

“If We Get the Girls, We Get the Race”: Missionary Education of Native American Girls

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When I saw the lonely figure of my mother vanish in the distance, a sense of regret settled heavily upon me. I felt suddenly weak, as if I might fall limp to the ground. I was in the hands of strangers whom my mother did not fully trust. I no longer felt free to be myself, or to voice my own feelings. The tears trickled down my cheeks, and I buried my face in the folds of my blanket. Now the first step, parting me from my mother, was taken, and all my belated tears availed nothing.

Zitkala-Sa

MISSION school education, with its wrenching separation from family, had a profound impact on Native American girls and on their female kin. Zitkala-Sa's description of her departure for boarding school in 1884 characterized the experience of thousands of young girls in the nineteenth century.¹ Most left no written record of their years in school; Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Bonnin), a Dakota (Sioux) writer and activist on Native American issues, was

¹ Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Bonnin), *American Indian Stories* (Washington, D.C.: Hayworth Publishing, 1921; rpt. Glorieta, N.M.: The Rio Grande Press, 1976), pp. 44-45.

unusual in that respect. She recorded both her own memories of her school years and her mother's reaction to the Western education of her daughter.

Zitkala-Sa's mother, heartbroken by the child's departure, was convinced that someone had "filled [her daughter's] ears with the white man's lies" to persuade her to leave for school. What else would induce an eight-year-old to quit her mother for the company of strangers? "Stay with me, my little one!" she futilely implored the child, overwhelmed by anxiety about her safety among white people.² The woman's fears were not unfounded. Her child's well-being at school was by no means assured, as an examination of the experiences of Ojibwa and Dakota girls suggests.³ A girl's exposure to Anglo-American religious, economic, and gender values often had a permanent effect on her, whether or not she accepted them. Moreover, the time in school deprived her of the continuing tutelage of her mother and other female relatives—instruction that was the key to assuming her place as a woman within her own cultural tradition.

The history of mission schools is a troubling one in which stories of benevolent, self-sacrificing missionaries contend with accounts of relentlessly rigid discipline, ethnocentrism, and desperately unhappy children.⁴ Native Americans received their

² Ibid., pp. 40-41.

³ The Ojibwa (also known as Chippewa) are Algonquian-speaking peoples in the western Great Lakes region, southern Ontario, and Manitoba. During the nineteenth century most groups still retained a seasonal nomadism based on hunting and gathering, combined with occasional horticulture in the southern groups. For cultural and historical descriptions, see Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 86 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1929); A. Irving Hallowell, *Culture and Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955); Harold Hickerson, "The Chippewa of the Upper Great Lakes: A Study in Sociopolitical Change," in Eleanor Burke Leacock and Nancy Oestreich Lurie, eds., *North American Indians in Historical Perspective* (New York: Random House, 1971), pp. 169-99.

The people generally known to outsiders by the misnomer "Sioux" (a French mispronunciation of a derogatory Algonquian term meaning "little adders") consist of seven linguistic and political subgroups, or "Fireplaces." The eastern groups call themselves "Dakota," while the western dialect pronounces the name "Lakota." Before the reservation era they were seminomadic hunter-gatherers who followed the buffalo. See Roy W. Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux: United States Indian Policy on Trial* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967); Marla N. Powers, *Oglala Women: Myth, Ritual, and Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

⁴ The last two decades have seen a significant growth in the written history of mission and government schools and Native American children's experiences in them. See, for example, Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862*, 2d ed.

introduction to Anglo-American education at the hands of British missionaries in 1617, following King James's advocacy of schooling Indians to promote "civilization" and Christianity. Dartmouth College soon was established to teach young Indian men, and both Harvard College and William and Mary College incorporated the education of native youth into their missions. The Church of England's Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts also regularly instructed Indians until the American Revolution. Following independence, a host of missionary societies were organized with the stated intent of evangelizing native peoples, among them the American Society for Propagating the Gospel among the

(New York: Atheneum, 1976); Henry Warner Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Mary Lou Hullgren and Paulette Fairbanks Molin, *To Lead and to Serve: American Indian Education at Hampton Institute, 1878-1923* (Virginia Beach: Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy, 1989); Elizabeth Muir, "The Bark School House: Methodist Episcopal Missionary Women in Upper Canada, 1827-1833," in John S. Moir and C. T. McIntire, eds., *Canadian Protestant and Catholic Missions, 1820s-1960s: Historical Essays in Honor of John Webster Grant* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 23-74; Francis Paul Prucha, *The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888-1912* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979); Robert A. Trennert, Jr., *The Phoenix Indian School: Forced Assimilation in Arizona, 1891-1935* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988). See also James Axtell, *The School upon a Hill: Education and Society in Colonial New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

For contemporary studies, see Estelle Fuchs and Robert J. Havighurst, *To Live on This Earth: American Indian Education* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972); Margaret Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination since 1928*, 2d ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977).

Several Native American women have written about their school experiences. In addition to Zitkala-Sa, see Mary Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes, *Lakota Woman* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990); Polingaysi Qoyawayma (Elizabeth Q. White), *No Turning Back: A Hopi Indian Woman's Struggle to Live in Two Worlds* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1964). Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), relates her school experiences as a métis woman in Canada.

The following studies address the impact of schooling on Native American women and girls: Robert A. Trennert, "Educating Indian Girls at Nonreservation Boarding Schools, 1878-1920," in Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz, eds., *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 224-37; Ruey-Lin Lin, "A Profile of Reservation Indian High School Girls," *Journal of American Indian Education* 26 (1987): 18-28; Beatrice Medicine, "The Interaction of Culture and Sex Roles in the Schools," in Shirley M. Hufstедler et al., eds., *Conference on the Educational and Occupational Needs of American Indian Women* (1976) (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1980), pp. 141-58; Agnes F. Williams, "Transition from the Reservation to an Urban Setting and the Changing Roles of American Indian Women," in Hufstедler et al., eds., *Conference on the Educational and Occupational Needs of American Indian Women*, pp. 251-84.

Indians and Others in North America (1787) and the New York Missionary Society (1796).⁵

The founding of the interdenominational American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in 1810 ushered in a new era of missionary endeavor. The combined influences of the religious revival known as the Second Great Awakening and heightened nationalism following the War of 1812 added a further goal to the missionary effort: rescuing Indians from destruction by the inexorable march of Anglo-American progress. Numerous denominational organizations were formed, such as the Missionary Society of the American Methodist Episcopal Church in 1820 and the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions (BFM) in 1837.⁶

Nineteenth-century missionaries and their sponsors firmly believed in the linear progression of history and in their own elevated place on the ladder of civilization. They clearly understood their charge to be the transformation of native peoples into Christian citizens. Admittedly, it was a monumental undertaking. "We cannot be too grateful that God did not make us heathens," observed Sherman Hall, of ABCFM's La Pointe mission in Wisconsin, in 1833. "It is an awful calamity to be born in the midst of heathen darkness."⁷ Heathenism seemed a surmountable obstacle, however, if children could be brought into the fold at a tender age

⁵ Fuchs and Havighurst, *To Live on This Earth*, pp. 2–3; Charles L. Chancy, *The Birth of Missions in America* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1976), pp. 70–71; Ernest Hawkins, *Historical Notices of the Missions of the Church of England in the North American Colonies, Previous to the Independence of the United States: Chiefly from the M.S. Documents of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* (London: B. Stowes, 1845), p. 342. See James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Cornelius J. Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); and J. H. Kennedy, *Jesuit and Savage in New France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), for discussions of French missionary education efforts in the colonial period. For the Spanish efforts to educate Indians in California, see Sherburne F. Cook, *The Conflict Between the California Indians and White Civilization, Ibero-Americana* 21–24 (1943).

⁶ Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage*, pp. 2–3, 12–13; Wade Crawford Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions, Part One: Early American Methodism, 1769–1844* (New York: Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, 1949–50), p. 164; Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 58–62. For a detailed examination of the ABCFM, see William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

⁷ Sherman Hall to Lydia Hall, 15 June 1833, Sherman Hall Papers, Minnesota Historical Society (hereafter cited as SH), St. Paul.

and raised as Christians. As one missionary put it: "This can only be effectually accomplished by taking them away from the demoralizing & enervating atmosphere of camp life & Res[ervation] surroundings & Concomitants."⁸ Although bringing adults to knowledge of gospel truths was important, it was "the rising generation" who provided hope for the salvation of the native population.

Schooling became the primary means of enticing young Native Americans to reject tradition and seek conversion. To missionaries, the abandonment of native ways for Western ones was a creative rather than destructive process that made new Christian citizens out of savages. School, missionaries hoped, was a way to change Indians from "others" into dusky versions of themselves. Rayna Green, a Native American scholar, has offered this observation of a photograph of pupils at the Hampton Institute, a nineteenth-century boarding school in Virginia for African-American and Native American pupils: "School put them into drawing classes, where young Indian ladies in long dresses made charcoal portraits of a boy dressed in his Plains warrior best. These Victorian Indians look toward the camera from painting class, their eyes turned away from their buckskinned model."⁹

Missionaries worked diligently to gather girls and boys of all ages into day and boarding schools near villages and reservations, as well as at distant Indian schools such as the Hampton Institute or the Carlisle School in Pennsylvania (founded in 1879 to prove to the public that Native Americans were educable). Because missionary teachers could not forcibly round up and remove Native American children to schools as their government counterparts often did, it was a real challenge to enroll them. Zitkala-Sa was lured to the Quakers' Indiana Manual Labor Institute in Wabash by tales of lush, rich land bursting with sweet fruits for the child's taking.¹⁰ Charles Hall, a minister at the ABCFM's Fort Berthold mission in North Dakota (which served mostly Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara rather than Dakota) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reported that "getting the children

⁸ John C. Lowrie, 2 March 1877, *American Indian Correspondence: The Presbyterian Historical Society Collection of Missionaries' Letters, 1833-1893* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), C:310 (hereafter cited as AIC).

⁹ Rayna Green, "'Kill the Indian and save the Man': Indian Education in the United States," introduction to Hultgren and Molin, *To Lead and to Serve*, p. 9.

¹⁰ Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, pp. 9-10; Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories*, pp. 39-40; Trennert, *The Phoenix Indian School*, pp. 113-14.

to go to school was as delicate and cautious work as catching trout. To send a child to school meant, to the Indian, the giving up of all his distinctive tribal life, his ancestral customs, his religious beliefs, and sinking himself into the vast unknown, the way of the white man."¹¹ After several years, Hall developed a recruitment strategy that he later explained in a section of his memoirs entitled "Capturing Children":

How to reach the children was a problem. They were told by shrewd parents that owls and bears and white men would harm them, so naturally they ran and hid when we approached. . . . White Shield, the old Ree [Arikaraj chief, said in regard to our problem, "If you feed the children, they will come to school like flies to syrup." His advice was taken, and a Friday dinner, in the manner of the white man, was provided. This was as attractive as ice cream and lollipops. The school became a popular institution, especially on Friday.¹²

Other missionaries reported similar of food and other enticements, such as singing, to get the children into the classroom.¹³

Initially, mission schools concentrated on teaching boys and men, with little emphasis on female schooling. By mid century, however, they had shifted their approach in response to the growing belief among Americans that women, as mothers, must be educated in order to raise virtuous male citizens.¹⁴ According to

¹¹ Charles Hall, "The Story of Fort Berthold," Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: Missions to the North American Indians, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 26: 6.48-49 (hereafter cited as ABC).

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

¹³ See, for example, Carol Devetis, *Countering Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions, 1630-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), chap. 5.

¹⁴ There are many fine works that address nineteenth-century views of women and education. See Polly Weltz Kaufman, *Women Teachers on the Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980); Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1981). For discussions of the interactions between Native American women and missionaries, see Kendall Blanchard, "Changing Sex Roles and Protestantism among the Navajo Women in Ramah," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 14 (1975): 43-50; Devens, *Countering Colonization*; Lillian A. Ackerman, "The Effect of Mission-

Isaac Baird, who served at the Presbyterian BFM Odanah mission in Wisconsin, "The girls will need the training more than the boys & they will wield a greater influence in the future. If we get the girls, we get the race."¹⁵ ABCFM's Santee Normal Training School in Nebraska, founded in 1870, exemplified this position in its annual bulletin, which stated that the school's purpose was the "raising up [of] preachers, teachers, interpreters, business men, and model mothers for the Dakota Nation."¹⁶

Once the commitment to female education had been made, however, missionaries faced low enrollments and high dropout rates. Presbyterian and ABCFM missions to the Ojibwa and Dakota suffered a shortage of schoolgirls and, moreover, were dissatisfied with the performance of the female pupils they did have. William Boutwell, ABCFM missionary at Leech Lake, Minnesota, reported in the 1830s that girls avoided him and refused to come to school; he was uncertain whether fear or shame motivated their response.¹⁷ At the Presbyterian BFM mission in Omena, Michigan, Peter Dougherty thought he could not go wrong with his female school; he had provided women teachers to instruct girls in domesticity and Christianity as well as some academic subjects. When the school opened in 1848, it had a fine enrollment of twenty-two, but this quickly dwindled, and by 1850 Dougherty was forced to close the school. The boys' school, however, flourished as fathers sent their sons to acquire reading and ciphering skills that allowed them to deal with Anglo-Americans on their own terms.¹⁸ The manual labor boarding school Dougherty opened in 1853 had similar problems, attracting only five girls out of twenty-seven students. The Presbyterians were even more discouraged by the situation at Middle Village, a satellite mission of Omena, where women refused to send any children to school. Their action

ary Ideals on Family Structure and Women's Roles in Plateau Indian Culture," *Idaho Yesterdays* 31 (1987): 64-73; Karen Anderson, "Commodity Exchange and Subordination: Montagnais-Nasakapi and Huron Women, 1600-1650," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* II (1985): 49-62; Mary C. Wright, "Economic Development and Native American Women in the Early Nineteenth Century," *American Quarterly* 33 (1981): 525-36.

¹⁵ Isaac Baird to John C. Lowrie, 14 July 1883, AIC, G:1:111.

¹⁶ *Woonspe Wankantu* (Santee, Nebr.: Santee Normal Training School, 1879), ABC, 18.3.7, v.5, 85.

¹⁷ William Thurston Boutwell, "Diary Kept by the Reverend William Thurston Boutwell, Missionary to the Ojibwa Indians, 1832-1837," entry for 11 November 1833, William T. Boutwell Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

¹⁸ Peter Dougherty to Mr. McKean, 25 September 1850, AIC, 7:1:13.

led to the school's closing in 1858, despite the village men's petition to the BFM to keep it open.¹⁹

At Sisseton agency in the Dakota Territory, the local U.S. Indian agent, J. G. Hamilton, was shocked by how tenaciously Dakota women clung to their old ways. He urged the Women's Board of Missions (affiliated with the ABCFM) to send a lady to teach the native women. "I was struck, upon my arrival here some two months ago," he wrote to the Women's Board in 1875, "with the vast difference in the general appearance of the men & women. Contrary to the usual rule, the men of this tribe have made far greater progress & have yielded more readily to civilizing forces than the women have."²⁰ He hoped that female teachers might be able to reach them. His comment suggests that, like the Ojibwa, Dakota women sought to keep distance between themselves and whites and were reluctant to adapt to Anglo-American customs or values. Susan Webb, a missionary teacher at Santee, reported that "the older women could not read and the younger women would not."²¹ The female aversion to interaction included an unwillingness to have their daughters involved in mission schooling. When Captain Richard H. Pratt, founder of the Carlisle School, visited Fort Berthold in 1878 to recruit Dakota children for the Hampton Institute, he had a difficult time securing students, especially girls. "The people feared to give up their girls," Charles Hall explained, "not trusting the white people."²²

One teacher contemplating the enrollment problem suggested that the Ojibwa, at least, saw no point in educating girls. Revealing his poor understanding of Ojibwa gender roles and cultural values, he explained that women were destined for a life of servitude. A more likely explanation, however, came from a perceptive missionary who suggested that close ties between mothers and daughters were to blame—that women who maintained a traditional way of life were loath to relinquish control of their daughters' upbringing. It was with tremendous reluctance, for example,

¹⁹ Peter Dougherty to Walter Lowrie, 25 December 1848, AIC, 7:3:167; 1 May 1849, AIC, 7:3:166; 4 September 1850, AIC, 7:1:7; 26 September 1853, AIC, 7:1:91; 16 January 1854, AIC, 7:1:108. Dougherty to P. Babcock, superintendent of Indian affairs, Grand Traverse, 14 October 1850, AIC, 7:1:8; J. G. Turner to Walter Lowrie, 5 January 1858, AIC, 7:2:47. For further explanation of these incidents, see Devens, *Countering Colonization*, chap. 5.

²⁰ J. G. Hamilton, U.S. Indian agent, to Mrs. E. W. Blalchford, secretary of Women's Board, Chicago, 7 July 1875, ABC, 183.3.7, v.5, 170.

²¹ Susan Webb to J. O. Means, 8 February 1881, ABC, 18.3.7, v.4, 274.

²² Hall, "Ford Berthold," p. 46.

that Zitkala-Sa's mother allowed her to go to school. She eventually consented only after concluding that Western education would provide her daughter greater protection against the growing number of Anglo-Americans settling on Dakota lands than traditional training could.²³

Much like their Ojibwa counterparts, those Dakota girls who did enroll seldom seemed to conform to the missionaries' expectations. Susan Webb commented that her female students always seemed the opposite of what she hoped they would be. She saw her work with them as a lesson in the depths of the human condition: "I think as I work for these girls I am learning the weakness and depravity of our own human natures."²⁴

Despite women's traditionalism and their suspicion of missionaries, many girls did end up attending school for at least short periods of time.²⁵ Once there, they immediately began the physical transformation that missionaries hoped would be a catalyst for their intellectual and spiritual metamorphosis into Christian citizens. A young girl, whether faced with the total immersion of boarding school or the less comprehensive (but nonetheless thorough) indoctrination attempted by day schools, was presented with an alien world view, behavior code, and language to which she was quickly expected to adhere. It was a confusing and frightening whirlwind of strangers, journeys, haircuts, and loneliness. Zitkala-Sa again provides a window on the experience of starting school: "My long travel and the bewildering sights had exhausted me. I fell asleep, heaving deep, tired sobs. My tears were left to dry themselves in streaks, because neither my aunt nor my mother was near to wipe them away."²⁶ She recalled how humiliating the mandatory haircuts were for Native American children. "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

²³ Isaac Baird to J. C. Lowrie, 30 December 1876, AIC, C:287; Baird to D. C. Mahan, U.S. Indian agent, 30 March 1878, AIC, E:1:3; Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (n. 1 above), pp. 42-43. For a detailed discussion of women's responses to mission schools and missionaries in the Great Lakes area, see Devens, *Countering Colonization*, chaps. 3, 5.

²⁴ Susan Webb to J. O. Means, 18 March 1881, ABC, 18.3.7, v. 7, 276.

²⁵ The reasons for their enrollment are not often clear. Many appear, like Zitkala-Sa, to have been enticed by the material goods promised them. Polingaysi, a Hopi, recalled that she was fascinated by the cotton dresses and food that the children received at school. See Qoyawayma, *No Turning Back* (n. 4 above), p. 23.

²⁶ Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (n. 1 above), p. 51.

shingled hair by cowards!" She had to be dragged out from under a bed before she submitted to having her long braids snipped off. Charles Hall remembered the children's horror of losing their long hair at his school, and the Indian agent, J. C. McGillicuddy, reported that when new Lakota students at Pine Ridge reservation caught a glimpse of teachers giving haircuts, they feared that he intended to disgrace them, and all fled in alarm.²⁷

The school world was tough and confusing. Mission schools' programs for girls were intended to indoctrinate them with the ideals of Christian womanhood—piety, domesticity, submissiveness, and purity. By the missionaries' Victorian standards, Native American women were careless, dirty, and unfamiliar with the concept of hard work. Indian girls, they complained, were woe-fully unfamiliar with the lore, paraphernalia, and routines of female domesticity.²⁸ Schools therefore trained girls in sewing, knitting, cooking, and other domestic skills and tasks, as well as in academic subjects, such as history, natural sciences, arithmetic, and spelling.²⁹ The content of the curriculum bore no relationship to the intellectual, social, or philosophical constructs in which the girls had been raised. Indeed, the schools' underlying principle was that Anglo-American history, morality, and health were inherently superior to and should replace those of their students' cultures.

This perspective was reinforced by typical textbooks, such as Webb's *Readers*, Webster's *Spelling Book*, Greenleaf's *Intellectual Arithmetic*, and Colbun's *Mental Arithmetic*, used by Ojibwa children in the 1860s at ABCFM's Odanah Manual Labor Boarding School.³⁰ These books unabashedly proclaimed the Anglo-American vision of progress and morality subscribed to by the mission-

²⁷ Ibid., p. 54; Hall, "Fort Berthold," p. 49; J. C. McGillicuddy, *McGillicuddy, Agent* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1941), pp. 205–206, quoted in Medicine, "Culture and Sex Roles" (n. 4 above), pp. 149–50.

²⁸ Leonard Wheeler to David Greene, 23 January 1843, ABC, 18.3.7., v. 2, 219. See Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage* (n. 4 above); and Michael Coleman, *Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes Toward American Indians, 1837–1893* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), for thorough explications of the workings of a mission classroom. See Barbara Welter's classic piece, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151–74, for a perspective on nineteenth-century white female domesticity.

²⁹ Fuchs and Havighurst, *To Live on This Earth* (n. 4 above), p. 19, observe that current pedagogy and curriculum in most schools for Native American children still are intended to alienate them from their own cultures.

³⁰ Leonard Wheeler, First Report of Manual Labor Boarding School, 11 January 1869, ABC (n. 11 above), 18.4.1, v. 2, 14.

aries. Even texts written specifically for Native American pupils (ABCFM teachers usually taught in their students' language) tended to be literal translations of standard classroom lessons that teachers applied to their pupils with little or no regard for context or appropriateness. The sailboats depicted in Stephen Riggs's *Model First Reader* (1873), for example, were a world away from the experiences of the Dakota children learning to read out of this book at the Santee Normal Training School.³¹

The curriculum often placed an even heavier emphasis on vocational instruction for girls than for boys. The thirty-six girls at the Shawnee Quaker School, for example, in 1827 alone produced 400 pieces of student clothing, 50 sets of sheets and towels, and 80 pairs of socks. They also spun and wove 100 pounds of wool and 40 yards of rag carpet, churned 800 pounds of butter, made 600 pounds of cheese, 2½ barrels of soap, and 100 pounds of candles. In addition, they did daily housekeeping, laundry, cooking, and cleaning. The girls worked in groups, rotating jobs every two weeks in order to learn all aspects of housekeeping.³² Martha Riggs Morris at ABCFM's Sisseton (Dakota) mission, explained the rationale for this approach, which still held sway in 1881: "The book learning is after all not so important for them, at least after they have learned to read and write fairly well. But to take care of themselves—to learn to keep body and mind pure and clean, to learn to keep house comlortably, these are most important—for the advancement of the people."³³

Ideally, the missions' female teachers were to be role models for appropriate gender activities, values, and work, showing Native American girls through daily example both the techniques of household economy and a womanly demeanor. In reality, however, the teachers were overworked and often ill. Furthermore, rigid schedules and overcrowding often made the situation impersonal and miserable. At the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society's Aldersville School in Ontario, Canada, a report of the girls' schedule in 1841 indicated their rigorous life. The children (mostly Ojibwa) arose at 4:30 A.M. in summer, a lazy 5 A.M. in winter. Between rising and 9 A.M., the girls did the milking, prepared the

³¹ R. David Edmunds, "National Expansion from the Indian Perspective," in Frederick E. Hoxie, ed., *Indians in American History* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson), pp. 159–77.

³² Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage* (n. 4 above), p. 39.

³³ Martha Riggs Morris to J. O. Means, 6 May 1881, ABC (n. 11 above), 18.3.7, v. 6, 165. Boys, of course, did extensive manual labor as well, at most schools.

school breakfast, attended prayers and a lecture, made cheese, and did housework. They then spent six hours in the classroom, with a break for lunch, followed by needlework, supper, evening milking, prayers at 8 P.M. and bed at 8:30.³⁴

Throughout the 1880s, Martha Riggs Morris complained that her twenty-eight Dakota students were crowded into two tiny buildings measuring 10 x 24 feet and 17 x 24 feet. At the Santee Normal Training School, the Bird's Nest, a boarding home for small girls, was more spacious, having two kitchens, a dining room, teachers' sitting room and bedrooms, sick bay, laundry room, and three dormitories for the girls. Still, both teachers and students felt cramped and hurried.³⁵ Zitkala-Sa's account of the Wabash school once again personalizes the depressing impact of frantic school regimes on pupils and teachers alike:

A loud-clamoring bell awakened us at half-past six in the cold winter mornings. . . . There were too many drowsy children and too numerous orders for the day to waste a moment in any apology to nature for giving her children such a shock in the early morning. . . . A paleface woman, with a yellow-covered roll book open on her arm and a gnawed pencil in her hand, appeared at the door. Her small, tired face was coldly lighted with a pair of large gray eyes. She stood still in a halo of authority. . . . It was next to impossible to leave the iron routine after the civilizing machine had once begun its day's buzzing.³⁶

Susan Webb's comments about her pupils indicate that the schooling process alienated and confused the girls. "When I look about me," Webb wrote in 1881, "and see how helpless and indiffer-

³⁴ John Sunday to Robert Alder, 7 April 1841, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Archives, London-North American correspondence, microfiche. United Methodist Archives and History Center, Madison, N.J., Box 102, 1841/42, 12C.

³⁵ Martha Riggs Morris to J. O. Means, 6 May 1881, ABC (n. 11 above), 18.3.7, v. 6, 165; Alfred L. Riggs to John O. Means, Report of Santee Agency Station for the Year ending March 31, 1882, ABC, 18.3.7, v. 5, 64; M. A. Shepard to J. O. Means, 17 June 1881, ABC, 18.3.7, v. 7, 241.

³⁶ Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (n. 1 above), pp. 65-66. This pattern continued in government boarding schools well into the twentieth century. At the Rice Boarding School in Arizona in the 1910s, children were up at 5 A.M., spent half the day in school and half working, and made their own clothing and shoes. They did this on a diet of bread, coffee, and potatoes, which cost the school nine cents per day per child. (The minimum standard expenditure for healthy growth in those years was set by the government at thirty-five cents per day per child.) See Szasz, *Education and the American Indian* (n. 4 above), p. 19.

ent apparently are the young women I long to help arouse them to a sense that there is something for them to be doing. I cannot endure the thought that our girls will leave us to settle down with no weight of responsibility.”³⁷ Zitkala-Sa’s experience confirmed this: “The melancholy of those black days has left so long a shadow that it darkens the path of years that have since gone by. These sad memories rise above those of smoothly grinding school days.”³⁸

Stories of her grandmother’s experiences in a turn-of-the-century mission school prompted Mary Crow Dog (Lakota Sioux) to write: “It is almost impossible to explain to a sympathetic white person what a typical old Indian boarding school was like; how it affected the Indian child suddenly dumped into it like a small creature from another world, helpless, defenseless, bewildered, trying desperately and instinctively to survive at all.”³⁹ Some young girls at the school killed themselves or attempted suicide to escape an unhappy situation beyond their control.

The demoralizing effect of school programs was often rivaled by their futility. Most of the domestic instruction that girls received was virtually useless when their schooling ended and they returned to the village or reservation. Only if a family had made the transition from tipi or lodge to frame house, as Zitkala-Sa’s had, were the girl’s Western housekeeping skills applicable—unless she worked as a domestic servant for local Anglo-Americans or at the mission itself. Native American girls’ servitude filled a perceived need for trained household help; girls at the government’s Phoenix Indian School were pressured to become servants, and this may have been the case at mission schools as well.⁴⁰

The conditions that children reported enduring in school led many Native American parents to become firmly entrenched in their opposition to Anglo-American education. Other factors in-

³⁷ Susan Webb to J. O. Means, 8 February 1881, ABC (n. 11 above), 18.3.7, v. 7, 274.

³⁸ Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (n. 1 above), p. 67.

³⁹ Crow Dog and Erdoes, *Lakota Woman* (n. 4 above), p. 28.

⁴⁰ Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage* (n. 4 above), pp. 17–42; Leonard Wheeler to Selah B. Treat, 21 July 1857, ABC (n. n above), 18.4.1, v. 1, 265. Sherman Hall, at the American Board’s La Pointe mission in Wisconsin, reported that he was very encouraged when families built and lived in frame houses, as their closeness and sedentary life made them much easier to teach. See Hall to Laura Hall, 4 February 1835, SH (n. 7 above); Trennert, *The Phoenix Indian School* (n. 4 above), p. 137.

fluenced them as well. The loss of the children to school was, in a way, like death in the family and community. "Since you have been here with your writing . . . the place has become full of ghosts," one person told Charles Hall. In fact, schooling often did end in death, as Hall observed, especially for children at boarding schools, where infectious diseases took a high toll.⁴¹

The schools' threat to family well-being was heightened for mothers and grandmothers. A girl's participation in mission school undermined the women's ability to oversee her upbringing and to assure that she would take her place as a woman within the tribal tradition. "The grandmothers and many of the parents," reported Eda Ward, a teacher at Fort Berthold, "wish their children to be wholly Indian."⁴² Female kin were responsible for instructing the child in both the practical and ritual activities that would shape her life as an adult within the community. Schooling removed a girl from the warmth of her kin's care, left her with no one to teach, comfort, or guide her as they would at home. Zitkala-Sa's mother had warned her departing child that "you will cry for me, but they will not even soothe you."⁴³

Overworked, ill, and ethnocentric teachers were no substitute for the female network on which a girl's emotional, spiritual, and intellectual development depended. Although many missionary teachers were well intentioned and some really enjoyed their small charges, all were put off by the unfamiliar habits and values of the girls, and by the physical setting of their new environment. After nine years with the Ojibwa around the La Pointe mission, the ABCFM missionary Sherman Hall told his brother that "it is difficult to reach their hearts, or even their understandings with the truth. They seem almost as stupid as blocks. Yet they are far enough from being destitute of natural endowment. Most of them have superior minds by nature; but they are minds in ruins."⁴⁴ Hall lasted a long time in the missionary field and was seemingly better able to adjust to his surroundings than many of his peers, yet he described his pupils as "ragged, dirty, lousy and disgusting

⁴¹ Hall, "Fort Berthold" (n. 11 above), pp. 41, 49; Szasz, *Education and the American Indian* (n. 4 above); Trennert, *The Phoenix Indian School* (n. 4 above); Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage* (n. 4 above); and Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (n. 1 above), all address the issue of children's deaths at school.

⁴² Eda Ward to J. O. Means, 13 March 1881, ABC (n. 11 above), 18.3.7, v. 7, 27.

⁴³ Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (n. 1 above), pp. 40-41.

⁴⁴ Sherman Hall to Aaron Hall, 2 February 1842, SH (n. 7 above).

little objects trying to learn to read their own language.”⁴⁵ His attitude was more positive than that of one of his coworkers, however, who complained bitterly about “the effects of crowding from 40 to 70 dirty vicious Indian children” into a small schoolhouse.⁴⁶

Not all teachers were so intolerant; most of the women at ABCFM’s Dakota missions, for example, expressed real fondness for their students and jobs.⁴⁷ However, their commitment to “civilizing” their pupils precluded any real understanding of or concession to those pupils’ culture or values. Most tried to treat their charges as they would Anglo-American youngsters.⁴⁸ By regarding their students simply as children rather than as Indian children, teachers essentially denied their very identities. This lack of cultural awareness or empathy contributed to the gulf between student and teacher and to the children’s unhappiness and disorientation. Even well-intentioned but uninformed jollity could be a source of alienation and confusion for the newly (dis)located girl. Zitkala-Sa vividly remembered an incident at the Quaker school that to the staff must surely have seemed an inappropriate response to an innocuous action. On the night she arrived, “a rosy-cheeked paleface woman caught me in her arms. I was both frightened and insulted by such trifling. I stared into her eyes, wishing her to let me stand on my own feet, but she jumped me up and down with increasing enthusiasm. My mother had never made a

⁴⁵ Sherman Hall to Laura Hall, 4 February 1835, SH (n. 7 above).

⁴⁶ A. P. Truesdell, quoted in S. G. Clark to S. L. Pumroy, 11 May 1858, ABC (n. 11 above), 18.4.1, v. 2, 19.

⁴⁷ Adele Curtis (Sisseton) reported, “I enjoy my work very *much indeed*.” Susan Webb (Santee) claimed that her years at the mission were the happiest of her life, as did Martha Paddock (Santee). Adele M. Curtis to Selah B. Treat, 9 December 1875, ABC (n. 11 above), 18.3.7, v. 6, 29; Susan Webb to J. o. Means, 8 February 1881, ABC, 18.3.7, v. 7, 274; Martha M. Paddock to J. O. Means, 20 June 1881, ABC, 18.3.7, v. 6, 187.

⁴⁸ Fuchs and Havighurst report that currently “few teachers of Indian children overtly express bigotry, and most have a favorable attitude towards their pupils. But observers of Indian schools were often impressed by a view prevalent among many—that they did not treat their Indian pupils differently than others, that they saw children, not Indians. While this appears as an expression of egalitarianism, it does reflect an absence of sensitivity to the actual differences among pupil populations and a denial of Indian identity” (*To Live on This Earth* [n. 4 above], p. 199). While recognizing Christian missionaries’ “need to help,” Williams contends that “basic lack of respect for the Indian as a unique Native combined with the urban industrial value of converting others to their own religion also motivated their behavior” (Williams, “Changing Roles of American Indian Women” [n. 4 above], p. 262).

plaything of her wee daughter. Remembering this I began to cry aloud.”⁴⁹ Indeed, Native American parents treated their children with respect and reserve. In general, mothers were satisfied to scold a young offender or to threaten that an animal might kidnap her. The rare physical punishment was a light switching with a twig on the hands or knees, and only serious problems warranted it. Mission teachers, however, often were quite free with corporal punishment. Because such punishment was an accepted, even required, part of their own culture, beatings and other methods were frequently used. At ABCFM’s Fond-du-Lac mission in Minnesota, Edmund Ely, a contemporary of Sherman Hall, moved Ojibwa parents and children to outrage when he pulled children’s hair to discipline them.⁵⁰ Both the rough play that Zitkala-Sa was subjected to and the strict discipline and corporal punishment that were standard fare in most schools went against Native American child-rearing methods, frightening and humiliating students.

The difference in educational methods between Anglo-American and Native American cultures exacerbated the disorienting impact of the mission schools on girls. Native peoples did not confine either schooling or pupils to classrooms. Children roamed freely, exploring and learning individually and in groups. “I was a wild little girl of seven,” Zitkala-Sa recalled. “Loosely clad in a slip of brown buckskin, and light-footed with a pair of soft moccasins on my feet, I was as free as the wind that blew my hair, and no less spirited than a bounding deer. These were my mother’s pride,—my wild freedom and overflowing spirits. She taught me no fear save that of intruding myself upon others.”⁵¹

A girl’s education took place constantly, through listening to and working with elders or in games with peers. Dakota girls engaged in “small play”—impersonating their mothers, and mim-

⁴⁹ Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (n. 1 above), p. 50.

⁵⁰ Sister M. Inez Hilger, *Chippewa Child Life and Its Cultural Background*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 146 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1951), pp. 58–59; Laurence French, *Psychocultural Change and the American Indian: An Ethnohistorical Analysis* (New York: Garland, 1987), p. 107; Edmund F. Ely, Writing, 1 January 1835, Ely Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul. For a discussion of Anglo-American child-rearing practices, see Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (New York: Meridian, 1977), pp. 87–99.

⁵¹ Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (n. 1 above), p. 8.

icking marital and domestic roles, conversations, and manners. Little girls worked companionably alongside their mothers, cooking, cleaning, and imitating them in beadwork and preparing medicinal plants. Zitkala-Sa's mother attracted her daughter's interest in beadwork by having her assist in designing and working on her own new moccasins. The woman's guidance made the child feel responsible and secure in her skill: "she treated me as a dignified little individual."⁵²

Grandmothers also played a critical role in educating girls, enticing them with stories and reminiscences that illustrated tradition and history, drawing them toward an understanding of tribal philosophy and values. In *Waterlily*, Ella Deloria, a Dakota ethnologist, described a girl's relationship with her grandmother. The older woman's role was to make "well-behaved women" of her young charges. She tutored them in how to move, how to interact with elders, where to sit in the tipi. Only with constant and relentless reminding could she be sure that the girls had absorbed the lessons vital to their success in life. Moreover, the grandmother frequently talked with the girls about the children's early years in the camp, furthering their sense of belonging and place.⁵³ In the evenings, mothers often sent daughters—proudly bearing presents of tobacco or a favorite food—to invite grandmothers to instruct the girls in the myths and lessons that established their own place within the group and their people's place in the world.⁵⁴

Women also guided their daughters and granddaughters through the ritual activities preparing them for womanhood. For example, Ojibwa girls of four or five undertook their first vision quests, heading into the forests with their little faces blackened, hoping to establish a relationship with supernaturals. Over the next few years the length of the quests gradually increased; eventually a girl might spend four or more days fasting, sleeping, and dreaming for power. She was ritually greeted and feasted by her

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 21; French, *Psychocultural Change*, pp. 107–108; Medicine, "Culture and Sex Roles" (n. 4 above), p. 146; Powers, *Oglala Women* (n. 3 above), p. 58.

⁵³ Ella Caria Deloria, *Waterlily* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), pp. 52–53, 70. The book, based on twenty years of scholarly field work about her people, was written in the form of a novel, with the goal of making it more accessible to a general readership.

⁵⁴ Hilger, *Chippewa Child Life*, pp. 153–62; Ruth Landes, *Ojibwa Woman* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), p. 11; Williams, "Transition from the Reservation" (n. 4 above), p. 254; Medicine, "The Interaction of Culture and Sex Roles" (n. 4 above), p. 146; Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (n. 1 above), pp. 13–15.

mother or a female relative upon her return home, and all listened attentively as she reported on her guardian spirit dreams.⁵⁵

Mothers and grandmothers also presided over a girl's first menstruation. The Ojibwa built a special small wigwam near the main lodge, to isolate the adolescent's newly expanded spiritual powers from men's hunting powers and infants' weak natures. During these days of seclusion and fasting for dreams, the mother instructed the girl in the responsibilities of adult women and oversaw her beadwork and sewing. When a daughter's first menstrual period had ended, her female kin feasted her upon her return to the household and entry into womanhood. Thereafter, she was chaperoned by a grandmother or aunt until marriage.⁵⁶ Dakota girls similarly retired to a new tipi set up beyond the circle of the camp, and female relatives cared for them and instructed them in the duties of a wife and mother. When seclusion had ended, the Buffalo Ceremony took place, and female relatives set up a ceremonial tipi. A medicine man then called upon the spirit of the buffalo to infuse the girl with womanly virtue, and he informed the community that her childhood had ended. The mother now attempted to protect her daughter, insisting that she wear a rawhide chastity belt, and her grandmother took it upon herself to constantly accompany the girl.⁵⁷

Clearly, it was difficult if not impossible for a girl at day or boarding school to engage in vision fasts or menstrual seclusion, both for practical reasons of time and distance from women relatives and because of the missionaries' opposition to such practices.⁵⁸ Girls who went to school were inevitably less immersed in their cultures and frequently felt less obligated or able to maintain traditional ways. Otter, daughter of Hidatsa shaman Poor

⁵⁵ Hilger, *Chippewa Child Life*, pp. 39–50. Mountain Wolf Woman, a Winnebago (a tribe with many cultural similarities to the Ojibwa), described her experience: "My older sister Hinakega and I also used to fast. They used to make us do this. We would blacken our cheeks and would not eat all day. . . . We used coals from the fire to black our cheeks and we did not eat all day. . . . When father returned from hunting in the evening he used to say to us, 'Go cry to the Thunders'. . . . We used to sing and scatter tobacco, standing there and watching the stars and the moon" (Mountain Wolf Woman, *Mountain Wolf Woman, Sister of Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian*, ed. Nancy Oestreich Lurie [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961], pp. 21–22).

⁵⁶ Hilger, *Chippewa Childlife*, pp. 50–55.

⁵⁷ Powers, *Oglala Women* (n. 3 above), pp. 66–70.

⁵⁸ Medicine, "Culture and Sex Roles" (n. 4 above), p. 153, has pointed out that the matter of learning appropriate gender roles of a child's particular tribe continues to be a problem in contemporary boarding schools.

Wolf, was only seven years old in 1881 when Charles Hall sent her to the Santee boarding school, 300 miles from her home near Fort Berthold. When she and her sister returned home, their father felt compelled to move because his daughters no longer fit into the old village life. Moreover, Otter, “having found the Christ-road, told her father how to become a ‘child of God’ ” and convinced him to abandon his lifelong beliefs.⁵⁹ Similarly, Zitkala-Sa related that after three years at the mission school she felt that she had no place in the world, that she was caught in between two cultures. Four uncomfortable years as a misfit among her people prompted her to return to school and go on to college—without her mother’s approval.⁶⁰

Mission education clearly threatened and sometimes eliminated Native American women’s ability to supervise their daughters. Its goal was to alienate girls from the cultural values and practices of their mothers and turn them instead to Christianity and the Anglo-American work ethic and material culture. Although missionaries were not overwhelmingly successful in achieving their goal of shaping a new generation of assimilated citizens, their programs did have a long-term and often devastating impact both on girls and on the daughter-mother-grandmother relationship. For Zitkala-Sa, it was a bitter experience. “Like a slender tree,” she remembered, “I had been uprooted from my mother, nature, and God.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Hall, “Fort Berthold” (n. 11 above), pp. 32, 98, 117 (quote).

⁶⁰ Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (n. 1 above), pp. 69–75. Qoyawayma described a similar experience; she had become “almost a stranger” in her own community. She eventually went to live with local Mennonite missionaries because her home life was too unsettling (Qoyawayma, *No Turning Back* [n. 4 above], p. 76). A study of Navajo women who had accepted Christianity found that they tended to view themselves as outside traditional structures and did not feel obliged to maintain older social patterns, such as matrilineal residence: Blanchard, “Changing Sex Roles” (n. 14 above), p. 48.

⁶¹ Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (n. 1 above), p. 97.