⁰ The response was as follows:

“Several of our young people were formerly brought up at the Colleges...; but, when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a Deer, or kill an Enemy, spoke our Language imperfectly,... were totally good for nothing... However... if the Gentlemen of Georgia will send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take great Care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make *Men* of them.”¹⁷¹

Up for Discussion

What is your reaction to this quote from Benjamin Franklin's writings (in which he shared the Iroquois response declining Virginia's offer to send six young Iroquois men to William and Mary)? In what ways might this affect your understanding of the term “education”? Can “education” be subjective, or mean different things depending on the people defining it?

¹⁶⁷ Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences: Introduction: Origin and Development of the American Indian Boarding School System*, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 4.

¹⁶⁸ Russell Thornton, *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 80.

¹⁶⁹ Thornton, *Studying Native America*, 81.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ From Albert Henry Smyth, ed., *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 10: 1789-1790, (New York, New York: Macmillan, 1907 [1784], 98-99,) in Thornton, *Studying Native America*, 81.

Despite such reactions from Native communities, EuroAmerican use of European forms of education as a means for assimilation continued.

The late 19th century saw a marked push in assimilation efforts, affecting not only Native peoples but also all those who were considered outside of the mainstream American society, including the increasing waves of mainly European immigrants and African Americans, among others. As David Tyack, Thomas James, and Aaron Benavot write in their book, *Law and the Shaping of Public Education, 1785-1954*, “as the United States became more urban, industrialized, and heterogeneous in its population and values in the late nineteenth century, politically powerful WASP groups concluded that they must find new ways to enforce traditional social controls once exercised informally in smaller and more homogeneous communities.”¹⁷² The increasingly heterogeneous nature of American society resulted in new waves of assimilation movements, for example, the adoption of the compulsory (or required) public education policies and various residential school programs, which included the Indian boarding school project.

The [systematic] boarding school experiment for Native American students began after one Lieutenant Richard Henry Pratt, believing in the necessity of a Western education, created a “civilization program” for the “Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, and Kiowa prisoners who were incarcerated at Fort Marion in Saint Augustine, Florida.”¹⁷³ Lieutenant Pratt’s program consisted of a combination of academic schooling and vocational training; this educational experiment became the foundation of the boarding school system, one that he hoped would, as he stated,

¹⁷² David Tyack, Thomas James, and Aaron Benavot, eds., *Law and the Shaping of Public Education, 1785-1954*, (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 155.

¹⁷³ Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 5.

“feed the Indians to our civilization.”¹⁷⁴ After the prisoners were released from Fort Marion, Pratt went on to found the Carlisle school in 1879, one of the most notorious of the residential schools.

Pratt’s boarding school quickly became an archetype as other boarding schools opened with a similar purpose. In 1886, the government published the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior. An excerpt from this report, a quote from John B. Riley, Indian School Superintendent, read as follows:

However excellent the day school may be, whatever the qualifications of the teacher, or however superior the facilities for instruction of the few short hours spent in the day school is, to a great extent, offset by the habits, scenes and surroundings at home — if a mere place to eat and live in can be called a home. Only by complete isolation of the Indian child from his savage antecedents can he be satisfactorily educated, and the extra expense attendant thereon is more than compensated by the thoroughness of the work.¹⁷⁵

Riley’s statement reflects the government’s position with regards to the boarding school system; it was for this reason that by 1899, twenty-five residential schools were in operation in the United States.¹⁷⁶

Section 6.3: Inside the Boarding Schools

The boarding and residential schools of the United States and Canada were not exactly the same, nor were the experiences of individual students (even at the same school) exactly the same. Therefore, it is extremely difficult and perhaps unjust to generalize the boarding school experience because “students, teachers, and administrators contextualize the experience in many varied ways.”¹⁷⁷ However, based on the primary sources available – specifically, letters between children and their parents, journals and memoirs written by people who experienced boarding

¹⁷⁴ Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 3.

¹⁷⁵ Charla Bear, “American Indian Boarding Schools Haunt Many,” *NPR*, May 12, 2008, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16516865>.

¹⁷⁶ Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 5-6.

¹⁷⁷ Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 17.

and residential schools across North America – many of the schools shared a conceptual framework, and there are certain thematic similarities that emerge from many children’s and parents’ accounts of the experience.

The violence of the boarding school experience began as soon as Native American children were forcibly removed from their homes and brought to the schools. **Coercion** was often used, and while many parents fought back, refusing to let their children go, reservation police responded with force.¹⁷⁸

Once students were brought to the boarding school, the process of removing layers of Native American identity began immediately and in a very physical sense. “School superintendents, teachers, matrons, and disciplinarians often stripped the children and took their clothing, blankets, ornaments and jewelry. School officials bathed the children and cut their hair “to kill the bugs”...[which] began the process of taking away the child’s outward appearance as an Indian person.”¹⁷⁹ Luther Standing Bear, a student at Carlisle, described this process; “at Carlisle the transforming, the ‘civilizing’ process began. It began with clothes. Never, no matter what our philosophy or spiritual quality, could we be civilized while wearing the moccasin and blanket.”¹⁸⁰ Students, both boys and



Figure 1: Tom Torlino, a student at the Carlisle School, before and after his time as a student. Courtesy of Denver Public Library X-32984, X-32985

¹⁷⁸ Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 17.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

¹⁸⁰ Standing Bear, *Land of the Spotted Eagle*, 231.

girls, were dressed in military-style uniforms and forced to walk, train, and live in a military manner.

At many of the boarding schools, the next step involved renaming. "For reasons both practical [in terms of pronunciation difficulties] and symbolic, government school policy-makers insisted that tribal children abandon their traditional Indian names...symbolically, the casting off of the Indian name and the assumption of a "Christian" name was the first sign that "civility" had indeed touched the savage."¹⁸¹ Standing Bear was required to select a name from a "list written on the blackboard." "I did," he wrote, "and since one was just as good as another, and as I could not distinguish any difference in them, I placed the point on the name Luther."¹⁸²

Students were also required to speak English at all times; "We had been forbidden to speak our mother tongue, which is the rule in all boarding-schools," wrote Standing Bear, "the language of a people is part of their history."¹⁸³

This "erase and replace" strategy was also explicitly violent in many cases; with regards to life at boarding schools more generally, students were simultaneously anglicized, neglected, and abused. "When students spoke their own languages, lied, used obscene language, fought, stole, destroyed property, acted stubbornly, or



Figure 2: A group of Apache students at Carlisle, before and after arrival.

John N. Choate/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

¹⁸¹ Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 28-29.

¹⁸² Standing Bear, *Land of the Spotted Eagle*, 232.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

misbehaved, teachers, disciplinarians, matrons, and superintendents could inflict corporal punishment or imprison the child.”¹⁸⁴ Physical abuse was commonplace; students were whipped, confined to stockades, publicly humiliated, starved, and forced to remain in or clean unsanitary environments. Physical and emotional violence came hand-in-hand with the neglectful environment fostered by the boarding schools; malnutrition and disease were rampant. At some schools – for example, at Flandreau Indian School in South Dakota – many of the students were underweight. The lack of proper nutrition, combined with the heavy labor that students were required to do during the day as part of their programs, compromised immune systems and exacerbated disease transmission at the schools. One former boarding school student at the Sherman Institute, Viola Martinez (Paiute), recalled that “tuberculosis was very common,” and “it seemed to me there were always real sick children in the hospital.”¹⁸⁵ Viola visited home only once during her time at Sherman in order to bring her cousin back to the reservation in his casket.¹⁸⁶

Up for Discussion

1. *What do you think we can gain by focusing our historical research on the sources written by the students who experienced the boarding schools? Why are primary documents important in studying this moment in history? What are the complications or issues that might arise from relying on individual students' accounts?*
2. *Based on the mission of the schools, why do you think the schools refused to allow the students to return home for periods of years?*

As Brenda Child highlights in her work on the boarding schools, perhaps the worst sicknesses were not physical, but mental and emotional; “The most common malady experienced by children in boarding school,” writes Child, “was homesickness.” She continues, “their loneliness was compounded by harsh boarding school policies that strictly regulated visits

¹⁸⁴ Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 21.

¹⁸⁵ Diana Meyers Bahr, *Viola Martinez, California Paiute: Living in Two Worlds*, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 53.

¹⁸⁶ Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 20.

home.”¹⁸⁷ It was not just the students that were affected by this deep forced separation; the parents of students who were kept away from home, sometimes for years, were also deeply impacted. The Indian agents who served as the liaisons for the parents and their children were also, at times, blatantly unresponsive to parental concerns.

Section 6.4: Resistance from Within

While it is critical to recognize the multi-generational effects of the violence inflicted upon the Native communities who were subjected to the boarding school system, perhaps equally critical is the need to recognize that Native peoples were not passive victims of European policies. It is for this reason that scholars Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc write in the Introduction to their book, *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences*, that “among North American Indians, the boarding school system was a successful failure.”¹⁸⁸ Native American children who were forced to attend the boarding and residential schools in the U.S. and Canada *were* deeply affected and defined by their experiences, but in a manner that was directly opposite of the government’s intentions in sending them to boarding schools in the first place. The schools failed in their mission to “assimilate completely Indian children.”¹⁸⁹

Resistance to the effects of the boarding schools (and the schools themselves) – from both the children in attendance and their families – began, for many children, during the years that they were actually attending the schools. Firstly, the very act of remaining in contact with one another when the school’s very purpose was to separate students from their families was an act of resistance. “Schooling imposed a new and unwelcome distance on Indian family

¹⁸⁷ Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 43.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

relationships, but letters reveal that parents and other relatives were uncompromising in their determination to be involved in many aspects of their children's lives...[thus, while] government policy severely restricted visits home during the early boarding school era...communication between students and their families was steady and strong.¹⁹⁰ These lasting connections rendered the governmental goal of complete separation of students from their Nativeness impossible to complete.

Perhaps the most common form of resistance from within the boarding schools was attempted escape; defying the civilizing process that was supposed to be occurring within the walls of the schools, many Native students of both genders took it upon themselves to run away. Because the girls were "granted fewer privileges than boys, [they] were more likely to be chaperoned on their outings from campus."¹⁹¹ Thus, while both boys and girls attempted escape, Native girls had a more difficult time remaining hidden from townspeople. The explanations that many of these students gave reflected the many problems that existed inside the schools, including poor nutrition, neglect, homesickness, and abuse. The communities of these students had varying reactions; while Native communities were "often sympathetic to the plight of boarding school runaways," some parents were concerned about their children's safety as potential escapees. Still, other communities *fully* supported this individualized form of resistance. In other words, "for some Indians, [for example,] like the residents at Sisseton-Wahpeton [Reservation in South Dakota], fostering deserters became a viable form of protest against a substandard school."¹⁹²

While they occurred less frequently than individualized forms of resistance, there were certainly some moments of communal resistance. For example, in 1912 the Haskell students

¹⁹⁰ Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 27.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 91.

petitioned the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington, requesting that their school be closed. Seven years later, again at Haskell, a physical and violent rebellion occurred, during which property was destroyed, and the principal was threatened. After the rebellion, four boys were expelled for their destructive behavior and five girls were expelled for their mere participation.¹⁹³

Section 6.5: The Closing of the Boarding Schools: Is the end really the end?

In the 1920s, the federal government commissioned an investigation of the government-issued policies affecting Native American peoples; following this investigation, "The Problem of Indian Administration" report was released, informing the public of its findings that "children at federal boarding schools were malnourished, overworked, harshly punished, and poorly educated."¹⁹⁴ Excerpts from the report included the following statements:

*"The survey staff finds itself obliged to say frankly and unequivocally that the provisions for the care of the Indian children in boarding school are grossly inadequate."*¹⁹⁵

*"The term 'child labor' is used advisedly. The labor of children as carried on in Indian boarding schools would, it is believed, constitute a violation of child labor laws in most states."*¹⁹⁶

*"The diet is deficient in quantity, quality, and variety."*¹⁹⁷

"Inadequate" was really an understatement for the "wounding effects of residential schooling [and boarding schools] on contemporary Native individuals, families, and communities throughout Canada" and the United States, respectively.¹⁹⁸ Maggie Hodgson, Métis

¹⁹³ Child, *Boarding School Seasons.*, 94.

¹⁹⁴ Charla Bear, "American Indian Boarding Schools Haunt Many: The Problem of Indian Administration."

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Sam McKegney, *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School*, (Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2007), 32.

scholar, writes, "those of our people who have difficulty adjusting, who are in jail, who are alcoholics, who suffer from poor self-esteem, are actually reflecting the effects of the Canadian government's residential school policies."¹⁹⁹ Hodgson does not imply that the residential schools in Canada or the boarding schools in the United States are the sole causes of the extremely high rates of suicide, imprisonment, alcoholism, domestic violence, and depression, in many Native communities today. Rather, she highlights the key role that the residential schools played as a culmination and concentration of the negative effects of colonialism on Native communities; the era followed a history of oppression, "dispossession, relocation, missionary intervention, and governmental control."²⁰⁰ The residential and boarding schools worked to solidify in many Native peoples that which had been implied through the Europeanizing policies of colonization leading up to the mid-20th century: an internal belief that Native peoples, culture, language, tradition, and life, were somehow less significant than those of European peoples. The boarding schools simply made that intention and those processes explicit.

A Pause for Critical Thought

Read the following quote from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation Handbook, 2nd Edition.

"Inter-generational or multi-generational trauma happens when the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation. When trauma is ignored and there is no support for dealing with it, the trauma will be passed from one generation to the next. What we learn to see as "normal", when we are children, we pass on to our own children.

Children who learn that physical and sexual abuse is "normal", and who have never dealt with the feelings that come from this, may inflict physical abuse and sexual abuse on their own children. The unhealthy ways of behaving that people use to protect themselves can be passed on to children, without them even knowing they are doing so"

The experiences of the boarding school era continue to affect Native communities through inter-generational trauma.

¹⁹⁹ Maggie Hodgson, "Rebuilding Community after the Residential School Experience," in *Nation to Nation: Aboriginal Sovereignty and the Future of Canada*, Diane Engelstand and John Bird, eds., Concord: Anasi Press, 1992), 109.

²⁰⁰ McKegney, *Magic Weapons*, 33.

Section 6.6: Continued Resistance: A Focus on Native American Female Survivors

Due to their comparative lack of rights, Native American girls who were subjected to the boarding school experience were faced with perhaps an even more difficult situation with regards to opportunities for resistance. Punished more severely for any noticed participation in communal resistance and more easily recognized as escapees, Native girls were forced to overcome not only the explicit racism of the boarding schools, but also the deeply sexist nature of the institution.

Just as the damaging effects of the boarding school violence continued (and continue) long after the closing of the physical sites, so too does indigenous resistance to those effects continue. While this form of emotional scarring certainly could have produced an irreversibly negative effect on Native students, many “students [instead] used the potentially negative experience to produce a positive result” after finishing their time at the boarding schools, namely, “the preservation of Indian identity, cultures, communities, languages and peoples.”²⁰¹ Thus, many survivors **appropriated** the failed mission of the governmental schools, taking that which they learned from their experiences in order to affirm their identities as Native peoples. “Ironically, [the schooling] provided new skills in language, literature, mathematics, and history...many children attending boarding schools returned home or moved to urban areas where they embraced their American Indian heritage in a heightened manner, communicating their strength in being the First Americans in ways that preserved Indian identity.”²⁰²

While resistance efforts originate from both Native men and women, Native women’s resistance requires deep and focused attention. Native women resist from a place of twofold marginalization, as they have been marginalized both by race and by gender. Their experiences,

²⁰¹ Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 1.

²⁰² Ibid.

and continued struggle have been under-recognized; they offer a unique gendered lens through which to look at the boarding school era, reflecting what Gerald Vizenor, scholar from the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, White Earth Reservation, terms “survivance,” a combination of survival and continuance.²⁰³

One method through which Native peoples, including many Native women, have sought to resist the continued damaging effects of the boarding school era, is through language. In writing about their experiences in and reflections on the boarding or residential school era, female Native writers are not only able to bring to light the “reality of residential school oppression and abuse,” but also are able to *engage* with that reality, reflect on it, and then write about what it means, for them, specifically, for their community, or for indigenous peoples, more generally, to move forward. In essence, literature, of all forms, allows them to envision a future through engaging with the past; it is a process of healing. One example of this type of writing comes from a woman, Rita Joe, of the Mi'mkaq peoples of Canada, who attended Shubenacadie Residential School in Nova Scotia. Joe's autobiography, *Song of Rita Joe*, takes the Western autobiographical approach, but infuses it with poetry and Native-centered methods of thinking and writing. She uses a “positive outlook” method, engaging with the trauma she experienced in early childhood and at the boarding schools, while still recognizing the positivity she saw and felt throughout.²⁰⁴ Poetry is mixed in with simple prose, pain and anger is mixed in with a recognition of what she gained from her experiences. One of her poems included in the book, “I Lost My Talk,” speaks to her experience at Shubenacadie school, being force fed a language that was not her own. The poem, purposefully written in English so as to reach a broader audience, is

²⁰³ Roberta Stout and Sheryl Peters, “kiskinohamâtôtâpânâsk: Intergenerational Effects on Professional First Nations Women Whose Mothers are Residential School Survivors,” (*Prairie Women's Health: Centres of Excellence for Women's Health*, August 2011), 2.

²⁰⁴ McKegney, *Magic Weapons*, 106, 126.

one of Joe's most vivid moments in the text, and yet, her use of poetry, her thoughtful prose, and her non-alienating tone opens up the possibility for hope and change on this post-boarding school continent.²⁰⁵

Joe is by no means the only female Native survivor of the boarding schools who used writing as a tool for pushing back against the effects and continuing of colonial violence. Writers like her "inspire change with [their] defiance of the colonial narratives of assimilation," and challenging of the expected post-colonial narratives of victimhood.²⁰⁶ As Sam McKegney writes, "residential school survival narratives are written from *within*, redefining what it means to inhabit an Indigenous identity 'within' disparate contemporary Indigenous communities."²⁰⁷

A Pause for Critical Thought

I Lost My Talk

*I lost my talk
The talk you took away
When I was a little girl
At Shubenacadie school.
You snatched it away;
I speak like you
I think like you
I create like you
The scrambled ballad, about my
word.
Two ways I talk
Both ways I say,
Your way is more powerful.
So gently I offer my hand and
ask,
Let me find my talk
So I can teach you about me.
--Rita Joe, The Song of Rita Joe*

***Section 6.7: A Case Study in Native American Women's Resistance to the Boarding School
Tactics and Effects: Zitkala-Sa (or Gertrude Bonnin)***

Another Native American female writer who emerged from the boarding schools was Zitkala-Sa, who later also went by Gertrude Simmons Bonnin after she was renamed by a missionary and eventually married a Sioux man named Ray Bonnin. A Yankton Sioux born in 1876 on a Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, Zitkala-Sa attended the White's Manual Institute, a Quaker missionary school in Wabash, Indiana, for a period of three years beginning

²⁰⁵ McKegney, *Magic Weapons*, 128-129.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 182.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

when she was twelve years-old.²⁰⁸ In 1900, she wrote a short autobiographical account of her experiences at the boarding school titled, "The School Days of an Indian Girl." The text offers descriptions of certain key moments throughout her experiences as a student as well as her reflections on those experiences.

"The School Days of an Indian Girl" affirms certain practices that were described by other Native boarding school goers who also wrote about their experiences. For example, one section of Zitkala-Sa's text describes the period of time immediately after her arrival at school and the practices of physical and psychological Europeanization that took place. One specific part of this section describes the fear and anger that Zitkala-Sa felt when she learned that her hair would be cut:

Our mothers had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy. Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards! We discussed our fate some moments, and when Judéwin said, "We have to submit, because they are strong," I rebelled. "No, I will not submit! I will struggle first!" I answered.²⁰⁹

This moment in Zitkala-Sa's text, along with a handful of others, is indicative of two crucial characteristics of the boarding school experience: it offers insight into the experience of a child on the receiving end of assimilation tactics, and it sets a precedent for Zitkala-Sa's lifetime of resistance to those tactics, both inside and outside the walls of the school. With regards to the insight that this particular section offers, Zitkala-Sa's words offer reasoning for why so simple as a haircut was detrimental. She explains that which she had learned from her mother: that having "short" or "shingled" hair signified a number of undesirable things in the context of Sioux cultural beliefs and practices. Throughout the rest of the text, Zitkala-Sa describes other

²⁰⁸ Roseanna Hoefel, "Zitkala-Sa: A Biography," (*The Online Archive of Nineteenth-Century U.S. Women's Writings*, Glynis Carr, Ed., Winter 1999), Accessed February 19, 2014, <http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/gcarr/19cusww/zs/rh.html>.

²⁰⁹ Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," 4.

instances during which the boarding school's disregard and disrespect for both her and other student's belief systems and practices led to confusion, tension, and fear. These instances occur – through exchanges that Zitkala-Sa has and those she witnesses – when issues related to cultural – linguistic and religious – differences arose.

In addition to offering insight into the effect of certain methods of assimilation, the scene also foreshadows Zitkala-Sa's continued resistance, both during her time in school and in the years that followed. In reference to the moments after the school leaders found her hiding under the bed, Zitkala-Sa wrote, "I remember being dragged out, though I resisted by kicking and scratching wildly. In spite of myself, I was carried downstairs and tied fast in a chair. I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit."²¹⁰ This statement, "then I lost my spirit" is both powerful and deeply saddening; however, based on the many moments that Zitkala-Sa described in the rest of her text, during which she continued to resist in both subtle and obvious ways, "I lost my spirit" did not mean that she lost her will to resist.

Up for Discussion

Read the following from Zitkala-Sa's text, "The School Days of an Indian Girl." In this quote, Zitkala-Sa was attempting to explain how it felt to be home during the summers.

"Even nature seemed to have no place for me. I was neither a wee girl nor a tall one; neither a wild Indian nor a tame one. This deplorable situation was the effect of my brief course in the East, and the unsatisfactory "teenth" in a girl's years" (9).

What do you think Zitkala-Sa means considering the context within which this quote was written?

Zitkala-Sa defied that which was expected of her as a boarding school student, and more specifically, a female boarding school student. When she began to grasp more of the English language, she used that knowledge and power to her advantage; "As soon as I comprehended a

²¹⁰ Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," 4-5.

part of what was said and done,” she wrote in reference to the English that her teachers spoke, “a mischievous spirit of revenge possessed me.”²¹¹ When asked to “mash the turnips” for a meal, Zitkala-Sa took the orders literally and mashed the turnips so forcefully that she shattered the jar. “As I sat eating my dinner, and saw that no turnips were served, I whooped in my heart for having once asserted the rebellion within me.”²¹²

These moments of individualized resistance are significant in considering Zitkala-Sa’s experience, not because of the immediate effect that they had on the boarding school, but rather, because they collectively challenge the notion that Native children who went to governmental boarding schools acquiesced to the Europeanizing and Christianizing agenda. With regards to Zitkala-Sa’s life more specifically, these smaller acts of resistance during her boarding school years were only the beginning of her fight against **cultural dislocation** and injustices related to colonialism.

Zitkala-Sa became a violinist, an educator, a scholar, and a politically-minded activist. In a similar fashion as Rita Joe, she used English as her chosen tool through which to write and speak for reform. As Roseanna Hoefel, biographer of Zitkala-Sa, explains, Zitkala-Sa “became an earnest bridge builder between cultures, using language as a tool to forge an identity.”²¹³

Zitkala-Sa made her story and her opinions public beginning in the early 20th century; she wrote about the feelings of alienation and homelessness that stemmed from her experiences at the boarding school and about her critical view of the government’s treatment of Native peoples in

²¹¹ Zitkala-Sa, “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” 6.

²¹² Ibid. See “The School Days of An Indian Girl,” pp. 6-8, for more specific examples of Zitkala-Sa’s moments of rebellion at boarding school. Another example includes her description of learning about the devil: “I hear the paleface woman say that this terrible creature roamed loose in the world, and that little girls who disobeyed school regulations were to be tortured by him” (Zitkala-Sa, 7). That night, she had nightmares about the devil and took action the next day. “On the following morning I took my revenge upon the devil. Stealing into the room where a wall of shelves was filled with books, I drew forth The Stories of the Bible. With a broken slate pencil I carried in my apron pocket, I began by scratching out his wicked eyes. A few moments later, when I was ready to leave the room, there was a ragged hole in the page where the picture of the devil had once been” (8).

²¹³ Hoefel, “Zitkala-Sa: A Biography.”

her community and more generally. She was the first Native American woman to write her story “without the aid of an editor, interpreter, or ethnographer.”²¹⁴

She later committed herself fully to activist work, serving as a clerk at Standing Rock Reservation, and later, working as the secretary for the **Society of American Indians**. In 1916, after moving to Washington D.C. with her husband, she worked as the secretary and editor of *American Indian Magazine*, lectured publicly, and continued to publish other works.²¹⁵ In part because of what Hoefel describes as Zitkala-Sa’s “tireless advocacy of improved education, health care, resource conservation, and cultural preservation,” President Hoover appointed two **Indian Rights Association** representatives to the **Bureau of Indian Affairs**. In 1930, she founded the **National Council of American Indians** and acted as President until she passed away in 1938.

Zitkala-Sa’s story exemplifies, in both a literal and symbolic manner, the strength of resistance that emerged from the boarding schools. While the boarding school practices were intended to render Native peoples the objects of an assimilation agenda, many boarding school veterans like Zitkala-Sa emerged, instead, as active agents of social and political change.

Fascinating Factoid
In 1902, Zitkala-Sa published an essay titled, “Why I Am a Pagan,” as a push against the assumption that all Native American peoples were making the decision to convert to Christianity. (See Hoefel, “Zitkala-Sa: A Biography”).

Writing and political activism were certainly not the only methods through which Native women (and men, certainly) have worked towards survivance for themselves and their communities in the last century. Many women became active pro-education believers, insisting that their children receive an education that looked nothing like that which they received. Others focused on building and maintaining close, meaningful, intergenerational relationships. And still

²¹⁴ Hoefel, “Zitkala-Sa: A Biography.”

²¹⁵ Ibid.

others channeled their energy towards creating successful and worthwhile careers. As the daughter of a survivor explains, “I think that my mom taught me that in her life – that she was really determined to be here because there are so many things in her life that told her that she shouldn’t be here, all the abuse that she went through. So I think that’s a really beautiful, beautiful gift that she gave me. I didn’t learn that in therapy, I learned that from her.”²¹⁶

In other words, while the boarding school system was certainly in many ways a devastating product of the 20th century colonialist agenda, through their own determination and resiliency, regardless of the chosen outlets, many survivors of the system have taken and used their experiences and the tools offered to them through a Western education as a means through which to reaffirm cultural ties and fight for political justice. And in some communities, as the valuable progenitors of future generations of Native peoples, female survivors have become role models of cultural survival for many, inspiring a will for cultural and political sovereignty and rights in their children and others.²¹⁷

216 Stout and Peters, “kiskinohamâtôtâpânâsk,” 55.

217 See Stout and Peters “kiskinohamâtôtâpânâsk” for further reading on this subject.

Post Chapter Activities

1. List three things that you learned about the boarding school era and its effects that were new, that surprised you, or that you had questions about.
2. Return to page 64 and reread the poem by Rita Joe, "I Lost My Talk." Then answer the following questions:
3. To whom do you think Joe is writing? What do you think she means when she states "your way is more powerful"? If this is a poem of resistance, why do you think Joe decided to write the poem in English, the language of the colonizer?
4. Read the following passage by a female survivor (in Stout and Peter's, "kiskinohamâtôtâpânâsk," 69).

"It's about the reclaiming and claiming, to be healthy at the end, feeding my spirit. I know one thing, when you're on a spiritual journey, it's so wonderful. So wonderful to wake up and realize that as women we are so much like Mother Earth. We're suffering just like Mother Earth is suffering. But if we can do the healing maybe we can make changes and help people understand that Mother Earth needs healing too. The abuse has to stop there too.

A couple of weeks ago, about a month ago I was given a women's drum. It's a ceremonial drum. A young lady had a dream about me two days in a row and brought this drum and gave it to me. And in that dream, she said the name of that drum is 'walking in a good way on Mother Earth.' That drum is for our women to heal, for women to come back to ceremony. For Mother Earth also, for the abuses that are happening to Mother Earth, for us to do what we can as individuals to make that change. If individuals can do it, if enough of them do it, then change can happen and I truly believe that. And healing can happen, for us and our mothers and Mother Earth because we're all like Mother Earth, each and every one of us. Mother Earth has trees with arms and we have arms...the water is her veins. As soon as we start respecting that, and knowing that then we can move on to our healing and our dreams and our higher purposes on this Earth."

What did you take away from these paragraphs, with regards to the movement towards resistance and healing highlighted in this chapter?

How does she suggest that Native peoples push back against the effects of inter-generational trauma and violence?

Chapter 7: Contemporary Native American Activism

The Occupation of Alcatraz and Idle No More

"We are still here, my mother has always said that." – Kanyon Sayer-Roods, Ohlone, Artist²¹⁸

Section 7.1: Introduction to Native American Activism

Native American peoples have been active agents in resisting the effects of colonization since the arrival of Europeans on this continent. Despite the general absence of Native American peoples from contemporary mainstream American histories, including those presented in some of the most widely adopted textbooks in public schools today, Native American peoples are not only still around; they are also the progenitors of multi-communal and multi-national movements for social justice and civil rights.²¹⁹ In fact, the past fifty years have produced a number of Native-led, noteworthy activist movements among Native peoples from across the country, continent, and globe.

This chapter will focus specifically on two different protests and movements: the Red Power Movement and the Idle No More Movement, taking specific note of the role that Native women have played in founding and continuing the movements through the present moment. These two movements are neither all encompassing nor representative of the movements, protests, or individual acts of resistance that have stemmed from Native communities over the past fifty years. However, while having occurred decades apart and in disparate locations, these two movements are indicative of the continuance and growth of Native activism and resistance,

²¹⁸ See Stout and Peters "kiskinohamâtôtâpânâsk," 55.

²¹⁹ See Part I of this project for an in-depth analysis of four of the most widely adopted textbooks in the United States, as determined by the American Textbook Council's 2013 study: *The American Journey* (middle school), *The Americans* (high school), *The American Vision* (high school), *America: Past and Present* (advanced placement high school).

and highlight, specifically, the crucial role that Native women played and continue to play in these efforts.

Section 7.2: The Red Power Movement

The 1960s saw an eruption of a pan-Indian identity movement. Named the **Red Power Movement** by Vine Deloria Jr., the movement was established in the summer of 1961 when Native American students came together in New Mexico and founded the National Indian Youth Council.²²⁰ The goal? To make “activism a part of the greater intertribal fight to preserve Native culture, uphold treaty rights, push for self-determination, and promote tribal sovereignty.”²²¹

The Red Power Movement did not come out of nowhere. As Joane Nagel, political and cultural sociologist who specializes in Native American activism (among other things), writes in her book, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power*

Fascinating Factoid

*One of the most crucial protests that took place in the early stages of the Red Power movement was a “fish-in.” As Bradley G. Shreves describes in his text, *Red Power Rising*, the fish-in stemmed from the 1963 State v. McCoy case, after “the arrest of a Swinomish Indian who had been fishing along the Skagit River using a six-hundred-foot-gillnet.” The court gave “regulatory power to [Washington State’s] Game and Fish Department...the judge declared [that] it did not matter that the defendant was a member of a tribe that had signed a treaty guaranteeing the right to fish at usual and accustomed places.” The response was astounding; Native fishers drove to Washington to respond to the ruling. Then, they began to fish, despite the restraining orders and eventual arrests that followed (See Bradley G. Shreves, *Red Power Rising*, 125-126).*

and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture, “the 1960s was a time of political and cultural flux in American society...for America’s ethnic minorities it was a time to cast off negative stereotypes, to reinvent ethnic and racial social meanings and self-definitions, and to embrace

²²⁰ Bradley G. Shreve, *Red Power Rising: The National Indian Youth Council and the Origins of Native Activism*, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 3-4.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 119.

ethnic pride.”²²² The black civil rights movement, second-wave feminism, the Red Power Movement: all of these collective reclamations of identity-centered rights emerged in parallel with one another.

As Nagel states, therefore, “the social and demographic changes planted by decades of federal Indian policy found fertile soil in the political and social cultural landscape of civil rights-era America.” The Red Power movement even “borrowed from civil rights organizational forms, rhetoric, and tactics but modified them to meet the specific needs and symbolic purposes of Indian grievances, targets, and locations.”²²³

So how, exactly, did the Red Power Movement manifest itself in terms of Native American activism? This question takes us to a small island off the coast of San Francisco, California.

Section 7.3: The Occupation of Alcatraz

*“We will no longer be museum pieces, tourist attractions and politicians’ playthings. There will be no park on this island, because it changes the whole meaning of what we are here for.” – John Trudell, New York Times, April 9, 1970*²²⁴

Today, Alcatraz Island is most well-known for having been home to a federal penitentiary. While the prison was ordered closed in 1963 due to economic and environmental issues, for twenty-nine years some of the most notorious criminals in history were its occupants.²²⁵ Following the closing of the prison’s doors, however, another type of occupation

²²² Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 122.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 130.

²²⁴ Wilma Mankiller and Michael Wallis, *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People: An Autobiography by the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation*, (New York, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 196.

²²⁵ “Alcatraz Island,” National Park Service, Accessed January 10, 2014.

<http://www.nps.gov/alca/historyculture/us-penitentiary-alcatraz.htm>

took place: an occupation by Native American peoples, from 1969-1971, who aimed to reclaim the land from the federal government.

The basis for this occupation of Alcatraz in 1969, stemmed from a smaller and briefer occupation in 1964. This occupation, carried out by six men of the Lakota peoples (one of the seven related Sioux tribes), had its foundations in a treaty made between the Sioux nation and the United States in 1868. The treaty, titled the Treaty of Fort Laramie, among many other things, contained a provision that allowed “any male Native American older than eighteen whose tribe was party to the treaty to file for a homestead on abandoned or unused federal property.”²²⁶ After the federal penitentiary on the island closed in 1963, the Sioux expected that the treaty to be upheld and the land to be returned to their nation. When this did not occur, the smaller occupation began.

Fascinating Factoid

A central aspect of the Alcatraz Occupation was humor. For example, in the “Proclamation for the Indians of All Tribes” presented by Adam Fortunate Eagle, the occupiers offered to pay \$24 for the island. Where did this price come from? The number was a humorous reference to the supposed amount that the Dutch paid Native peoples to purchase Manhattan (See Hoxie’s “Alcatraz, Occupation Of,” 14).

While, as Frederick Hoxie, scholar and contemporary professor of American Indian Studies states, the federal government “treated the occupation [in 1964] as a joke,” it “set the precedent” for the occupation that followed five years later and lasted for nineteen months, from November 20, 1969 to June 10, 1971.²²⁷ This occupation, while justifiable

through the Treaty at Fort Laramie, was planned in reaction to the **termination and relocation policies** that began in the 1950s. The occupation began with 79 Native peoples, who referred to themselves as “Indians of All Tribes,” included “students, married couples and six children.”

This initial group sailed to the island despite the Coast Guard’s efforts to prevent the launch, and

²²⁶ Mankiller, *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People*, 191.

²²⁷ Frederick E. Hoxie, “Alcatraz, Occupation of,” *Encyclopedia of North American Indians*, Houghton Mifflin, 1996. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost (accessed January 23, 2014), 13.

over the course of the next year and a half, was followed by many other waves of Native peoples who joined the occupation. There were moments when the population reached about one thousand people.²²⁸

Adam Fortunate Eagle, leader of the Bay Area United Council, and Richard Oakes, a Native student at the San Francisco State University at the time, were two of the notable leaders of the movement. Despite the federal government's efforts to block the goings and



Figure 3: A group of Native peoples waiting for the ferry to bring them to Alcatraz island.
The National Park Service

comings of people to and from the island, as well as their continued threats, the occupiers remained.

When the government instructed the groups to leave within 24 hours at the beginning of the occupation (with accompanying threats), for example, Richard Oakes responded with the following message:

We invite the United States to acknowledge the justice of our claim. The choice now lies with the leaders of the American government - to use violence upon us as before to remove us from our Great Spirit's land, or to institute a real change in its dealing with the American Indian. We do not fear your threat to charge us with crimes on our land. We and all other oppressed peoples would welcome spectacle of proof before the world of your title by genocide. Nevertheless, we seek peace.²²⁹

Up for Discussion

John Trudell, one of the Alcatraz occupiers, spearheaded the broadcasts from the island to KPFA/Berkeley and KPFK/Los Angeles. Why do you think these broadcasts began? How do you think this and the other forms of publicity affected the protest?

228 "Alcatraz Is Not An Island: The Occupation, 1969-1971," PBS (with itvs and KQED), 2002, Accessed January 23, 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/itvs/alcatrazisnotanisland/occupation.html>; Mankiller, *A Chief and Her People*, 191.
229 Hoxie, "Alcatraz, Occupation of," 14; "Alcatraz Is Not An Island," PBS.

This powerful request for “real change” by the occupiers was accompanied by specific, more concrete goals. One, for example, was to “establish an educational and cultural center in the abandoned prison.”²³⁰ Despite food and water supply shortages and constant attempted intervention from the U.S. government, the occupiers created a center for life. They established a council, democratic processes for decision-making on the island, constructed a school space in which adults were able to teach traditional skills, began publishing broadcasts and newsletters, and attracted people from the entertainment industry for support and solidarity purposes.²³¹

The occupation of Alcatraz ended in 1971, after a series of difficult – and, in a few instances, tragic – events. In 1970, Richard Oakes’s stepdaughter fell to her death on the island, and only months later, a fire on the island raised controversy. As conditions worsened on the island, the government cut off all electrical power and water supply, and an increase in drug-use and violence on the island diminished support on the mainland. On June 11, 1971, a group of government officers arrived on the island and forcibly removed the last protestors off of the island.²³²



Figure 4: A group of Native peoples stand in front of graffiti during the occupation of Alcatraz. Vince Maggiora, photographer

²³⁰ Hoxie, “Alcatraz, Occupation of,” 14.

²³¹ Ibid. 13-14.; “Alcatraz Is Not An Island,” *PBS*; Lapin and Hanna, “1969 Alcatraz takeover ‘changed the whole course of history,’” 1.

²³² Ibid.

Section 7.4: Women and the Movement, the "Occupation" Continues

Native American women have been deeply involved in the growing activist movements of the past fifty years since the beginning. "Like their forebears in the Society of American Indians, the American Indian Federation, and the NCAI, women played a pivotal role in the [National Indian Youth Council] - the organization's initial first and second vice presidents were women, as were five of the ten founding members."²³³ Additionally, sexism was simply not an issue; Karen Rickard, a Tuscarora woman and one of the members of the group, reasoned, "perhaps the lack of sexism was due to the strong matrilineal traditions of many Native peoples, which led to a respect for women not found in non-Native organizations."²³⁴

Women not only played crucial administrative and leadership roles in the early years of the organization; they also effectively led and continued many powerful protests. While Richard Oakes and Adam Fortunate Eagle are the two most famed leaders of the occupation of Alcatraz, many women held equally crucial roles on the island. Holding and maintaining the traditional caretaker role, Native women were at the heart of the occupation. Women such as Wilma Mankiller, the first female chief of the Cherokee nation and others served as noteworthy leaders in the occupation, emerging from the island and taking on other highly effective activist and leadership roles. Wilma Mankiller described the occupation as a sort of liberation:

I, too would become totally engulfed by the Native American movement, largely because of the impact that the Alcatraz occupation made on me. Ironically, the occupation of Alcatraz - a former prison - was extremely liberating for me. As a result, I consciously took a path I still find myself on today as I continue to work for the revitalization of tribal communities.

Another crucial figure in the movement (and one of the first occupiers), Dr.

LaNada War Jack (Bannock), reflected on the occupation by stating, "we wanted the

²³³ "Alcatraz Is Not An Island," *PBS*; Lapin and Hanna, "1969 Alcatraz takeover 'changed the whole course of history,'" 1.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

government to know that we wanted them to follow their laws...Alcatraz was the rock that hit the water."²³⁵

The empowering and life-altering nature of the occupation was not reserved to the female leaders; many Native American women who participated in the occupation describe the experience as having had a similar effect on their lives and the lives of their families. A recently filmed documentary titled "If She Can Do It, You Can Too: Empowering Women Through Outdoor Role Models: Women of Many Nations," interviews women who participated in the occupation, or who had female relatives who participated. Their responses to questions about the occupation, the greater Red Power movement, and their own experiences are particularly illuminating with regards to not only the effect that the occupation had on **pan-Indianism**, but also on Native Women's empowerment.

One woman, Yvonne Sawn, a Sinixt Activist, responded, "Alcatraz was a catalyst that made me do some self-searching, and I found my spirituality in that time...it's an extra responsibility to be a woman, a caretaker."²³⁶ The concepts that Sawn's response evokes through this response – womanhood, family, self-affirmation and discovery – are mirrored in the responses of women from a number of different nations. For example, Linda Aranaydo, a Muscogee Creek family physician explained, "I think the most important lesson that I learned from Alcatraz is that if you don't have a place for family and community, then you make one."²³⁷

²³⁵ Dr. LaNada War Jack from Miho Aida, "If She Can Do It, You Can Too: Empowering Women Through Outdoor Role Models: Women of Many Nations, Video," January 1, 2011. <http://www.mihoaida.com/2011/01/01/women-of-many-nations/>

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Aida, "If She Can Do It, You Can Too, Video," <http://www.mihoaida.com/2011/01/01/women-of-many-nations/>.

Alcatraz, therefore, not only offered the space for building new communities to occur, but also inspired other women to then return to their communities to take action. “It inspired me to seek out other Native people and to want to make a positive change in our communities,” Corrina Gould, an Ohlone Educator stated.²³⁸

Section 7.5: Idle No More

While there does not always exist a causal relationship between one Native American activist movement and another, each movement, each affirmation and reaffirmation of the existence of a pan-Indian identity and consciousness, paves the way for continued activism and intertribal, international, and intercontinental alliances.

The Idle No More Movement, originating in Saskatchewan, Canada in 2012, exemplifies this notion, particularly with regards to the crucial role that women continue to play in the development, maintenance, and power of these movements. The movement began “as a thread of emails between four women from Saskatchewan: Jessica Gordon, Sylvia McAdam, Nina Wilson, and Sheelah McLean,” three First Nation women and one Native Canadian.²³⁹ The women decided to take action against the Canadian Bill C-45 which “attacks the land base reserved for Indigenous people, removes protection for hundreds of waterways, and weakens Canada’s environmental laws.”²⁴⁰ What began as a Facebook page dedicated to pushing back against a specific law quickly expanded to incorporate rallies and panels, and has since become a massive movement – drawing supporters and participants from all over the world – aimed at protecting

²³⁸ Aida, “If She Can Do It, You Can Too, Video,” <http://www.mihoida.com/2011/01/01/women-of-many-nations/>.

²³⁹ Febna Caven, “Being Idle No More: The Women Behind the Movement,” (*Cultural Survival Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 1.; *The Electronic Drum: Community Radio’s Role in Indigenous Language Revitalization*, March 2013, Accessed January 24, 2014), <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/being-idle-no-more-women-behind-movement>, 1.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

the environment, indigenous **sovereignty**, and women's rights, and renewing indigenous identity for the betterment of the people.

At one of the rallies for the movement, Nina Wilson, Nakota and Plains Cree from Treaty 4 White Bear territory and one of the four founding women, spoke to a reporter about the movement's intentions:

"We are trying to help people get their voices back so that we can make more change and we are able to have more of a First Nations voice...not just a First Nations, but an Indigenous voice, and not just an Indigenous voice but a grassroots voice, because it affects us all." And it does affect us all, as it does the environment.²⁴¹

The grassroots protest gained attention and traction due to the actions of Chief Theresa Spence of Attawapiskat First Nation, who traveled to Ottawa and went on a hunger strike on December 11th, 2011. Her stated purpose was to protest the Canadian government's continued mistreatment and exploitation of First Nation peoples. "Canada is violating the right of Indigenous peoples to be self-determining and continues to ignore our constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights in their lands, waters, and resources," Chief Spence explained.²⁴² Spence's strike lasted for six weeks, but the attention that it brought to the Idle No More Movement and its mission continues.

Section 7.6: Where's the Connection? A Conversation with Cecilia Point, Musqueam Spokesperson, Mother, and Activist

Cecilia Point, spokesperson for the Musqueam First Nation, is deeply involved in the Idle No More Movement. I had the opportunity to speak with her on the phone about the movement

²⁴¹ Febna Caven, "Being Idle No More: The Women Behind the Movement," 1.

²⁴² "Chief Spence Announces Hunger Strike in Ottawa," *Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement Ottawa*, December 11, 2012, <http://ipsmo.wordpress.com/2012/12/11/chief-spence-announces-hunger-strike-in-ottawa/>.

in general, as well as her involvement. When asked to describe herself, Point states that she is “half Irish and half Native” with just a “dash of Chilean,” and then continues by explaining that she is a “mom [with] two kids and a husband” whom, like seventy percent of First Nation peoples in Canada, does not live on a reserve.²⁴³

Point’s activism began two years ago when she found out that “a [Musqueam] burial site which had hundreds of bodies in it,” located in the centralized Stanley Park in Vancouver, was going to be desecrated by a planned condo development project.²⁴⁴ Point explains that they dug up “two adults and two babies”; “our nation learned about this totally by accident,” she continues, “one of our members drove past the site and saw digging.”²⁴⁵ This began a two hundred day protest, which drew in not only First Nation peoples from all over, but also Native peoples from the United States. “When this situation came up,” Point elaborates on her role in the protest, “my community asked me to be the spokesperson...[I was] catapulted to the forefront.” This position became the starting point for Point’s participation in the Idle No More Movement, specifically focusing on environmental issues affecting First Nation peoples in British Columbia.²⁴⁶

While evidently not directly connected to the Alcatraz Occupation that took place more than four decades earlier and across the continent, the continued growth of the Idle No More movement not only reflects the continued presence of Native peoples on this continent, but also their continued active resistance against the damaging effects of colonialism. In these and every movement over the past half-century, women have played and will continue to play integral roles to the continuance and survivance of Native peoples.

²⁴³ Interview with Cecilia Point, conducted by Hannah Ellman, March 6, 2014.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

When I asked Point to speak to this point, her response was as follows: “I have a friend who used to be the Chair of the Native Women’s Association of Canada. She said [that] you can trace [women being pushed to the sidelines] right back to colonialism...[but] to tell you the truth, I’m not really sure why the women are on the front lines; it’s just happening organically.” After pausing to reflect, she continues, “I guess from our history - and I think for other First Nations – the women were the matriarchs before British law. We were the decision makers and we were at the table...we’re just sort of taking it back.”²⁴⁷

Post Chapter Activities:

1. List three things that you learned about contemporary indigenous movements that were new, that surprised you, or that you had questions about.
2. Read the following quote from Wilma Mankiller and answer the question below:
“Today, we are helping to erase the stereotypes created by media and by western films of the drunken Indian on a horse, chasing wagon trains across the prairie. I supposed some people still think that all native people live in tepees and wear tribal garb every day. They do not realize that many of us wear business suits and drive station wagons. The beauty of society today is that young Cherokee men and women can pursue any professional fields they want and remain true to traditional values. It all comes back to our heritage and our roots. IT is so vital that we retain that sense of culture, history, and tribal identity.” – Wilma Mankiller, A Chief and Her People

Does this quote surprise you? What did you picture when you thought about Native people, and specifically, Native women today?

²⁴⁷ Interview with Cecilia Point, conducted by Hannah Ellman, March 6, 2014.

Conclusion

"I would just like this history to be on the forefront. Since we sort of made the news last year with our resistance over our graveyard, now we are getting schools and universities out to our reserve...I would like that to be very prominent in the history books." – Cecilia Point, Musqueam Spokesperson²⁴⁸

I recently had a conversation with a fellow scholar in one of my Education courses about her experiences in her high school history classroom. I began my expected rant about the ineffective and troubling nature of the American history curriculum in high school that relies on the textbook as a golden sourcebook for this nation's narrative. My fellow scholar, however, while able to sympathize with my experience, informed me that her history class was, in fact, drastically different. She attended a small private school in Seattle, Washington, The Bush School. In her high school American history class, she explained, each of the students was expected to read from the mainstream textbook *and* from Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*.

"In every class," she stated, "we would read a section from the textbook and then read the comparable section in *A People's History*."²⁴⁹ The class would then have discussions not only about the material presented in the sections, but also about the disparities between the two texts. "The teacher asked questions about what was absent from one of the texts or the other, and we would talk about biases in studying history," she continued.²⁵⁰

Admittedly, this fellow scholar attended a school that had both the resources and the capability to foster this kind of educational experience. Unencumbered by the common core, the Bush School, like other private schools, certainly has an easier task in creating a space for a

²⁴⁸ Interview with Cecilia Point, conducted by Hannah Ellman, March 6, 2014.

²⁴⁹ *Conversation with a Vassar Student*, November 7, 2013.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

certain kinds of learning. This does not, however, excuse the accepted teaching tools for American high school history in public schools.

This critique, analysis, and rethinking of the American high school history textbook is aimed to serve as a resource for those teachers who want to change the way that public education approaches American history. This is not meant to be a replacement for the texts that educators are required to teach; rather, it is meant to supplement standard methods, to be read in tandem with the texts that are predetermined for teachers, and to serve as a means through which conversations about the true American past, as well as the study of history – biases, voice, and the multiplicity of the American experience – *can* be addressed in the classroom.

This is by no means a singular source. Rather, it enters a growing collection of texts that seek to change the way “America” is taught. Simon Ortiz’s *The People Shall Continue*, illustrated by Sharol Graves and written for children, retells the story of the first Thanksgiving as part of the trajectory of the Native American experience on this continent.²⁵¹ *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years*, authored and edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson, presents a version of history that explicitly questions the practice of telling history through the victor/victim dichotomy, and seeks to present a more accurate and comprehensive version Native American history and resistance over the past 500 years.²⁵² And, of course, Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States*, offers a version of history that seeks to present the past

²⁵¹ Debbie Reese, “Beyond the So-Called First Thanksgiving: 5 Children’s Books That Set the Record Straight,” *Indian Country Today*, November 19, 2013, Accessed January 21, 2014, 1, <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2013/11/19/beyond-so-called-first-thanksgiving-5-childrens-books-set-record-straight-152337>.

²⁵² Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson, *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years 2e*, (Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 1998).

five hundred years through the eyes of the people, such as laborers, activists, revolutionists, and the oppressed; Zinn's work is geared towards slightly older students and adult readers.²⁵³

There is no such thing as a golden text for reading the history of the United States or for understanding the history of U.S./Native American relations on this continent. In fact, there is no such thing as a golden text for studying any history; history is a dynamic manifestation of a trajectory of experience and is, by nature, biased. It is for this reason that the American high school history classroom must adopt, incorporate, and push for supplementary sources and methods for understanding American history from every angle. Only then will the narrative of this nation begin to reflect the reality of human experience on this continent.

²⁵³ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: Teaching Edition*, (New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1980).

Glossary:

Chapter 5: The Iroquois Confederacy

1. **colonists:** the members of a colonizing group.
2. **EuroAmerican Exceptionalism:** The perception that that which comes from a European/American origin – for example, methods of governance, education, religion, philosophy, culture – is inherently better than that which extends from any other place of origin. (See Chapter 5: The Iroquois Confederacy, Section 5.1: Introduction, footnote no. 137 for historicization of EuroAmerican Exceptionalism.)
3. **Colonization:** the process of creating a *colony* or *an area located in one country that is controlled by another*.
4. **oral tradition:** method of history or story-telling that serves as a means for maintaining a connection to, understanding about, and record of the past.
5. **Reservation:** an area of land, unwanted by the United States government, where Native Americans were moved to from their homelands as part of the EuroAmerican colonization of the continent. Reservations have historically been central locations for U.S. governmental policies of colonization, and have remained some of the most impoverished and underserved places in the country. The *Reservation system* continues in the United States today, though most Native American people now live in urban areas.
6. **ethnographer:** an anthropologist who does *ethnographic* work, or who does research through observation of specific human societies, usually focusing on sociocultural life within those societies.
7. **kinship:** the familial, blood, or social relationships that connect humans beings.
8. **reciprocity:** a relation or interaction characterized by a complimentary give-and-take, or mutual reliance, action, or support.
9. **tribal specificity:** (in considering Native American history): maintaining a focused look at an individual tribe's qualities, history, or experience.
10. **philosophies:** framework(s) or idea(s) relating to understanding the meaning of life, existence, knowledge, truth, morality, and values.
11. **matrilineal:** (as in *matrilineal society*): a society based on *kinship* defined through the female line.
12. **Eurocentric:** characterized by a belief in the superiority of European societies, belief systems, or ways of being over those of the rest of the world. While the term is relatively new, the concept has existed since early medieval times and was generally based on religious reasons (Christianity). *Eurocentrism* was one of the driving forces in European colonization of the United States and attempted conquest of Native American peoples. See James M. Blaut's *Eight Eurocentric Historians: Chapter 1: Eurocentric History* for more information.
13. **missionary:** a member of a religious group who is either sent or decides to go to an area to spread the belief systems and teachings associated with that religious group.

Chapter 6: Native American Boarding Schools

14. **assimilation:** (as in *cultural assimilation*): the process through which a person or a group either willingly (with regards to certain immigrants to the United States) or forcibly (with regards to the attempted colonization of Native peoples) adopts the cultural ways of those of the supposed mainstream majority.

15. **systematic**: purposeful; organized, designed, or structured in a carefully planned and purposeful manner.
16. **oppression**: when one group systematically abuses another group. Oppression can come in individual, institutional (written into policies, laws, or practices of the institutions that affect different groups), and social forms, and can be founded upon any number of identity characteristics including race, gender, class, and sexuality among many others.
17. **appropriated**: to take or adopt, usually without authorization. In a critical historical context, the term is often applied in the concept: *cultural appropriation*. *Cultural appropriation* refers to the adoption of certain aspects of a culture that is not one's own, including language, religion, dress, and spiritual practice among other things, and usually implies an unequal power dynamic between the cultural appropriator and the culturally appropriated.
18. **Society of American Indians**: The first national Native American rights organization that was started and run by Native American peoples. The early leaders of the group were called the "Red Progressives" and included the following: Dr. Charles A. Eastman (Dakota), Dr. Cdefarols Montezume (Yavapai-Apache), Thomas L. Sloan (Omaha), the Hon. Charles E. Dagenett (Peoria), Laura Cornelius (Oneida), and Henry Standing Bear (Sioux). The group held their first meeting on the Ohio State campus from April 3-4 of 1911, their first annual conference on Columbus Day weekend of 1911 brought together prominent Native American peoples from across the country. The group used their conferences, public speakers, and a variety of publications in order to open up conversations about contemporary issues affecting Native Americans including: issues of class, citizenship, and education. See *The Ohio State University: American Indian Studies* site for more information,
<https://americanindianstudies.osu.edu/SAISymposium/AboutTheSAI>.
19. **Indian Rights Association**: An organization founded in Philadelphia 1882 by Americans who aimed to advocated for Native American peoples; however, the members of the organization believed that the best way to do this was to fight for citizenship for all Native Americans and to push for assimilation. The association worked with the *Board of Indian Affairs* (see definition), as well as with Native peoples and agents. See *The Historical Society of Pennsylvania's "Collection 1523: Indian Rights Association Records, 1830-ca. 1986"* for more information.
20. **Bureau of Indian Affairs**: A federally sponsored agency with headquarters located in Washington D.C. and operating within the U.S. Department of the Interior. Originally founded in 1824 within the War Department and under the name *Office of Indian Affairs*, it was renamed the *Bureau of Indian Affairs* in 1947. The agency has been implicated in a number of controversial policies and events affecting Native American peoples over the past century; for example, the boarding school system in the late 19th and early 20th century (see Chapter 6: Native American Boarding Schools). The Bureau of Indian Affairs also faced increasing protest during the rise of the *Red Power Movement* (see definition) and the *American Indian Movement* of the 1960s and 1970s; in fact, the headquarters were occupied in 1972 by around 500 members of the American Indian Movement as a way to bring attention to issues affecting Native American peoples and, more specifically, the effects of the many treaties between the U.S. government and Native American nations that the U.S. has broken (See texts including: Deloria, Jr., Vine

and David E. Wilkins's *Tribes, Treaties, & Constitutional Tribulations*, and "Bureau of Indian Affairs" in Richard T. Shaefer, ed. *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society*.

21. **National Council of American Indians:** An organization founded by Zitkala-Sa (or Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) in 1926 (See Chapter 6: Native American Boarding Schools for an extensive description of Zitkala-Sa's life, experiences, and work.) The intention of the organization was to empower Native American peoples by advocating for their political and civil rights to health care, cultural recognition, and education. The organization ended in the mid-1930s. See "Gertrude Bonnin" from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online Academic Edition* for more information.

Chapter 7: Contemporary Native American Activism: The Occupation of Alcatraz and Idle No More

22. **termination and relocation policies:** refers to the number of policies introduced in the mid 20th century as part of the governmental efforts to assimilate Native American peoples into what was considered mainstream society. The government ended official recognition of many Native American tribes (termination) and moved many Native peoples to urban areas (relocation), believing that this would foster more effective and thorough assimilation.
23. **Red Power Movement:** A phrase coined by Vine Deloria Jr., a Standing Rock Sioux scholar, activist, historian, author, and theologian, describing the rise of multi-national Native American protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s.
24. **pan-Indianism:** a shared sense of identity or purpose between Native American peoples of different nations.
25. **sovereignty:** a nation's autonomy, self-governance, or right to self-determine in relation to other sovereign nations. See *Native American Sovereignty*, edited by John R. Wunder and Joanne Barker's *Sovereignty Matters* for a more in-depth look at sovereignty as it relates to Native American issues and rights.

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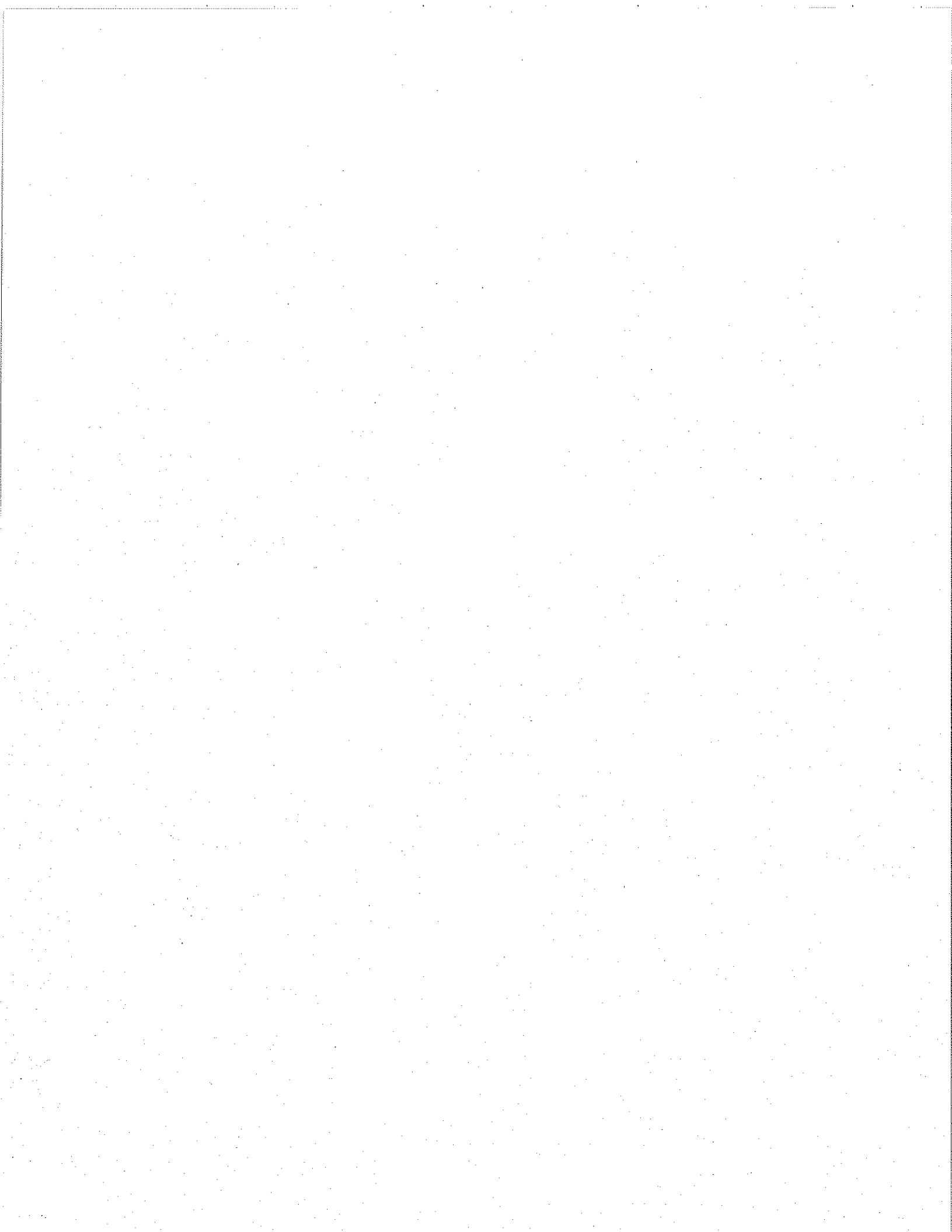
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- McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *American Journey* (8th grade level)
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- McGraw Hill: Glencoe, *The American Vision* (11th grade level)
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Images

- Figure 1:** Bear, Charla. "American Indian Boarding Schools Haunt Many." *NPR*. May 12, 2008. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16516865>
- Figure 2:** Bear, Charla. "American Indian Boarding Schools Haunt Many." *NPR*. May 12, 2008. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16516865>
- Figure 3:** Alcatraz Is Not An Island: The Occupation, 1969-1971." *PBS (with itvs and KQED)*, 2002. Accessed January 23, 2014. <http://www.pbs.org/itvs/alcatrazisnotaniland/occupation.html>.
- Figure 4:** Vigil, Delfin. "Disputed Alcatraz invasion flag on block." *SFGATE*. January 24, 2008. Accessed January 24, 2014. <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Disputed-Alcatraz-invasion-flag-on-block-3231419.php>



home.”¹⁸⁷ It was not just the students that were affected by this deep forced separation; the parents of students who were kept away from home, sometimes for years, were also deeply impacted. The Indian agents who served as the liaisons for the parents and their children were also, at times, blatantly unresponsive to parental concerns.

Section 6.4: Resistance from Within

While it is critical to recognize the multi-generational effects of the violence inflicted upon the Native communities who were subjected to the boarding school system, perhaps equally critical is the need to recognize that Native peoples were not passive victims of European policies. It is for this reason that scholars Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc write in the Introduction to their book, *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences*, that “among North American Indians, the boarding school system was a successful failure.”¹⁸⁸ Native American children who were forced to attend the boarding and residential schools in the U.S. and Canada *were* deeply affected and defined by their experiences, but in a manner that was directly opposite of the government’s intentions in sending them to boarding schools in the first place. The schools failed in their mission to “assimilate completely Indian children.”¹⁸⁹

Resistance to the effects of the boarding schools (and the schools themselves) – from both the children in attendance and their families – began, for many children, during the years that they were actually attending the schools. Firstly, the very act of remaining in contact with one another when the school’s very purpose was to separate students from their families was an act of resistance. “Schooling imposed a new and unwelcome distance on Indian family

¹⁸⁷ Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 43.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

