

Girls' Vocational Education at Chemawa Indian School 1900-1930s: A Story of
Acculturation and Self-Advocacy

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Abstract

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This dissertation focuses on female student experiences at Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon between 1900 and the 1930s. It examines the broader meaning and significance of the federally-funded boarding school education provided to Indigenous female students at Chemawa during this period of educational reform in which the long-time emphasis on gendered vocational education for Indigenous youth, reinforced by the settler colonial paradigm of a strict sexual division of labor, became part of a broader movement in public education nationally. This movement strongly reinforced restrictive gender roles and was philosophically justified by its proponents based on influential theories of social efficiency and social evolution of the period.

By demanding forms of education that fit their needs and desires and actively seeking these forms of education, some female Indigenous students carved out spaces of maneuverability and access within and beyond the Chemawa campus. Female students helped negotiate the malleability of this space and used it as a launch pad for greater opportunity. Chemawa female students' resistance took two distinct forms: advocacy for

choice and self-definition. Many existing stories of Indigenous youth resistance in education--including those told by David Wallace Adams, K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Theresa McCarty--are stories of students turning away from schools. By contrast, the stories of female student advocacy at Chemawa told here are examples of Indigenous youth turning toward education and actively negotiating for different options. Their resistance was to a restrictive vocational curriculum, not to education itself.

The period of this study, between 1900 and the 1930s, marked a fascinating time in federal perceptions of Indian education through assimilation. This was the heyday of government off-reservation Indian boarding schools. By 1931, twenty nine percent of Indian children in school were in government boarding schools. This period is also described by Frederick Hoxie as the 'second phase' in the assimilation program in which the US Government aimed at incorporating Indigenous peoples into the American society, but not on equal terms as whites. Sex-segregated vocational education in off-reservation Indian boarding schools was an essential component of this assimilationist program that sought to shape Indigenous identity in a fashion that would be both useful and non-threatening to white American society. In this second phase of assimilation, prejudices against Indigenous lifeways came to define policy that did not seek to equalize Indigenous people, but rather firmly position them in subservient societal roles.

By seeking out secondary and higher education, and professional education that offered paths to financial independence, female Chemawa students defined how they would pilot themselves and their people in the changing world. Part of this self-advocacy was challenging educational policy, which attempted to force them into narrowed fields of work. To some extent, Chemawa school leaders and BIA agents tried to respond to

these demands on the part of female students by negotiating additional opportunities for some of the school's most successful self-advocates. In the end, however, these local administrative efforts to accommodate female student demands and aspirations, proved limited in scope and duration. In keeping with policies at the federal level during the Depression, Chemawa, like other BIA schools reinforced a narrow definition of appropriate education for Indigenous female students even as a number of students themselves sought more "mainstream" opportunities.

The stagnation of the Chemawa curricula during this period represented the Bureau of Indian Affairs' resistance to the changing role Indigenous youth were advocating for in broader society. It also represented the entrenchment of a social efficiency educational paradigm that resisted the changing roles women were playing in the labor market. The way Indigenous girls perceived their role in the changing Industrial world flew in the face of a social efficiency educational paradigm which tried to relegate them to positions of un-paid or low-paid domestic labor. The educational self-empowerment of these Indigenous girls disrupted the perceived boundaries of control of Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools as well as threatened the intentions of the settler colonial paradigm, a paradigm which was designed to weaken Indigenous identities and disenfranchise Indigenous people.

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INTRODUCTION: Centering Student Voice in the History of BIA Indian Education

*“Our voices rock the boat, and perhaps the world.”
-Dian Million*

Between 1900 and 1930 thousands of schools across the United States implemented vocational curricula. For girls, this expansion of school-based vocational education embodied a paradox. In the paid work force, women’s participation expanded hugely during this period. In schools, however, policy makers and school administrators began to resist what had been a well-established tradition of gender equal education for white, middle class women, substituting instead a sex-differentiated vocational curriculum in both public and private schools. This juxtaposition was not a coincidence. Women entered the paid work force in huge numbers during this period, yet how women worked, what they were paid and the work that was available to them was significantly restricted, and education played a powerful role in structuring these opportunities.¹

The growth of vocational education created fundamental shifts in both the purpose and outcomes of education. At its core, vocational education was segregated by sex. Girls’ vocational education during this period was made up of three primary components. The first component encompassed domestic education, which included

¹ Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 140. Kessler-Harris describes this phenomenon as ‘crowding’ and helps to explain the contradictory nature of the expansion of women’s work. “The self-imposed social restrictions on the kinds of jobs women were prepared to take, coupled with employers’ eagerness to offer gentility as a partial substitute for wages, resulted in an inevitable crowding of women into a few readily available occupations. They were competing with each other for the same jobs. The ‘crowding’ phenomenon operated on two levels: it denied women in general access to most jobs, and it confined particular women in certain kinds of jobs.”

home care training for the unpaid labor of wives and mothers, as well as the low paid labor of domestic service. The second component consisted of trade skill education, which included labor outside of the home, including millinery, seamstress work and work in the food industries. The third component consisted of commercial training, which included training for office, clerical and cashier jobs, including skills in stenography, bookkeeping, typing, and sales.² Some of these vocations did offer opportunities that could be financially stable and offer a respectable living for women, but most schooling offered through girls' vocational education trained students for no-pay or low-pay labor.

Although two of the components of girls' vocational education did offer job training in paid work, all three were targeted and marketed as traditionally female and domestic-oriented occupations.³ The implementation of vocational curricula was a direct representation of normative assumptions about women's and men's roles in society. David S. Snedden, a prominent educational scholar in the progressive era who was a leading proponent of vocational education and social efficiency, stated in his 1908 address to the National Education Association annual meeting, "Present educational practice differentiates between boys and girls in the provision of manual and domestic work in view of their different educational destinations."⁴ Snedden's words highlight the tensions of this fascinating period in which traditional gender roles were simultaneously

² Jane Bernard Powers, *The 'Girls Question' in Education: Vocational Education for Young Women in the Progressive Era* (Washington D.C.: The Falmer Press, 1992).

³ Harvey Kantor, *Learning to Earn: School, Work and Vocational Reform in California, 1880-1930* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 64-73. Kantor explains that by 1920, when young women were taking commercial courses in large numbers and beginning to dominate office clerical positions, educators and policy makers advocated commercial courses as appropriate preparation for wifehood and motherhood, as young women practiced serving and being attentive to their male superiors.

⁴ Herbert M. Kliebard, *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876-1946* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), p. 119.

being resisted by the actions of students and female workers, while being enforced by education and policy leaders.

Marvin Lazerson and W. Norton Grubb, in their second historical analysis of vocational education, which extends into the twenty-first century, argue that the transformative power and broad implications of vocational education are rooted in issues of economics and social equity. In arguing that vocational education policy over the past century has been *the* most influential element of education, they highlight "The irony is that both the high school's promise and its tragedy are rooted in the same phenomenon: the vocationalizing of American education."⁵ Grubb and Lazerson are clear that the outcome of vocational education policy, largely facilitated by the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, while apparently offering the prospect of occupational and social mobility for youth of varied class backgrounds, also structured inequality. The tragic elements of the policy are not lost on them.⁶

Like other education historians who have investigated vocational education in the progressive era, Lazerson and Grubb explain the rise of vocational education policy in the early 1900s as a method of adaptation to relevant types of work and education in the early industrial era. They see vocational education as an adjustment to a changing society, or, as they explain, "the dominant theme of making schools more responsive to the new economic order."⁷ The problem with this historical assessment is that girls' experiences in vocational education during this period was the antithesis of an adaptation to social

⁵ Marvin Lazerson and W. Norton Grubb. *The Education Gospel: The Economic Power of Schooling* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 29.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 131, Lazerson and Grubb describe an outcome of the Smith-Hughes Act, especially in continuation schools as "[these schools] in practice became dumping grounds for students unable to make adequate progress in conventional high schools, rather than innovative ways of combining schooling and employment."

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10

change. The policy was, in fact, a form of resisting girls' expanding economic, social and political roles. Lazerson and Grubb, along with other scholars in the field of education history, have missed the specific gender and racial implications of vocational curricula not just after the implementation of the Smith-Hughes Act, but decades prior to its passage.

The impact of vocational education on girls is particularly worthy of critical analysis. Margaret Nash argues that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries class and race, more than gender, determined one's access to empowering education.⁸ Early vocational and industrial schooling for Indigenous and African American students in the mid-nineteenth century and later vocational education policy in the early twentieth century would change this paradigm. Vocational education shifted the emphasis onto gender as a distinguishing identity marker that determined what one was taught and for what purpose.

From an intersectional perspective it is important to understand that the paradigms that shaped the sex-differentiated education of white, middle and upper class girls of this period was foundationally connected to racial, class and cultural assumptions that shaped the sex-differentiated education of disenfranchised, non-white girls.⁹ By accounting for

⁸ Margaret A. Nash, *Women's Education in the United States 1780-1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). p. 99.

⁹ Multiple layers of identity, including race, class, and gender influence one's access to resources and acceptance as knowledge producers, among many other markers of privilege. Critical Race Theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in her article *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color* makes the argument that generalized categories of identity, such as 'woman', perpetuate bias and domination over minority groups. Intersectionality is a needed lens in historical education research because it helps us understand how power and access to resources and knowledge not only shape who can learn but also what she learns and what she can do as an educated member of a changing society. Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1990-1991 1990-1991): 1241-99.

layers of identity that include not just gender and class, but also race and culture, I hope to expand on previous scholars' work regarding the impact of vocational education on different women in the early twentieth century. By inquiring into a largely under researched Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) off-reservation Indian boarding school in the Pacific Northwest, an educational environment that catered to distinct identity groups of girls, and comparing it to regional public high schools, we gain a broader and more complex understanding of the significance of vocational education for girls.

This dissertation focuses on female student experiences at Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon between 1900 and the 1930s. My goal is to examine the broader meaning and significance of the federally-funded boarding school education provided to Indigenous female students at Chemawa during this period of change in the Pacific Northwest. The interests that drive my research are rooted in gender identity and, particularly, the role that school and education played in how young women were assigned certain cultural, racial and gender identities by larger educational, social and colonizing structures and, at the same time, constructed their own identities in the face of these prejudiced forces.

Female students at Chemawa sought opportunity and growth. They understood the restrictions of their educational environment yet, also, found and created opportunities within and beyond the structures of the system. The period of this study, the heyday of US government off- reservation Indian education, was one of great fluctuation and inconsistency in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. As Native American scholar K. Tsianina Lomowaima describes, "The idealized school society envisioned in federal

policy bore little resemblance to reality.”¹⁰ I argue that Chemawa, as a local representation of Bureau of Indian Affairs policy, was a permeable and malleable space of learning. By demanding forms of education that fit their needs and desires and actively seeking these forms of education, some female Indigenous students carved out spaces of maneuverability and access within and beyond the Chemawa campus. Female students helped negotiate the malleability of this space and used it as a launch pad for greater opportunity. I also argue that because of close proximity of substantial and influential Indigenous communities and the accessibility of local public high schools and institutions of professional and higher education in the vicinity, Chemawa became a distinctively negotiable learning space, unlike that which other scholars have described at Haskell Institute, Carlisle Indian School, and other eastern and central United States BIA boarding schools.

The narrative that has shaped our historical understanding of the BIA off-reservation boarding school experience, including the work of David Wallace Adams, Fredrick Hoxie and Francis Prucha, has focused predominantly on research on Carlisle Indian School, Flandreau Indian School and Haskell Institute, all located in the eastern United States. These histories paint an image of off-reservation boarding schools as insular and tightly controlled institutions, as impenetrable to outside influence. The Pacific Northwest story of Chemawa complicates this narrative by including many real stories of Indigenous students who lived and studied in and beyond the walls of Chemawa Indian School. The story of Chemawa focuses on the experiences of girls, a perspective insufficiently appreciated in Native American boarding school history.

¹⁰ K. Tsianina Lomawaima. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. P. xiii

Chemawa female students' resistance took two distinct forms: advocacy for choice and self-definition. First, students advocated for choice in their educational and work opportunities. They navigated multiple educational spaces, including Chemawa, as well as regional public schools and independent commercial certification programs. Their call for choice and flexibility in the types of education and opportunities afforded them transforms earlier narratives of Government Indian education in that it demonstrates Indigenous youth engaging in active agency in the face of oppressive government policy. Many existing stories of Indigenous youth resistance in education- including those told by David Wallace Adams, K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Theresa McCarty- are stories of students turning away from schools: sometimes literally running from the schools and in a number of cases actively trying to destroy the schools through arson. By contrast, the stories of female student advocacy at Chemawa told here are examples of Indigenous youth turning toward education and actively negotiating for different options. Their resistance was to a restrictive vocational curriculum, not to education itself. Second, female students at Chemawa worked creatively to define themselves, largely in opposition to the image of the domesticated Indian wife and mother that settler colonialism worked to impose upon them. Their self-definition largely revolved around how they chose to work in the world. Nationally, women's roles in the home and the work place were changing dramatically in the Progressive Era. Vocational education and educational policies influenced by social efficiency and social evolution were pushing curricula that targeted specific races and genders for specific roles in society. Resistance on the part of girls at Chemawa embodied self-definition outside of the domesticated, no or low-pay labor that was expected of them in this educational paradigm. Female

students at Chemawa actively sought education and professional opportunities that afforded them socially and financially stable work. They purposefully resisted the domestic education curriculum which trained them for domestic manual labor and drudgery on an Anglo-colonial model.

Stories of female student resistance to BIA policy are largely missing from current accounts of BIA boarding school experience. K. Tsianina Lomawaima's important 1994 study of Chilocco Indian School in Oklahoma is a major exception to this rule. It does look critically at gender identity in the BIA school environment, describing the distinct curricula and experiences designed for boys and girls at the school. She also highlights acts of agency and resistance on the part of Chilocco students, including girls. However, Lomawaima's examples focus primarily on student experience outside of the classroom, in liminal spaces where the authoritative gaze of matrons and teachers was less present, such as at school dances, in bathrooms and in dormitories. By contrast, I look specifically at female student resistance inside the classroom, with regards to curricular options. Although Lomawaima provides rich historical context for vocational domestic education in BIA boarding schools, her analysis misses specific forms of student resistance that targeted learning and curricula. At Chemawa, female students crafted their own educational choices and their own intellectual identities despite the restrictions of BIA education.

Gender re-socialization was at the center of BIA education policy. Lomawaima writes in her historical analysis of domestic education for girls at Chilocco Indian School during this period,

The struggle to reform and reshape the Indian home targeted the education of young women. They would serve as the matrons of allotment households,

promoting a Christian, civilized lifestyle and supporting their husbands in the difficult transition from hunter, or pastoralist, to farmer. Women's capacity to bear this burden was taken for granted by the Victorian vision of Woman as Mother, influencing society and shaping the future through her nurture of her children.¹¹

Within this power play over cultural perceptions of land, space and identity, Indigenous girls were navigating their own identities, fighting to define themselves outside of the bigoted, settler colonial image of the 'Indian' woman.

Few historiographical pieces have been published specifically on Chemawa Indian School, or, more broadly, on the experiences of Indigenous students in the Pacific Northwest. SuAnn M. Reddick and Carey C. Collins published two articles on the history of Chemawa in the winter 2000 edition of the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*. Reddick's piece traces the early origins of assimilation education targeted towards Pacific Northwest Indigenous youth in the sixty years prior to the opening of Chemawa, including the missionary school at Red River, in Manitoba. Reddick also describes the transitions of thought at the federal level that led to the formation of both Carlisle and Chemawa. Collins, in his article 'The Broken Crucible of Assimilation' focuses on the first five years of the school, from 1880 to 1885, accounting for personal experiences of early Chemawa students, tribal perceptions of the new school and the turbulent early years of M.C. Wilkinson's tenure as the first superintendent of the school. Collins describes Wilkinson as both fanatical and passionate about the implementation of his off-reservation school. In 1889 he was removed from his position because of his extreme views on the lengthy separation of Indigenous children from their families and multiple incidences of him personally forcibly removing children from their homes and taking

¹¹ K. Tsianina Lomawaima. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. p. 86

them to the school.¹² Both these pieces provide context for the creation of the school and its early relationship to Indigenous communities. However, they end their analysis prior to the second phase of the US Government's Indian assimilation policy, beginning in 1900.

Melissa Parkhurst's work on music at Chemawa in 'To Win The Indian Heart: Music at Chemawa Indian School' addresses the ways in which students were able to distinguish their own paths in learning and personal identity, especially through music. Parkhurst makes the significant distinction between assimilation and acculturation, claiming that, unforeseen by Indian education policy makers, Indigenous students at Chemawa engaged in "selective adoption, multidirectional sharing, and polyvalent" meaning-making, as active participants in the acculturation process.¹³ Parkhurst's analysis of students' pro-active participation in their musical learning experiences resonates with their activity in other areas of learning, especially in the vocational education department.

As with Parkhurst's work, my research reveals the complex stories of acculturation and self-advocacy on the part of Indigenous students at Chemawa. These students were not passive in their educational experiences. I argue that this process of active acculturation was especially prominent with female students as they navigated the gender-restrictive vocational education curricula at Chemawa. These female students also challenged the boundaries of BIA institutions and the confines of BIA curricula. I build and expand on previous scholarship by analyzing the vocational education program

¹² Cary C. Collins "The Broken Crucible of Assimilation: Forest Grove Indian School and the Origins of Off-Reservation Boarding School Education in the West." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (2000): p. 477

¹³ Melissa D. Parkhurst *To Win the Indian Heart: Music at Chemawa Indian School*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2014. P. 21

during the second phase of the US Government's Indian assimilation policy, between 1900 and 1930. In particular, I consider how vocational education based on sex differentiated curricula exposes deeper societal assumptions regarding the intersections of race, class and gender. For Indigenous girls, a large part of their active resistance was not simply against racial and cultural oppression but also gender disenfranchisement. How female students at Chemawa Indian School negotiated vocational curricula in order to determine their own opportunities during this period, reveals much about the normative assumptions rooted in this education policy as well as about the policy's ultimate outcomes and significance. Vocational education policy, and specifically domestic education, was a resistance to womens' expanding economic, social and political roles. The prejudiced assumptions about female identity imbedded in vocational education policy did not go unnoticed and were strongly resisted by many female students at Chemawa Indian School.

Positionality

In this paper I use the term 'Indigenous' to identify the Native students who attended Chemawa for two reasons. First, the term 'Indian' I understand as a colonizing term, placed upon many different, diverse communities across North America at the beginning of white contact. I see the term 'Indian' as a colonizing term as it was designated by white, colonizing powers rather than by the people upon whom it was

imposed.¹⁴ It also was used by the United States government as a defining and titling term, as part of a larger colonizing project to homogenize and weaken what where diverse and complex communities. Second, the term ‘Indigenous’ has, in the past few decades, been embraced by many scholars as a term that empowers Native identity, but does so in a way that appreciates the complex diversity amongst Native identities. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in her introduction to her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, explains, “In some contexts, such as Australia and North America, the word ‘indigenous’ is a way of including the many diverse communities, language groups and nations, each with their own identification within a single grouping.”¹⁵

I am a white woman. I have no Indigenous ancestry. This positioning in this research project places me in a somewhat problematic space. There is long and complex history, some of it recounted in this dissertation, of white women forcibly and self-righteously imposing their values, their lifeways, their faith and their politics onto the lives of women of color. Smith addresses the power of history when she writes, “History is also about power. In fact history is mostly about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in the positions in which they can continue to dominate others. It is because of this relationship with power that we [Indigenous peoples] have been excluded, marginalized and ‘Othered’.”¹⁶ I approach this research acutely aware of my position as a white woman, looking into Indigenous experience, as an outsider with the level of privilege and power

¹⁴ It is significant in this distinction to acknowledge that many Indigenous people have, over the past several decades, made the intentional and political action of re-claiming the term ‘Indian’ and, in this way, disrupting the initial subordinating meaning of the term.

¹⁵ Linda Tuhiwai Smith. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. New York: Zed Books, 1999. P. 6

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34

to dominate and manipulate the telling of Indigenous experience. My goal is to center the voices of Indigenous girls in this story, allowing them to be the powerful story-tellers. One of the responsibilities of doing this work is to acknowledge unresolved violence, the vestiges of settler colonialism, which persists into the 21st century. Not only am I writing this history as a white person, but also as a member of a larger population of non-Indigenous people who occupy Indigenous land. No one person can solve this on-going oppression alone. But our deepening understanding of the roots of the U.S. – Indigenous relations as illustrated in systems of education is an important step.

Sources

My research is based on three types of sources drawn from the archives of Chemawa Indian School housed at the National Archives in Seattle, Washington: school curricula, administrative documents and student writing. Curricula and administrative documents are an important source of data for this historical analysis because they reveal social assumptions within an educational institution regarding what knowledge was valued and for what purpose it was taught. Zeus Leonardo and W. Norton Grubb, in their primer on education and racism, write, "...curriculum creation includes values and politics, such as which knowledge counts most and how much it should function in society."¹⁷ Although Leonardo and Grubb's work is aimed at contemporary issues in education, their insight on the power of curricula is acutely relevant to our historical understanding of vocational education and assimilation during the progressive era.

¹⁷ Zeus Leonardo and W. Norton Grubb. *Education and Racism: A Primer on Issues and Dilemmas*. New York: Routledge, 2014. P. 13

Curricula operated as a tool in the subordination and exploitation of specific groups of students. Administrative documents add an additional layer of understanding BIA policy and intentions. These documents also reveal the many micro and mundane examples of inconsistency and malleability within the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

It is important to note that administrative documentation of academic and vocational courses offered at Chemawa is vague and unreliable, particularly prior to 1917. In fact, there is no documentation in the National Archives detailing specific courses offered at Chemawa prior to 1917. There are exam records for all Chemawa students starting in 1917. These records indicate the specific academic courses taken by both boys and girls in each grade. For my purposes I focused on courses offered in secondary education. This meant grades nine and ten in the years 1917 to 1925. Between 1926 and the mid-1930s, once the school offered a full high school degree, I expanded my analysis to include courses offered to eleventh and twelve grade students.

Another significant source of data I rely on for this paper are the Graduate Student Files from Chemawa between the years 1900 and 1930. These files include administrative documents, evidence of school curricula, as well as student writing. In total I looked at 180 female graduate student files. These files were only kept for graduates of Chemawa; thus these files only tell the stories of students who were able or willing to complete their studies at Chemawa. Included in these files is correspondence between school administrators, staff and other officials, as well as family members and the students themselves. These correspondences frequently deal with financial requests from students, including access to allotment money, as well as both student and family requests for leave to visit family members. The majority of student files include written

communications between students themselves and Chemawa superintendents. These personal correspondences are compelling in that they represent student voice and provide a window onto individual students' goals, ambitions and concerns. Graduate Student Files also consistently include the application form submitted to the school as well as a 'Pupil Record'. In combination, these documents provide information regarding the student's birthdate, tribal affiliation, hometown, health records upon admission to Chemawa, previous education, reason for applying to Chemawa, years of enrollment, date of graduation and status of parents' finances, religious affiliations, health and tribal connections.

Occasionally the Graduate Student Files include information on students' lives after leaving Chemawa. A number of files include correspondence between graduates and school administrators, several decades after graduating, in which students requested documentation of tribal affiliations, land allotments or academic records. Beginning with students who graduated in 1912, there is regular documentation of students' vocational and academic progress. These records indicate when students advanced to the next grade level and when they graduated. Unfortunately, these grade reports did not distinguish which specific academic or vocational courses were attended but rather give a pass or fail mark under the generic category of 'Academic standing', 'Industrial standing', 'Musical standing' and 'Department'. Early student files are sparse and consist frequently of several pieces of correspondence related to a student's application to the school. Copies of formal applications do not appear in student files until 1907.

One significant archival source found in the Graduate Student Files is individual student writing. Almost every Graduate Student File included at least one form of

student writing. Student writing, including newspaper articles and personal letters, provide insight into individual students' perceptions of their educational experiences, as well as their personal intentions for their education. Much of the writing preserved by the current National Archives, in the form of individual student files from Chemawa, involve writings intended for a public or semi-public audience. This includes letters written for school papers, written surveys collected by the school and letters written between students and school administrators. But the student files also included some personal letters written between students and/or family members.

In her work on student life at Flandreau Indian School and Haskell Institute from 1900 to 1940, scholar Brenda J. Child addresses the historiographical significance of accounting for Indigenous student voices in letters. Child acknowledges the importance of administrative government documents, including annual reports and school ledgers but describes these types of data as falling short “of being able to explain American Indian points of view.”¹⁸ Personal letters, on the other hand, provide what she describes as “other destinies, other plots, with American Indian people at the core of the narrative.”¹⁹ Native American historical scholars are turning more and more towards research that includes these other destinies and plots, as shared through personal Indigenous voice. When Indigenous voice is centered in the research it has the effect of disrupting traditional historical narratives, narratives based almost singularly on administrative documents.

Much of the communication about students included in the student files I analyzed include information pertaining to issues that the government wished to monitor,

¹⁸ Brenda J. Child *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families 1900-1940*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1998. P. xii

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xiii

issues such as student progress, student health and, particularly their familial finances and land allotments. The complex system of Indigenous monitoring that evolved through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries operated as a tool through which the federal government could track Indigenous students and their families' finances and use of resources. The dependence upon this tracking and monitoring system was necessitated by the passage of the General Allotment Act, or Dawes Act of 1887, which instituted an allotment system for Indigenous peoples with the aim of eliminating tribal land and disbanding tribes. A passage from the 'Guide to Records in the National Archives' explains, "With the passage of the General Allotment Act, there was increased interest in enrollment or determining the members of the tribes. Records were created about individuals in connection with the making of allotments, determining competency to handle business affairs (which entitled a person to receive a fee patent to land), the sale of land by individuals, leases, and the determination of heirs."²⁰

The expansion of government Indian schools at the turn of the twentieth century meant an intensified effort of record keeping and Indigenous youth monitoring on the part of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Indian School Service. The following rules outlined in the 1900 'Office of Indian Affairs Rules for the Indian School Service', explain the justification for the detailed information preserved in the Chemawa Graduate Student Files, now housed at the National Archives, in Seattle, Washington.

Rule 1: The preparation of Indian youth for the duties, privileges, and responsibilities of American citizenship is the purpose of the governmental plan of education. This implies training in the industrial arts, the development of the moral and intellectual faculties, the establishment of good habits, the formation of

²⁰ Edward E. Hill *Guide to Records in the National Archives of the United States Relating to American Indians*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service General Services Administration, 1981. P. 29

character and preparation for citizenship. The development of this plan should be through the medium of permanent and well directed efforts.

Rule 18: A complete record of all children transferred from the reservation must be kept by the agent, which record should show names, parents or guardians, tribe, age, date of transfer, and by whom, and for what school collected.

Rule 55: The superintendent shall keep on file a full and complete record of all pupils enrolled at the school, preserving carefully both their Indian and English names. At the end of each school year after enrollment there should be added an entry as to the physical, moral and intellectual standing and progress of the pupils, and finally, the date and reason of separation from the school.²¹

Student files became a way of closely monitoring and tracking many aspects of Indigenous lifeways, including health, finances, land use, as well as assessing the efficaciousness of assimilation itself. Because many student letters include information regarding family allotments, finances, resources, and student progress related specifically to their track towards ‘competency’, student letters were kept with student files. These letters offer a window into Indigenous student voice and personal experiences and perspectives that are largely missing from our historical understanding of Indigenous experience in government schools.

The sources I draw on that represent student voice all come from government-collected documents, housed in federal archives. The etymology of these documents of student voice is important because of what is not represented in these documents. This dissertation, and the data used within it does *not* come from Indigenous archives. The voices and experiences absent in this dissertation are the voices of tribal community members, living in community spaces during the time of this study. I do not include the voices and experiences of Indigenous youth *prior* to their entrance into Chemawa. There are many back-stories of Indigenous experiences, in their tribal communities, that are missing in this dissertation and would deeply enrich our understanding of Indigenous

²¹ RG 75 BIA Chem, ‘Rules, Guides Etc. for Indian School Service’, in the *1900 Office of Indian Affairs Rules for the Indian School Service* National Archives, Seattle, WA

girls' experiences at and beyond Chemawa. A deeper understanding of Indigenous girls' different tribal identity formations would add greatly to the stories of their experiences navigating the BIA educational system and the settler colonial paradigm.

Centering Student Voice

The juxtaposition of the various sources I looked at, particularly in relation to data revealing student voice, in the Graduate Student Files, versus data related to school administration documentation, including school reports and grade exams, is compelling in that it reveals a tension between the administrative goals of the school and goals and intentions of individual Indigenous students. Based on student writing in the Graduate Student Files, many Indigenous girls saw the education offered at Chemawa as a prospect for advancement. They diligently and creatively used this education as a launch pad to project themselves to opportunities far beyond what life on their reservations or in their rural communities could offer them. Yet the backbone of Indian education policy, as demonstrated in administrative records, correspondence and school curricula, was training for a simple, farming lifestyle, which predominantly translated into no-pay or low-pay domestic labor for Indigenous women. This tension between the school's objectives and the often-opposing objectives of female Indigenous students is the focus of this paper. It is the inclusion of female student voices in this story that complicates and transforms our historical understanding of government boarding school experiences.

Historical understanding has the power to inform and transform the present and future. In the conclusion of her powerful article, *'Felt Theory: An Indigenous Approach to Affect and History'*, Indigenous scholar of American Indian Studies Dian Million writes,

Native scholars, communities, and individuals were fairly in agreement that this pain that had the power to destroy them, individually and communally, would not be silenced any longer. It became their *story*. Feelings, including their anger, would and must reenter their accounts, which would be incomplete without them. Their experience was pain that had to be historicized and taken into account in the public record....The successful struggle to rearticulate the colonial residential school experience as *abuse* was not a move to articulate *victimology*, it was a move to ground a present healing in a past properly understood, *felt*, and moved beyond.²²

Million is explaining how a new, more authentic, understanding of the Indigenous experience, through personal testimony, literally has the power to transform the present lives of Native Canadians.

Indigenous voice must be centered in this story telling. As Million writes so succinctly, "Our voices rock the boat, and perhaps the world. Our voices are dangerous."²³ Million argues that if certain historical experiences, such as rape and abuse, are not allowed to be remembered, if they are forced into erasure by a dominant meta-narrative, then victimization and abuse continues. But if counter-narratives are given space to emerge in the nation's memories, then a space for healing opens up and the possibility of a future without abuse begins. This is an incredibly powerful claim that how history is remembered and what history is remembered can literally transform the future.

²² Dian Million. "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History" *Wicazo Sa Review*, Volume 24, Number 2, Fall 2009. P. 73

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 57

CHAPTER 1: Settler Colonialism and the Restructuring of Gender Roles in Assimilation Education

Complicating the Story of Government Indian Education

Learning for learning's sake, not as a luxury but as a right and a necessity.

The period of this study, between 1900 and the 1930s, marked a tensioned time in federal perceptions of Indian education through assimilation. This was the heyday of government off-reservation Indian boarding schools. By 1931 twenty nine percent of Indigenous children in school were in government boarding schools.²⁴ This period is also described by Frederick Hoxie as the ‘second phase’ in the assimilation program in which the government sought to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the American society, but not on equal terms as whites.²⁵ This policy was a result of early failures in government-enforced assimilation that hoped to, as founder of the Carlisle Indian School, Richard Henry Pratt stated, “Kill the Indian and save the man.”²⁶ Pratt made this statement in 1892, during the period Hoxie describes as the ‘first phase’ of assimilation, a time when political leaders and reformers believed that their bold agenda could succinctly and neatly assimilate all Indigenous peoples to white lifeways and cultural values. Sex-segregated vocational education in off-reservation Indian boarding schools was an essential component of this assimilationist program that aimed to shape Indigenous identity in a

²⁴ K. Tsianina Lomawaima. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. P. 6

²⁵ Frederick E. Hoxie *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. Hoxie speaks to the powerful influence anthropologists and ideas of social evolution had on Indian policy. Assimilationist policy was not a blending of identity, but an absolute conformity to white identity, in which Indians had to “follow the ‘what man’s road’” in terms of going through a process of social evolution. P. 33

²⁶ David Wallace Adams. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995

fashion that would be both useful and non-threatening to white American society.²⁷ In this second phase of assimilation, prejudices against Indigenous lifeways came to define policy that did not aim to equalize Indigenous people, but rather firmly position them in subservient societal roles.

Scholars of Native American history, including Fredrick Hoxie, David Wallace Adams, Jane E. Simonsen, and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, to name a few, provide invaluable accounts of U.S. Indian education during this second phase of assimilation. Hoxie, Adams and Simonsen's work set a foundation for understanding the broad policies of the assimilationist agenda established by the United States government in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, accounting for the ambitions of white progressive reformers and political agents, as well as Indigenous peoples' responses and reactions to these policies. Hoxie's work in *A Final Promise* focuses most specifically on federally policy. His analysis of the second phase of assimilation, a period that he identified as beginning at turn of the century, is especially informative regarding the educational experiences of female students at Chemawa during this period. Hoxie describes the Indigenous experience in the second phase of assimilation as one in which,

modern Indians found themselves defined and treated as peripheral people-partial members of the commonwealth- and a web of attitudes, beliefs, and practices soon appeared to bind them in a state of economic dependence and political powerlessness.²⁸

²⁷ Jane E. Simonsen *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860-1919*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006. P. 11 Simonsen explains that the Dawes Act was heavily influenced by theories that saw environmental change as a way to create social change and controlling the roles of women was an important element of this. She explains, "Property ownership was the cornerstone of the Dawes Act; however, reformers drawing on social evolution believed that civilization could only be effect by concomitant changes in social life. To that end, the promoted Christian marriages among indigenous people, forced families to regroup under male heads (a tactic often enforced by renaming) and trained men in wage-earning occupations while encouraging women to support them at home through their domestic activities."

²⁸ Frederick E. Hoxie *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. P. xix

This paper investigates how these conditions of economic dependence and political powerlessness were felt by Indigenous women and how female students at Chemawa Indian School engaged in self-advocacy and acculturation in order to resist these conditions.

David Wallace Adams' seminal work on American Indian Boarding School experiences between 1875 and 1928 also provides invaluable overview of federal government Indian Education policy and trends, specifically its assimilationist policies. Both Adams and Hoxie cite multiple examples from Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, as well as other off-reservation boarding schools in the Central and Southwest United States. But neither scholar looks towards the Pacific Northwest region or engages a gendered analysis of assimilationist Indian education. My findings complicate their understanding of assimilation experiences. My inclusion of a specifically gendered lens exposes female students' strategic engagement in self-advocacy and self-definition, specifically through curricular choice. I use Adams' and Hoxie's scholarship to contextualize my analysis of student experiences and administrative goals at Chemawa Indian School, but I also bring a specific gendered lens to understanding this historical time and space. The story of female students' experiences at Chemawa also complicates a pervasive historical narrative of Bureau of Indian Affairs off-reservation boarding schools as isolated, insular and stagnate environments. Female students at Chemawa used the school as a launch pad from which they expanded their educational and professional opportunities beyond the walls of Chemawa, in Salem, Portland and other parts of the region.

Chemawa was part of the larger settler colonial project in the Pacific Northwest during this period. It also represents a distinctive model of government Indian education. As evidence from hundreds of student files analyzed in this project attest, many students came to Chemawa by choice, initiating the application process of their own accord. Because of the substantial and influential tribal communities that lived in regional proximity to the school, Chemawa's sustainability was partly reliant on both student and Indigenous community buy-in to the school and its programs. As indicated by the following story of the school's founder, M.C. Wilkinson, it was imperative that the regional Indigenous communities, and the students themselves, viewed the school as an opportunity. The relationship between local tribal communities and the school, along with the high enrollment of Chemawa students in the local public high school-- by 1920 over half of all Chemawa graduates were attending Salem high school-- demonstrates that student experiences at Chemawa during this period were different from those described by scholars for Carlisle, Haskell and other well-researched BIA educational institutions. I argue that the Chemawa students' involvement in the school and their self-advocacy on the part of their educational experiences represented the permeability and malleability of BIA educational policy in this local space on the Chemawa campus. And I question the generalizability of Indian education historical research that focuses predominantly on BIA schools in the eastern and central United States, most of which does not directly examine relationships between BIA schools and surrounding communities or engage in a gendered analysis of the education itself.

The project of governing and modernizing the Pacific Northwest region was intricately tied to how government-funded Indian schools developed and, particularly, the

education offered to Indigenous youth. Girls' vocational education was a tool in this settler colonizing process, structuring the roles different girls were expected to play in the transformation of the Pacific Northwest. The story of female students at Chemawa complicates previous interpretations of assimilation in BIA off-reservation schools. From an intersectional perspective it is important to understand that the paradigms that shaped the sex-segregated vocational education of Indigenous girls of this period was foundationally connected to racial, class and cultural assumptions.

Historian Margaret Jacobs describes the American West in the early twentieth century as a settler colony “characterized by a much larger settler European population of both sexes for permanent settlement.”²⁹ Jacobs defines settler colonialism as a type of European expansion that resulted not in overseas empires, but rather societies that were controlled politically and economically by Europeans and their decedents.³⁰ Settler colonial projects involved much more than simple resource extraction and Indigenous labor abuse. Jacob's analysis is especially relevant in that she illuminates the significance of gender in settler colonialism. The perpetuation and effectiveness of settler colonialism was heavily dependent upon traditional, European gender norms, which established strict sexual divisions of labor. Jacobs insightfully highlights the false conception that settler colonialism was in some ways innocuous, or that settlement occurred peaceably and justifiably. Rather, Jacobs and other scholars of settler colonialism point out these projects were, at their core, violent, destructive and also

²⁹ Margaret D. Jacobs *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. P. 3

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 2

complex in their manipulation of people and resources.³¹ The paradox in government-run Indian education policy, of instilling white values and practices on Indigenous youths, yet never intending for Indigenous peoples to gain equal positions of privilege and access as whites, was an integral part of the settler colonial paradigm. Beyond the important distinction that settler colonies “have combined elements of resource extraction, forced labor and the appropriation of land”, these projects were heavily reliant upon the permanent presences of white women, who would establish homes, bear white children and, through the promotion of the nuclear family, encourage the values of private property and individual household enterprise. By accounting for layers of identity that include not just race and culture, but also gender and class, I hope to expand on Hoxie’s, Adams’ and Jacob’s work regarding the impact of assimilationist political and education agendas on Indigenous peoples in the early twentieth century.

In her Introduction, Jacobs makes the case for the significance of a gender analysis in understanding education in a settler colony. She writes,

if we are to fully comprehend settler histories, the central role that gender played in settler colonies must be addressed. In any society, gender- the meanings we attached to maleness and femaleness and the practices that ensue from these meanings- constitutes one of the most fundamental organizing principles. Gender systems, especially the sexual division of labor, often underpin the economy of a group; they also provide fundamental mechanisms for the reproduction of the group and assertions of identity.³²

The intended outcome of BIA education, particularly in reference to work, was in essence tied to colonizing perceptions of race and gender. Jacobs’ descriptive analysis of the way gender roles operated in settler colonial projects also ties directly to the paradigm of social efficiency, espoused in vocational education policy. In the settler colonial project,

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 4

³² *Ibid.*, p. 9

Indigenous girls had a prescribed role as low or no pay domestic laborers in the European conception of the individual, patriarchal home. The economic devaluing of their labor was compounded by their devalued status as Indian women.

Citing the work of feminist anthropologist and historian Ann Laura Stoler, Jacob writes, “It was not only in the halls of governance or on the fields of battle, but also in the most intimate spaces of home, schools and missions where colonialism’s power and hierarchies were constituted and reproduced.”³³ Through this epistemological lens, Jacobs establishes four ways in which gender norms were used to re-enforce settler colonialism, specifically in intimate spaces of the home, schools and missions, to enforce settler colonialism’s power. These four ways include one, through the enforcement of an economic order that established a sexual division of labor, two, through sexual intimacies of white colonizing men and Indigenous women, three, through the protection of white women against Indigenous peoples, by white men, and four, through the reproduction of European notions of home.³⁴

Jacobs touches on the powerful implications of domestic education, in relation to the enforcement of sexual division of labor and the reproduction of the European notions of home in her chapter on ‘Maternalism in the Institutions’. She explains,

Indeed, in the United States, where officials expected Indian children to eventually return to their communities, women teachers, matrons, and reformers put an inordinate amount of emphasis on transforming Indian girls’ conceptions of and experiences of the home. Once the home was transformed, the women believed, Indian children would learn the rudiments of the new civilized order and other aspects of civilization would follow.³⁵

³³ Margaret D. Jacobs *White Mother to a Dark Race*. P. 10

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.10-11

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 303

Here Jacobs reveals the necessity of an established sexual division of labor and the reproduction of European notions of home in the proliferation of a settler colonial paradigm. Indigenous women's prescribed roles in this model were incredibly significant in that they, through their domestic work as wives and mothers in both Indigenous and Europeanized homes, were the forces that would perpetuate the settler colonial model. Because their roles in the domestic sphere was so pivotal to the success of the settler colonial paradigm, by disrupting this prescribed position as domestic laborers, Indigenous women also had the potential to disrupt the sustainability of the settler colonial paradigm itself.

By using Anne Laura Stoler's methodology as a guide, focusing on the intimate spaces of home and school, Jacobs cleverly peels back the complex layers of power in operation within the settler colonial system and reveals the profound implications of prescribed gender identity. Jacobs' stories primarily focus on administrative policy and larger oppressive systems in both Australian and US government schools and the role that the colonizing image of home played in these spaces. Where she does incorporate individual Indigenous voices, it is predominantly to re-affirm the efficacies of these systems in manipulating and controlling Indigenous identity and experience. Jacobs calls attention to the advocacy work on the part of Indigenous activists such as Ella Cara Deloria, Chippewa Marie Baldwin, and Angel DeCora, who worked in the early 1900s to uplift societal perceptions of Indigenous women.³⁶ But the activism of these Indigenous women happened many years after they left government Indian schools. These are not

³⁶ Margaret D. Jacobs *White Mother to a Dark Race*. P. 320-323

stories of student-led advocacy within the confines of BIA schools, during their school attendance.

Jane E. Simonsen, in her work on domesticity and Native American assimilation between 1860 and 1919 also engages with a critical, gendered lens in her analysis of domesticity as an imperial project in the American West. In her deconstruction of both white and Indigenous womens' work in the American West, Simonsen focuses her analysis on the impacts of white, female reformers, writers and photographers who worked amongst Indigenous women on reservations and homesteads. The Indigenous women in Simonsen's research constitute the models of the successfully civilized and domesticated women that Chemawa was aiming to train. By engaging in a similar gendered lens of analysis but shifting my gaze to educational experiences of Indigenous girls, I hope to expand upon Simonsen's understanding of how traditional, white, patriarchal perceptions of domesticity were an essential component of the larger settler-colonial project in the American West. Simonsen looks at how the settler colonial system was enforced in Indigenous women's homes, by white women. I extend this same gendered analysis of settler colonialism into the space of the classroom and the school and look specifically at how Indigenous girls responded to these systems within schools.

As with Jacobs and Simonsen, my research on the female students at Chemawa is an effort to challenge and disrupt settler colonial narratives by engaging with a critical eye towards gender. Jacobs works to invalidate the settler colonial narrative from a historiographical perspective by telling the truth of these silent histories, truths that reveal the violence of settler colonialism. The stories of the Indigenous girls' self-advocacy at Chemawa is a history of a *resistance* to the violence and oppression of settler colonialism.

The story of female students at Chemawa is not a story that focuses on the violence perpetrated against Indigenous women but rather a story of the enormous courage of Indigenous students in saving their personal identities against an oppressive system. When the narrative becomes one of agency and advocacy, as opposed to victimhood, how does that transform our larger understanding of the Indigenous experience in BIA off-reservation boarding schools?

By resisting the domestic education agenda of the Chemawa curricula, female students directly contested the settler colonial paradigm of, as Jacobs and Simonsen establish, the sexual division of labor and the reproduction of European notions of home. Female students sought education that would enable them to gain social and financial independence in the fields of teaching, nursing and commercial work. And, as shown in chapter 4, many young women had no intentions of returning home once they completed their studies because they knew that their financial and social opportunities were more abundant outside the home. Rather, female students at Chemawa wanted the freedom to make their own choices in regard to their education and their future work lives. Choice and financial autonomy, particularly on the part of Indigenous women, was antithetical to settler colonial agenda for subaltern, colonized peoples. As Lomawaima and McCarty succinctly describe

Public education in the United States was founded on the principle of local control, but that right, like citizenship, was not immediately offered to all Americans. For American Indians, African Americans, immigrants, and others, schooling has been an engine of standardization, not of parental choice and control, as powerful interests within the dominant society endeavored to fit diverse Americans for their assigned places within established economic and social hierarchies.³⁷

³⁷ Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain An Indian*, p. 5

The female students at Chemawa resisted again and again this standardization of settler colonial education.

Settler colonial scholar Lorenzo Veracini argues that the ultimate goal of settler colonialism, unlike colonialism, is to erase itself and to emerge successful in a post-colonial world. Yet, for this to be accomplished, Indigenous identities must either be eliminated or fully assimilated, which necessitates total erasure of Indigenous culture and identity.³⁸ Indigenous female students at Chemawa were fighting to define, on their own terms, their Indigenous identity as educated, working women. The vocational agenda of BIA education policy required an Indigenous woman's position almost exclusively in a domestic labor role. Education that facilitated financial and social autonomy, especially for Indigenous women, threatened the policy that demanded their erasure. In many case files of female Chemawa students during this period there is evidence of family members and youth themselves asking for access to a Chemawa education, specifically because it was their only access to secondary or higher education. These frequent requests for education, and education that focused on academic and professional training, as opposed to domestic labor, points to the resistance by the Indigenous students to a policy they understood as disenfranchising. Their voices represent an awareness not just that education was key to empowerment, but that the form and purpose of that education could either enable or hinder their life ambitions.

Margaret Jacobs roots her historical analysis of settler colonialism in the Maternalist movement that was building political and social momentum in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This movement, which would profoundly shape

³⁸ Lorenzo Veracini "Introducing Settler Colonial Studies" *Settler Colonial Studies* (1:1, 2013), 1-12.

the education of girls in Indian government schools, embodied four characteristics, elevating motherhood as a woman's most sacred occupation, justifying women's presence in public reform as a natural extension of their experience or socialization as mothers, acting in a motherly manner toward other women they deemed in need of rescue and uplifting and upholding a maternal and domestic role as most fitting for other women, not for themselves.³⁹ Thus, the settler colonial paradigm and the educational paradigms that proliferated within it was based on a powerful and fundamental male/female dualism and a racialized hierarchy which determined how men and women were to act, think and work in a civilized society. The Maternalist reformers who would influence BIA education policy and even broader vocational public education policy based their policies of sex-segregated vocational education on those four characteristics which defined, philosophically, the female identity as naturally maternal, nurturing, and, particularly in the case of Indigenous women, rooted in the home.

Bureau of Indian Affairs Education Policy- Assimilation Through Education

Toward the end of the nineteenth century the United States government embarked on a new policy to solve the 'Indian problem', with a special focus on assimilating Indigenous peoples through the dissolution of tribal reservation communities, individual land allotment, and Indigenous socialization into the culture of private property. Yet this policy of assimilation was limited in how Indigenous peoples were expected to live and work as participants in American society. As a result of massive efforts on the part of Indian policy reformers, including many influential female leaders such as Mary L.

³⁹ Margaret D. Jacobs *White Mother to a Dark Race*. P. 89

Bonney and Alice Fletcher of the Women's National Indian Association, the United States government determined the reservation system as largely failed in the early 1880s.⁴⁰ Conditions of starvation on many reservations coupled with Indigenous communities' inability to protect reservation lands and other resources from white land grabbers and corrupt officials led reformers to push vigorously for change.⁴¹ A policy emerged partly in response to reformers like Bonney and Fletcher, critical of corruption among Indian agents and the government's consequential role in the horrific treatment of thousands of Indigenous peoples.⁴² Reformers and policy makers saw the combination of land allotment and government-run Indian education as the way to 'save' the Indian from exploitation and extermination and to assimilate Indians into white, civilized society.

The General Allotment Act of 1887, also known as the Dawes Act, became the tool with which the United States government could enforce a paradigm of private property by dismantling the reservation system and pushing an agenda of individual land allotment and aggressive assimilation. As Cary C. Collins explains in reference to the work of Indian agent and Chemawa Superintendent Edwin L. Chalcraft, "Those two key pieces of American Indian policy- off-reservation boarding school education and the Dawes Act- fit hand-in-glove with each depending on the other for much of their assimilative punch. In school, Indians were to acquire at least a basic knowledge of how

⁴⁰ Tom Holm. *The Great Confusion in Indian Affairs*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005. P. 7 The WNIA was formed in 1879 with the explicit goal of petitioning Congress to live up to its treaty obligations to change its Indian policies away from military tactics and towards educational reform, rooted in a Christian mission.

⁴¹ Francis Paul Prucha. *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*. Vol. I & II, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. P. 656-657.

⁴² David Wallace Adams. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995, p. 8 Adams highlights Helen Hunt Jackson's 1881 publication 'A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the US Government's Dealings with Some of the Indian Tribes' as a pivotal publication in the push for a new policy.

to manage a small farm- from caring for livestock and equipment to knowing when to plant and harvest."⁴³

Historian Margaret Jacobs points out the enormous influence white women played in structuring the assimilationist agenda targeted towards Indigenous girls. "Senator Henry Dawes (architect of the 1887 Allotment Act) reportedly declared, '[The] new Indian policy...was born of and nursed by the women of this association [the Women's National Indian Association]."⁴⁴ Shortly after the passage of the Allotment Act, Dawes commissioned Alice Fletcher, an anthropologist and member of the WNIA, to conduct a nationwide survey of the government's Indian school system. Fletcher's seven-hundred page report ended with an emphatic appeal that more and better Indian schools must be a national priority.⁴⁵ These white, maternalist reformers, of which the WNIA was comprised, played a key role in both the creation of the Dawes Act and the dramatic increase in federal funding to American Indian education, including specifically domestic training for Indigenous girls.

The promotion of private property and Indian assimilation to Anglo gender roles extended back to early colonial objectives in the beginning years of the United States government. The 1790 passage of the Trade and Intercourse Act, promoted by George Washington and Secretary of War Henry Knox, implemented a two-fold agenda of ceding tribal lands to the United States government and assimilating Indigenous men and women into life-ways that were considered 'civilized' and embedded with normative

⁴³ Cary C. Collins, ed. *Assimilationist's Agent: My Life as a Superintendent in the Indian Boarding School System*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004. P. xxiii

⁴⁴ Margaret D. Jacobs *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. P. 145

⁴⁵ Frederick E. Hoxie *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. p. 25

assumptions about appropriate male and female roles in a colonized, civilized society. As historian Tom Holm summarizes, "Indian men were urged to 'give up the hunt,' till the fields, and care for livestock; Native women were advised to give up their agricultural pursuits, stay in a home, and spin wool."⁴⁶ The formation of Bureau of Indian Affairs Indian education curricula, implemented in off-reservation Indian boarding schools one hundred years later demonstrated a fundamental continuity of a colonial agenda rooted in normative assumptions about both gender and race.

A number of treaties, negotiated with Pacific Northwest tribes even prior to the passage of the Dawes Act, promised education programs that targeted assimilation through sex-segregated vocational education. The 1854 Medicine Creek Treaty with the Nisqually, Squaxin, Puyallup, and Steilacoom tribes promised that an agricultural and industrial school would be free to the children of said tribes for a period of twenty years, with expenses paid by the federal government. The 1855 Treaty of Point Elliot, signed by tribes of the greater Puget Sound region, contained the clause "to furnish them with schools, teachers, farmers and farming implementation, blacksmiths and carpenter, with shops of those trades."⁴⁷ Although like many government treaties made with Indigenous communities, these treaties were not fulfilled; initial federal funding toward Indian education began for a limited number of on-reservation day schools in the mid-nineteenth century. Also, church-sponsored missionary programs of vocational and religious education substantially preceded federally-funded initiatives, reaching back at least into the eighteenth century. These early efforts signified the powerful connection between land appropriation, cultural assimilation and education, particularly vocational education,

⁴⁶ Tom Holm. *The Great Confusion* . P. 3

⁴⁷ Melissa D. Parkhurst *To Win the Indian Heart: Music at Chemawa Indian School*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2014. P. 23

education that would be enacted in the Allotment Era. And they were built on a long tradition of mission education toward Indigenous people, which focused on re-gendering Indigenous culture through vocational education.

It is important to distinguish Indigenous education from colonial assimilation education, represented by United States government boarding schools. Indigenous communities of the Pacific Northwest had complex systems of education long before non-Natives came to the region. Different Indigenous perceptions of the land and concepts of education were strikingly at odds with the settler colonial paradigm of the nuclear family, private property and liberal individualism.⁴⁸ Indigenous forms of learning in medicine, mathematics, literature, science, music, dance, and history were largely transmitted by family and extended community, whereas the federal off-reservation boarding school paradigm was designed to separate children from their families and larger Indigenous communities.⁴⁹ The United States government Indian education was an attempt to replace one form of learning and identity construction with another.

The majority of historiographical work on US Government Indian education during the period of its apex, through the early 1900s, has focused on Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Carlisle was the oldest government operated off-

⁴⁸ Joel Spring, *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States*. 3rd ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2001. P. 16. Spring connects concepts of Protestant work ethic, private property and farming to the Government agenda of Indian education, tracing the connection back to Thomas Jefferson, writing "Jefferson was convinced that the cultural transformation of Native Americans was the key to acquiring tribal lands. If Native Americans could be transformed into yeomen farmers who live on farms and do not depend on hunting, then they would not need vast tracts of wilderness in which to hunt. In his first annual message to Congress in 1801, he informed the members that 'efforts to introduce among them [Indians] the implements and practice of husbandry and of the household arts' were successful. 'They are becoming more and more sensible of the superiority of this dependence for clothing and subsistence over the precarious resources of hunting and fishing.'"

⁴⁹ Clifford E. Trafzer, Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, Lorene Sisquoc, ed. *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue: Voices and Images from Sherman Institute*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2012.

reservation Indian boarding school, opened in 1879 by Captain Richard Pratt. Carlisle, under the leadership of Pratt, is largely credited with setting the model for the over two hundred federal Indian schools that would be established throughout the United States over the next four decades. What is largely under-acknowledged is that Chemawa Indian School was commissioned at the same time as Carlisle, opened a year after Carlisle, making it the second oldest off-reservation Indian boarding school, and the oldest Indian school still in operation. Chemawa's founder, U.S. Army Captain M.C. Wilkinson, worked along side Richard Pratt lobbying for government funding for creation of both Carlisle and Chemawa. And through the opening years of Carlisle and Chemawa, Pratt and Wilkinson corresponded regularly regarding the development of both schools.⁵⁰ The story of Chemawa Indian School, and the distinct ways in which its leaders and students interpreted and responded to broader BIA educational policy is worthy of more consideration.

Origins and Early History of Chemawa Indian School

US Army Captain Melville Carey Wilkinson experienced a turning point in his life while working as an aid-de-camp for the US Army in the 1878 Paiute-Bannock war. Wilkinson commanded a gun boat on the Columbia River near Wallula. He ordered his men, all heavily armed, to fire upon a large group of mostly noncombatant Palouse, who lined the shore of the river. The result of this largely unprovoked attack, led by Wilkinson's own aggressive firing into the crowd, resulted in the death of men, women

⁵⁰ Cary C. Collins "The Broken Crucible of Assimilation: Forest Grove Indian School and the Origins of Off-Reservation Boarding School Education in the West." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (2000)

and children, whose bodies ‘lay in every direction’ along the banks of the Columbia.⁵¹ Weeks after this slaughter on the Columbia, which was praised by U.S. Army General Howard as ‘efficient’, Wilkinson requested a leave of absence in order to seek a new career in Indian education, convinced that a military solution to Indian affairs was futile.

Wilkinson, a member of the 107th New York Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War worked as a military instructor at Howard University after the war and helped bring Indigenous students to Howard. After his leave following the Paiute-Bannock war, in March of 1879, Wilkinson went to Washington D.C., where he befriended retired Army General Richard Pratt. Wilkinson lobbied along side Pratt for the U.S. Government to establish two off-reservation Indian boarding schools, one on the east coast and one on the west coast. In June of that year the government approved funding for both schools. Although funding came more quickly to Pratt, who opened Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle Pennsylvania in 1879, Wilkinson, after complaining vociferously to the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the lack of promised funds, officially opened Forest Grove Indian School, later named Chemawa Indian School, in Forest Grove, Oregon February 25th, 1880. The advent of both Chemawa and Carlisle marked the emergence of a federal operated system of schools with the explicit goal of assimilating Indigenous youth.⁵²

Wilkinson had a great fondness and respect for Richard Pratt and saw many parallels between himself and the more well-known man. Both men had extensive military careers and had worked as educators in military-style, Industrial schooling with both Black and Indigenous students, Wilkinson at Howard University and Pratt in the

⁵¹ Cary C. Collins "The Broken Crucible of Assimilation: Forest Grove Indian School and the Origins of Off-Reservation Boarding School Education in the West." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (2000): 470.

⁵² Cary C. Collins "Forest Grove Indian School and the Origins of Off-Reservation Boarding School Education in the West" *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 101:4, 2000

formation of his military-style Indian prison school at Fort Marion in Florida and his visit to the Hampton Institute. Although both men, in their efforts to create Carlisle and Chemawa, saw education, not military intervention, as the necessary response to U.S. Government's problematic relationship with Indigenous communities, both men relied heavily on a regimented, military-style educational paradigm that made manual labor and assimilation to white culture central to that educational paradigm.

Chemawa Indian School, or The Forest Grove School, as it was initially called, opened under Wilkinson's leadership in 1880 with 4 girls and 14 boys who were largely tasked with building the school's original buildings and establishing systems of farming. By the turn of the century, at the school's now current location in Salem, Oregon, the campus had expanded to more than three hundred acres and by 1920 the school enrolled 900 students from 90 Western tribes including Haida, Tlingit, Puyallup, Klamath, Columbia River, Modoc, Nez Perce and Hupa. Students traveled from Alaska, Washington, Montana, Idaho, California and Oregon to attend Chemawa. By 1899 the U.S. government had opened twenty-four off-reservation Indian boarding schools, with an average daily attendance throughout the system of 6,263 students.⁵³

M.C. Wilkinson's intense nature and, in some cases, fanaticism for control and clear lack of perspective on the needs and wants of the Indigenous communities led to his dismissal as school superintendent several years after the school opened. Wilkinson was known for forcibly removing children from their homes, without the consent of families, as well as bribing families to enroll their children. Although it was actually legal for BIA agents to forcibly transfer Indigenous children to BIA schools until 1905, Wilkinson's

⁵³ K. Tsianina Lomawaima. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. P. 6

actions became so offensive to tribal communities, that other Chemawa administrators voiced concerns about his leadership, including his policy of keeping children in school for multiple years without allowing them home visits.⁵⁴ Local resistance on the part of the white community as well as the substantial Indigenous communities in the region played a significant role in Wilkinson's ousting. BIA administrators and policy leaders understood that they could not engage in their educational project without establishing a level of trust and buy-in from regional Indigenous communities, especially in a locality where relatively large Indigenous communities resided in proximity to the school and to white settler communities. Because of high death rates of Chemawa students in the first few years of opening, the school became known amongst tribal communities, including the Lower Spokanes as "a place from which students never return" and many tribes actively resisted sending their children.⁵⁵ Agitation and resistance to Wilkinson demonstrated an assertion of power on the part of regional Indigenous communities to inform and shape the school.

The following reflection from Richard Pratt, written years after the establishment of Chemawa and Carlisle Indian Schools, highlights the strategy of assimilation that both Pratt and Wilkinson zealously believed would 'save' Indigenous peoples, by saving them from themselves:

I was used in wars to enforce my country's...scheme of a supremacy worse than slavery over the 300,000, native aborigines, which compelled them to their own native land to live apart from the American family, amenable to a tyrannous un-American system which forces them to become dependents on a remote Bureau control, potentially engaged in perpetuating and enlarging itself by restraining them from participation in our American civilization and life. These experiences plainly showed that, through forcing the Negroes to live among us and become

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁵ Cary C. Collins "Forest Grove Indian School and the Origins of Off-Reservation Boarding School Education in the West" *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 101:4, 2000 p. 474

producers, slavery became a more humane and real civilizer, Americanizer, and promoter of usefulness for the Negro than was our Indian system through its policy of tribally segregating them on reservations and denying this participation.⁵⁶

Pratt's astonishing celebration of slavery as an assimilationist institution in this passage illuminates the logic of the educational paradigm at Carlisle and Chemawa. That paradigm closely linked the civilizing and saving of Indigenous people to manual labor and constructing a controlled model for lifeways in the home and in work. Pratt's statement also highlights the significant relationship between the manual training of Blacks in the south during Reconstruction and the vocational education of Indigenous youth in federal boarding schools. The ultimate goal of all Indian schools commissioned by the BIA was the assimilation of Indigenous youth into white culture and lifeways. Although both schools began with this firm assimilationist foundation, embodied by both Pratt and Wilkinson, the schools would evolve in their own, distinct fashions. And Chemawa Indian School would endure as the oldest off-reservation Indian boarding school still in operation today.

According to David Wallace Adams, in his seminal work on Indian boarding schools, the four-part goal of BIA Indian education was to teach work in the form of practical skills and trades, to teach the values of individualism (specifically in opposition to a tribal community autonomy, such as that which had been achieved by some Indigenous peoples in Indian Territory prior to the Civil War), to civilize Indigenous youth through their conversion to Christianity and, lastly to teach citizenship training.⁵⁷

K Tsianina Lomawaima, in her story of student resistance at Chilocco Indian School in

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 454

⁵⁷ David Wallace Adams. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995. P. 22

Oklahoma in the early twentieth century, describes BIA education policy as such, “Tribal/communal identity, primitive language, heathen religion; these pernicious influences would be rooted out and effaced in the construction of a new kind of American citizen.”⁵⁸ The 1889 Chemawa school rules, as outlined by then Chemawa Superintendent G.M. Irwin reveal the rigidity and objectives of obedience and conformity outlined to achieve such assimilationist goals at Chemawa and many other BIA schools.

Rule 1: Calls for School Chapel, Prayers and work must be answered promptly by all pupils unless excused on account of sickness or engaged in regular duties

Rule 2: Pupils must not leave the grounds nor the boys must not go to the girls side of the grounds or the girls go to the boys side except to perform regular duties or by the permission of the matron or the disciplinarian.

Rule 3: All pupils must work half of the day and attend school half of the day unless excused by the principal on account of sickness.

Rule 4: No communications in any but the English language will be allowed except by special permit from the superintendent or by someone acting for him.

Rule 5: No communication between boys and girls will be allowed except in the presence of someone in authority and then in the English language only and in such a time as to be heard and understood by the party or parties present.

Rule 6: Any or all written communications between boys and girls is persistently forbidden in any place about the grounds.

Rule 7: As politeness is a part of education teachers and all in authority must compel attention from the boys and girls to the manner of answering and asking questions and to all these permits that require teaching for quality.⁵⁹

These early school rules espoused that student activity was to be strictly regimented.

Margaret Jacobs, in her work on settler colonialism and Maternalism, addresses the strict monitoring especially of girls’ bodies, in the enforcement of a colonizing, assimilationist

⁵⁸ K. Tsianina Lomawaima. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. P. xi

⁵⁹ RG 75 BIA Chemawa Indian School, ‘*Rules for Chemawa School*’ 1889, Box 1, CH 12. National Archives, Seattle WA

educational paradigm. “Transforming Indigenous girls’ bodies to conform to white ideals and ‘keeping them clean’ required careful monitoring of and ‘protection’ of the girls’ sexuality.”⁶⁰ This level of sexual surveillance was evident in the separation of boys and girls on the Chemawa campus.

Language, particularly the use of English, was also an important part of this regimentation and assimilation, as was the separation between boys and girls. Chemawa, like many off-reservation BIA schools, was heavily segregated by gender and, thus, what the girls learned and did during their days was very different from what the boys learned and did. Work, beyond academics, was a significant part of students’ day and a significant part of the school project. Student labor was an important tool in the assimilation project. The strict enforcement of rigid labor was the method through which assimilation was deemed possible. As Wilkinson lectured while at Chemawa, “The strictest attention is given to order and system which the Indian is entirely deficient in, but which they adapt themselves to with readiness and pleasure.”⁶¹

Indigenous youth participation in off-reservation boarding school life was in many cases immensely painful for entire tribal communities. Yet some tribal communities, having endured decades of horrific assault and exploitation, wearily saw this new educational policy as an opportunity of cautious hope for tribal youth. Indigenous communities had many reason to not place their trust in the BIA, yet that trust, even if given with a guarded hand, was necessary for the sustainability of the school and local school administrators understood this. With reluctance, concern but also the

⁶⁰ Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. P. 309

⁶¹ Collins, ‘*Forest Grove Indian School*’, p. 475

possibility of hope and opportunity, Indigenous families sent their children to Chemawa. A number of prominent tribal chiefs in the region, including Chief Lot of the Spokane Tribe, would enroll their children at Chemawa.⁶² Students came, many by individual choice, to Chemawa with the goal of opportunity through education as well as simple survival, given many difficult home circumstances, as will be documented in later chapters of this dissertation. By 1900 the policy of forcibly removing Indigenous children from their homes and sending them to government schools was largely discouraged. A major catalyst for applying to Chemawa for many families was a simple lack of access to white, colonial education, an education that some tribal members saw was necessary in order for their children to secure viable means of self-support and also to succeed in a dominant white society.⁶³

Many students living on reservations and in rural areas simply could not get to public school and their only opportunity for attaining a secondary or even primary education was to attend an off-reservation boarding school. Access to public education was especially scarce in the early years of Chemawa, up through the early nineteen hundreds. The federal government established a contract system which channeled money from the BIA to help subsidize Indigenous youth enrollment in public schools. This

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 475

⁶³ In communication written by parents, students and Chemawa administrators in a number of the student files reviewed in this dissertation speak of circumstances in which the student's well-being was referred to in their request for admittance to Chemawa. Specific examples include: *Chemawa student file #159 Tillie Souvigner*: In 1915 she wrote letter to Superintendent Wadsworth asking him to admit three children belonging to a widow who is in debt and needs help. *Chemawa student file #209 & #211 Annie & Lela Wilson*: Their mother died and both girls asked to be admitted to the school. They had previously attended Samish Public School '99-'05 *Chemawa Student File #242 Cora Zeigler*: In 1912 she wrote a letter to Commissioner of Indian Affairs asking for special admittance. Her mother had died and her father couldn't work and raise the children. *Chemawa Student file #259 Annie Loftus*: Annie had attended public school from 1907-1913. In a letter she wrote that public schools in Ketchikan did not admit Indian children and she requested access to Chemawa. Annie graduated Salem High School in 1919.

system was necessary because Indigenous families whose land allotments were held in trust by the government were considered wards and were thus exempt from paying local property taxes that subsidized public schools. In 1900, 118 Indigenous youth held contracts for public school subsidies. By 1927 over 37,000 Indigenous youth held contracts.⁶⁴ The students at Chemawa represented a group of Indigenous youth who were vying for access to a BIA school and, subsequently, access to a regional public high school.

Also, as a result of Indian Wars, starvation and destitution, many tribal communities were displaced, living in exile. Chemawa and other off-reservation boarding schools represented for some Indigenous families a means of stability and socialization for their children. After the Nez Perce were defeated and exiled from their tribal lands in the War of 1877, tribal members saw BIA residential schools as an opportunity for their children, as their displaced families struggled to survive. By 1883, three years after the opening of Chemawa school, twenty-six of the students were Nez Perce.⁶⁵

As documented in research on many off-reservation Indian schools during this period, a significant minority of the applicants were either orphans or youngsters living in destitute poverty with a single parent who simply could not raise multiple children

⁶⁴ K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa McCarty. *To Remain an Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*. Multicultural Education Series. Edited by James A. Banks New York: Teachers College Press, 2006. P. 47

⁶⁵ Arthur Maxwell Taylor, 'Tradition to Acculturation: A Case Study on the Impacts Created by Chemawa Indian Boarding School Upon the Nez Perce Family Structure 1879-1945', Master of Arts Thesis, Loyola University Chicago, 2010 p. 12

alone.⁶⁶ Out of the 2169 students who enrolled in Chemawa between 1890 and 1913, thirty one percent had only one living parent and ten percent were orphans.⁶⁷ It was also common in student applications for families with two parents to express financial distress and request for their children's admission to the school because they could not afford to care for their children. According to a survey taken by Chemawa graduates in 1933, sixteen of the seventeen female graduates wrote that their families could not afford to pay for their school supplies, clothing or transportation to Chemawa. Thirteen of these girls had only one living parent.⁶⁸ Students at Chemawa did not come from financial and social privilege. For a large number of students, Chemawa represented a place of stability and opportunity, despite all the failings of the school.

Chemawa Indian School Vocational Curricula

From the opening of Chemawa Indian School through the 1930s, the purpose of the school curricula was to assimilate Indigenous youth into white culture and to train them to work in agricultural and industrial low skilled, low pay, manual labor. The vocational aspect of the curricula facilitated a system in which students spent large portions of their day doing drudgery work for the school, cooking, cleaning, planting, facilities maintenance and repair. The curricula for girls specifically targeted menial

⁶⁶ Brenda J. Child *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families 1900-1940*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. This is also evident in Chemawa school records between 1890 and 1914.

⁶⁷ Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, *1890-1914 Student Records, Chemawa Indian School*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

⁶⁸ Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Student Survey Response Forms, Chemawa Indian School 1933*, National Archives, Seattle WA

domestic labor. Girls, many of whom came to Chemawa by choice seeking opportunity and advancement through education, resisted the vocational curricula. Despite students' consistent demands for more professional and academic training, BIA educational policy leaders stubbornly maintained a vocational agenda through the 1930s. The stagnation of the Chemawa curricula during this period represented the BIA's resistance to the changing role Indigenous youth were advocating for in broader society. It also represented the entrenchment of a social efficiency educational paradigm that resisted the changing roles women were playing in the labor market.

The first graduates of Chemawa Indian School in the 1880s received the equivalent of a fifth grade education. In 1888 curricula expanded so that graduates gained an eighth grade education and, by 1917 the school program expanded again to a tenth grade education. Chemawa Indian School did not offer the equivalent of a full four-year high school diploma until 1926.⁶⁹ It is important to note that this gradual expansion of school curricula through the secondary grades was not uncommon in rural areas. Also, it is telling to note that the school's expansion to the tenth grade occurred in the same year as the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act. One possible interpretation of this connection is that the expansion of federal funding for vocational education in public education made the extension of BIA education possible.

According to Chemawa exam records between 1917 and 1930, the courses offered to senior level students included English, Physics, Citizenship, Rural Economics and History.⁷⁰ The restrictive curriculum, even after 1926, barred graduates from the possibility of attending higher education because they simply were not offered courses,

⁶⁹ Chemawa Student File, *Eva Bean File #460*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

⁷⁰ Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, *1917-1930 Exam Records Chemawa Indian School*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

such as higher mathematics, chemistry and Latin, which were required for university admittance. By 1921 the majority of Chemawa graduates went on to attend Salem High School, a path which allowed access to university admittance as well as access to professional fields beyond manual labor and low-pay and unpaid domestic labor.⁷¹ Students had to initiate the application process to Salem High School and had to pay the cost of supplies and transportation out of their own funds. It was not until over a decade after Chemawa graduates began attending Salem High School that Chemawa began offering a full four-year high school program in 1926.

Boys and girls at Chemawa took the same academic courses in every grade level, which constituted half of their learning program, as was customary in Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. The other half of the curriculum was the vocational, or industrial, program. A general grade report card used by the school in 1917 offers a snapshot of the vastly different courses offered boys versus girls in the vocational education curricula [see table 1]. In the area of vocational, or Industrial education, across a 14-year period, between 1917 and 1930, boys were consistently offered a choice in courses in Blacksmithing, Engineering, Carpentry, Tailoring, Mechanics, Printing and Plumbing.⁷² During this same time, according to exam records, year-to-year courses offered girls in vocational education changed constantly, yet the options offered were minimal. From 1917 to 1920, ninth and tenth grade girls were offered the choice of courses in Home Economics, Nursing or Teaching and all girls were required to take a course titled ‘Child Studies’. Between 1920 and 1925 girls in the ninth and tenth grades were only offered

⁷¹ Chemawa Student File, *Marguerite Chamberlin File #317*, National Archives, Seattle, WA.

⁷² Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, *1917-1930 Exam Records Chemawa Indian School*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

courses in Home Economics. No options within this category, including Teaching, Nursing or Child Studies are listed. During the first year that the school offered a full four-year high school program, 1926, and in the next academic year as well, female students in the eleventh and twelfth grades were offered courses in Nursing, Home Economics and Teaching. Between 1928 to 1930, female high school students were only offered vocational courses in Home Economics. Thus, the opportunities for courses outside of Home Economics were inconsistent and not long-lasting. The one consistent and dominant course for girls in the vocational arm of education at Chemawa was Home Economics.

Table 1: 1917 Chemawa General Grade Report Card[from student file #303-May Belle Heay]

Boys vocation courses-Agriculture: *Dairy, Farming, Fruit growing, gardening, poultry raising, stock raising*. Industrial: *Blacksmithing, Carpentry, Engineering (electrical/light, firing, forging, machine work, plumbing, steamfitting), Masonry, Mechanical drawing, Paining & decorating, Printing, Shoe and Harness fitting, Tailoring, Wagon Making, Woodworking*.

Girls vocation courses- Home Economics: *Domestic Science (care of home, cooking & sewing, making menus, laundering, kitchen & gardening, poultry raising, care of milk & butter)*. Domestic Arts (*plain sewing, dress making, embroidering, weaving, millinery, buying and household accounts*.)

Boys & Girls Academic: Arithmetic, civics, current events, drawing, English, geography, literary study, Nature study & gardening, penmanship, physiology, reading, spelling, physics.

Home Economics, the primary vocational arm of the curriculum for girls, was a requirement, not an option, during the years of this study. Indian vocational education policy dictated that only half the day was spent on academics and the other half was spent doing laundry, cleaning, sewing and cooking for the school. The course of study for girls in the required vocational division of the school represented a scientific breakdown of manual labor done within the home. For example, Course of Study for Laundry included

a class on starching, folding, bleaching, ironing and sorting clothing. Female students had to demonstrate ‘mastery’ of these abilities in order to advance in school [see table 2]. This manual labor focused squarely on domestic training for girls and offered minimal options within this field of study.⁷³ The narrow focus of study on domestic labor severely limited female graduates’ employment and continuing education options, unless they independently pursued a four-year high school degree at a school such as Salem High School.⁷⁴ K. Tsianina Lomwaima’s research on girls’ vocational education at Chilocco Indian School in Oklahoma, during this same period, affirms that the domestic education implemented at Chilocco, Chemawa and other BIA schools was meant more to functionally support the daily running of the school rather than to actually teach professional skills. She writes, “Habituation to simple labor clearly superseded any truly vocational goals (training for employment) for Indian girls.”⁷⁵

⁷³ Cary C. Collins, ed. *Assimilationist's Agent: My Life as a Superintendent in the Indian Boarding School System*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004. p. xlvii Collins describes the campus under Edwin Chalcraft’s tenure as superintendent from 1904-1912 as including 400 acres of agricultural track, a horse barn, a twenty eight stall dairy barn and a feed-storage silo. Chalcraft wrote in his memoirs “The usual plan of arranging the pupils in two divisions, so that each could be in the class rooms part of the day, one while the other was attending to their industrial duties, was in vogue at Chemawa.”

⁷⁴ SuAnn M. Reddick “The Evolution of Chemawa Indian School: From Red River to Salem, 1825-1885” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 101: 4, 2000

⁷⁵ K. Tsianina Lomawaima. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. P. 83

TABLE 2: 1919 [From File #431: Gertrude Caisse]

**Form 5-297C LAUNDERING/ RECORD CARD-
PREVOCATIONAL DIVISION**

"Each girl should devote 15 weeks to the work of this department during the three prevocational years. When she has accomplished the work as outlined in the course of study in a satisfactory manner, a suitable rating should be recorded. Ratings must be based on a practical application as well as a knowledge of the principles involved."

Categories for grading:

Sorting Clothes
Removing Stains
Setting colors
Softening of water
Washing, sterilizing, and rinsing
Bleaching
Bluing
Starching
Drying clothes
Sprinkling and folding for ironing
Ironing of unstarched clothing
Ironing starched clothing
Folding

In 1916 regional BIA Superintendent Charles Buchanan submitted an annual report of Chemawa Indian School. Buchanan's major concluding points in the report were that the school must establish more comprehensive documentation of both student and staff progress and must focus more on practical, rather than academic, education. He argued that vocational education must be the main target of learning. Based on the emerging documentation of exam records, beginning in 1917, Buchanan's report was a catalyst for better record keeping on the part of school administrators. The gap in evidence prior to 1917 meant that, for the purpose of this research, I had to rely more on broader Bureau of Indian Affairs curriculum policy, including Estelle Reel's earlier Uniform Course of Study, as well as educational booklets printed and distributed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Buchanan's second concluding point of his 1916 report on Chemawa, highlighted the necessity of a curriculum that focused on practical skills and knowledge. This conclusion reflected the long-standing significance of vocational education in Indian

education, but also reflected the increased emphasis on vocational education nationally, as public high schools expanded their curricula to include agricultural and industrial education in response to business advocacy and public funding.⁷⁶ In the conclusion of his report, Buchanan wrote,

It is advisable that the teachers keep in closer touch with the industrial and domestic departments and activities of the school and bring their class room work and problems into closer relations therewith, generally. For the same purpose set forth it would seem to be necessary either to adapt the principles of the present basic texts to the daily life and needs of the student through original problems based on such daily life and needs, or else to adopt a set of basic texts that would do so (though it is difficult indeed to find texts that will fully do so).⁷⁷

Buchanan's recommendation to integrate vocational and academic learning, with particular attention to practical learning, was reflected in the 1917-1918 exam records in which the only change to academic courses for fourth year [senior level] female students was the inclusion of a Child Studies class.⁷⁸

At this same time, around the nation, vocational education programs were quickly expanding in public high schools. The Smith-Hughes Act, passed by Congress in 1917, opened the door for thousands of public schools to receive federal funds for

⁷⁶ Herbert M. Kliebard. *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876-1946*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1999. The passage of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 marked a fundamental push, on a federal level, for more vocational education in education yet this bill was preceded by decades of vocational education already being implemented in schools, especially government-funded Industrial Indian schools, across the nation. The intention of the Smith-Hughes Act was to provide work training for students in public secondary education. It is a relevant distinction that the funding in the act was provided only for girls' courses in domestic education; no funding was provided for girls' courses in commercial, office or business training. The impetus for the Smith-Hughes act was a philosophical and political calling for industrial efficiency in American society and education. David Snedden, perhaps the most vocal proponent of vocational education, who spent years rallying for its implementation leading up to 1917, questioned the relevancy of certain subjects, such as history, in secondary education. Rather, Snedden argued that efficiency standards in vocational education, rather than humanities and the arts, were at the heart of the new industrial society.

⁷⁷ Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1916-1940 Annual Reports, Chemawa Indian School, National Archives, Seattle, WA

⁷⁸ Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1917-1918 Exam Records Chemawa Indian School, National Archives, Seattle, WA

implementing vocational education programs. But the act stipulated that boys were to receive industrial education, while girls could learn to be dieticians, dressmakers or homemakers. It expressly did not allocate funds for girls' educational programs in commercial, office or business training. As Alice Kessler-Harris summarizes in her research on the history of wage-earning women in the United States,

In accepting the condition that homemaking be part of the educational process, and in acquiescing to existing job segmentation, advocates of vocational education for women fell into a predictable trap. For the new programs perpetuated familiar characteristics among women workers. They trained women expected to stay in the labor marked briefly to expect little upward mobility and to deflect their ambitions into marriage.⁷⁹

An important distinction that will be developed in later chapters, is that in the public system, both girls and boys were offered choices regarding paths of study. And although vocational education, and, particularly for girls, home economics was becoming more readily offered in public high schools, female students in those schools were choosing other options. This comparison is especially impactful considering the educational options offered Indigenous girls at Chemawa, and other BIA schools, were severely restricted to domestic manual labor training.

In 1926, at a point when Chemawa and other off-reservation BIA schools were experiencing their highest levels of enrollment, newly appointed Secretary of the Interior, Herbert Work, asked the Institute for Government Research to conduct a comprehensive study on Indian Affairs. The study published in 1928, led by Lewis Meriam and commonly known as The Meriam Report, was titled 'The Problem of Indian Administration.' Its goal was to identify problems within the BIA and offer solutions. The report's assessment of off-reservation BIA Indian schools found "itself obliged to

⁷⁹ Alice Kessler-Harris. *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982. P. 179

say frankly and unequivocally that the provisions for the care of Indian children in boarding schools are grossly inadequate.”⁸⁰ The report’s scathing review of BIA boarding schools highlighted as serious problems inadequate food and medical care of students, hiring and retention of poorly qualified educators, the uniform course of study and, notably, the outdated vocational education program.⁸¹ Its publication and circulation would signify a turning point in BIA Indian education.

In his recommendations for changes, W. Carson Ryan, one of the key education authors of the Meriam Report, stressed surprisingly progressive changes in BIA education. Ryan encouraged more educational emphasis on student expression, creativity and active learning. Ryan actually argued that the outdated, underfunded vocational training programs failed to teach students to be independent and, in fact, perpetuated the “problem of the Indian administration.”⁸² Although vocational education was critiqued directly as one of the major problems of BIA education policy in the Meriam Report, it would take years for changes to happen in schools such as Chemawa.

⁸⁰ K. Tsianina Lomawaima. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. P. 30

⁸¹ Jennifer L. Bertolt, *After the Meriam Report: W. Carson Ryan, Jr. and The Transformation of American Indian Education, 1928-1936*, Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, The Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, George Washington University, 2007. P. 3

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 170

CHAPTER 2: Disrupting the Boundaries of the ‘Total Institution’: Female Students Seeking Opportunity Beyond Chemawa’s Walls

“What can be better than a good housekeeper, a good homemaker?”
-Rena Mann, 1912 Chemawa Graduate

David Wallace Adams, in his seminal work on the U.S. system of Native American boarding schools, commented on the ideological claims of such institutions. “The tearing down of the old selves and the building of new ones could, of course, be carried out simultaneously. As the savage selves gave way, so the civilized selves would emerge. As a ‘total institution’ the boarding school was designed to systematically carry out this mission.”⁸³ Although in his notes, Adams clarifies that the schools’ control over students was not absolute, he links Erving Goffman’s definition of total institutions to Indian boarding schools.⁸⁴ This narrative has shaped our historical understanding of both the insular and controlled characteristics of these institutions. The image of off-reservation boarding schools as impenetrable compounds, an image that is perpetuated by Adams’ depiction of these schools as total institutions, excludes many real stories of Indigenous students who lived and studied in and beyond the walls of Indian boarding schools.

⁸³ David Wallace Adams. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995. P. 100

⁸⁴ Erving Goffman, in his research on asylums, characterizes ‘total institutions’ as places that are established to care for people who are incapable of caring for themselves and can be a threat to society. One of their primary purposes is to establish work-like tasks in order to justify themselves. They establish a paradigm of disculturation, loss of identity and loss of self-agency. Goffman identifies sanitariums, mental hospitals, army barracks and boarding schools as total institutions. Erving Goffman. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. New York: Double Day & Company, Inc., 1961.

The story of Indigenous girls at Chemawa Indian School, particularly their self-advocacy with respect to curricular choices transforms our understanding of how Indian boarding schools operated during this period and how students navigated and altered the boundaries of these institutions. A space for re-negotiation and a fluidity of boundaries existed at Chemawa and perhaps other Indian boarding schools because Bureau of Indian Affairs policy was, in itself, fluid, changing and complex. The policies, regulations and goals of individual schools, such as Chemawa Indian School, were continually redefined by local school leaders and did not indisputably mirror federal policy and ideology, as it was established by leaders in Washington, D.C.

The changing picture of the courses Indigenous girls attended and the schools in which they were enrolled between 1900 and 1930 reveals both the fluidity and complexity of local BIA school policy and the permeable boundaries of Chemawa Indian School itself. K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa McCarty, in their research on Native American education and their application of safety zone theory explain that growing numbers of Indigenous youth, between 1900 and 1930, were gaining access to government contracts which allowed them to attend public schools, despite being wards of the state and not paying local property taxes on reservation lands.⁸⁵ A significant trend that emerged in my research was the number of Chemawa students who were vying for access to this BIA school and then using it as a launch pad to access a regional public high school. This phenomenon explains the paradoxical comparison of evidence, one from Lomawaima and McCarty that growing numbers of Indigenous youth were accessing public education, and research from David Wallace Adams which attests to the

⁸⁵ K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa McCarty. *To Remain an Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*. Multicultural Education Series. Edited by James A. Banks New York: Teachers College Press, 2006. P. 47

growing enrollment of Indigenous youth in BIA schools during this same period. Evidence both from female students' writing as well as from school administrative documents demonstrate that Chemawa girls wanted access to education that provided economic and professional opportunity and were attending classes at schools beyond Chemawa in large numbers. Students sought out opportunities at a regional business college that offered commercial certification programs, as well as at regional public high schools that offered access to higher education. They also fought for professional certification programs in nursing within the Chemawa program. Action taken on the part of students was in direct response to gendered perceptions of Indigenous identity and demonstrated their adept ability to acculturate rather than assimilate, to educational opportunities within their environment. In this acculturation process female students engaged in self-advocacy in order to re-define the educational opportunities at their disposal, as they navigated and utilized the educational options at both a BIA school and regional public schools.

Lomawaima and McCarty, in their critical assessment of Native American education over the past century, use the term 'safety zones' to describe spaces in which Indigenous youth were allowed agency and self-expression within the colonizing BIA educational paradigm. Student action in these spaces-- for example young Indigenous school girls setting up play tribal camps in the playground at Ogalalla Boarding School-- were allowed by school administrators because they did not threaten the overall control of the government over Indigenous identity, education and, most importantly, resources.⁸⁶ In his recent research on New Mexico's Indian boarding schools during this same period,

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 1

John Gram uses Lomawaima and McCarty's safety zone theory to understand school policy, especially in relation to student agency. He writes,

Lomawaima's and McCarty's 'Safety Zone Theory' helps to make sense of some otherwise confusing actions taken by school officials. Certainly, there were times when the personnel of the Albuquerque and Santa Fe Schools made decisions or allowed activities that are puzzling in light of the nature of the federal boarding schools as colonizing institutions designed to destroy indigeneity... Beyond determining whether or not to confront some aspect of Indian culture or society, they had to decide if they had sufficient power to win the confrontation. In other words, they had to choose not only what battles they should fight, but what battles they could fight at any given time.⁸⁷

Gram's assessment of safety zone theory re-enforces the complexity of policy enforcement within various Indian boarding schools. School leaders had to assess-- within their local school communities-- what was a threat and what could be allowed as safe on the part of Indigenous youth action. Local administrative actions and school policies were complex, diverse and constantly in flux as they responded to student action and student voice.

The actions on the part of Chemawa school administrators was, as Gram describes, 'puzzling' in that leaders seemed to both restrict and embolden Indigenous youth with regards to access to various curricula and additional schooling. Again, the complexity of these responses highlights the diversity and inconsistency of local BIA school policy, which, in fact, allowed for Indigenous youth agency and autonomy. I argue that Indigenous youth agency in and beyond the school boundaries of Chemawa operated outside of what Lomawaima and McCarty define as a safety zone because student action, especially with regards to curricular and school choice, directly challenged the gender and racial identity restrictions the government sought to force upon Indigenous girls.

⁸⁷ John R. Gram *Education at the Edge of Empire: Negotiating Pueblo Identity in New Mexico's Indian Boarding Schools*. Seattle, Wa: University of Washington Press, 2015. P. 5

Lomowaima and McCarty, in their definition of ‘safety zone theory’, describe the Indian boarding school environment, much as did David Wallace Adams, with his reference to ‘total institutions’ as “arguably the most minutely surveilled and controlled federal institutions created to transform the lives of any group of Americans.”⁸⁸ Yet the actions of Indigenous girls at Chemawa demonstrates the permeability and malleability of these institutions. This chapter examines these complexities by investigating the curricular options offered Indigenous girls at Chemawa in comparison to regional public school curricula, as well as the voices of female students themselves as they challenged and navigated their educational opportunities in and beyond Chemawa.

Curricula: Chemawa vs. Public Education

In January of 1921, then Superintendent of Chemawa Harwood Hall wrote the following to acting Chemawa school Principal, Flora Iliff, regarding a specific request from two current Chemawa students, Marguerite Chamberlin and Frances Thrope, who wished to pursue a high school degree at Salem High School,

Concerning the adjusting of our course to that of Salem High, where the majority of our graduates continue their education, Professor Nelson emphatically approves the plan to follow our one semester of chemistry, which has already been given to our 9th year, with a semester of General Science, omitting the parts of the text book which deals with chemistry. I will add for your information that our graduates now enter Salem High (Junior Year) with 19 credits, out of a required 37 for graduation.⁸⁹

At the time of this letter Chemawa only offered courses through the tenth grade. This letter highlighted several significant points. First, it is evidence of Indigenous students’

⁸⁸ Lomowaima and McCarty *To Remain An Indian*, p. 2

⁸⁹ Chemawa Student File, *Marguerite Chamberlin File #317*, National Archives, Seattle, WA.

active enrollment—the majority of Chemawa’s graduates—in a regional public high school, a circumstance that is surprising given the existing literature on Indian education during this period. Second, because Chemawa ended at the tenth grade, school graduates’ demand for access to Salem High School represented their ambitions for more education, specifically a high school diploma, which was a considerably prestigious degree at this time, for white youth as well. And third, the fact that local public school officials and BIA administrators played an active role in negotiating Chemawa students’ enrollment in public high schools is a reflection of their response to Chemawa students’ demand for more educational access. Chemawa was not adequately fulfilling the educational needs on the part of students. Yet school leaders were acutely aware of this need and were responding to it.

The story of Marguerite Chamberlin’s and Frances Thorpes’ request to attend Salem High School represents the tensioned line of negotiation between student advocacy and BIA administrative control. Throughout the years of this study students were continually negotiating for changes in the school curricula and for extending their opportunities within and beyond the school. For female students, this advocacy predominantly took the form of requests for professional and higher education training that specifically went beyond the narrow vocational option of domestic education. I argue that despite the resiliency of a sex-segregated vocational curriculum, which severely restricted the opportunities of Indigenous girls, female students found many ways to self-advocate for their own educational opportunities and were able to use Chemawa as a launch pad to greater resources and professional options. Their

acculturation and self-advocacy demonstrated the malleability and permeability of BIA educational policy at Chemawa.

Contrary to common assumptions in existing scholarship regarding the operations of BIA schools, even after Chemawa had established a four-year high school degree program, Chemawa students sought enrollment at Salem High School, as well as Portland area high schools, while they attended Chemawa and while they continued to dorm at Chemawa.⁹⁰ As early as 1907 there is evidence of female students at Chemawa actively seeking enrollment at Salem High School and other area public high schools, in order that they could attain a high school diploma and the professional opportunities associated with such a credential.⁹¹ In student case files between 1907 through 1930 there are numerous examples of students directly requesting assistance from Chemawa administrators for access to Salem High School. In a 1921 letter written to the school Superintendent Harwood Hall, Principal Iliff writes that the “majority” of Chemawa graduates are going on to finish their high school degrees at Salem High School and in response to this demand, Chemawa should consider adding an eleventh and twelfth grade, in order to provide a full high school diploma to graduates.⁹² Chemawa graduates requested assistance from school administrators because, for most, in order to attend Salem High School, they had to continue boarding at Chemawa and then pay additional fees for transportation between the schools.

⁹⁰ Part of the year-long Chemawa ‘Outing Program’ included opportunities for Chemawa girls to stay in Portland area homes, doing part-time domestic work, while attending Portland area-high schools. Also, many students, once they had completed the course of study at Chemawa, requested to live on the school campus in order to attend near-by Salem High School.

⁹¹ See Chemawa Student File, *Elizabeth Frazier file #139*, National Archives, Seattle, WA and Chemawa Student File, *Annie Loftus File #259*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

⁹² Chemawa Student File, *Marguerite Chamberlin File #317*, National Archives, Seattle, WA.

A four-year high school diploma, from a state-accredited school offered a path towards higher education, something a degree from Chemawa could not. In an opinion piece published in the school paper, The Chemawa American in August of 1910, female student Rena Mann, a member of the Klamath tribe, wrote,

I know that my subject is an unpopular one, that an Indian girl should presume to even wish for higher training than that given by our generous government, is frowned upon by many very good friends of the Indian people who have, really, the Indian's best interests at heart. They may frown, they may object, and, in some cases, even forbid, but how about the Indian girl herself? Has she no choice in the matter? Our training, outside of the Academic department, has been of such a character that we are able to do housework, able to cook, to launder, to sew, and some of us have learned how to nurse and care for the sick. What more can we want? Why should an Indian girl who has had such advantages aspire to anything higher? What can be better than a good housekeeper a good homemaker? We, who desire more education do not say that any thing is better, but we do say that if our tastes and inclinations urge us to go on with our studies, we should be encouraged, not discouraged and made to feel that we are ungrateful for what has been done for us. Will a few years more of study hurt us? Are we all to be considered Indians, with all the limitations the word usually suggests? Are none of us to be considered as individuals? In closing, I would say that I do not think all Indians girls who graduate from schools like this should enter higher school, but I do say that if I or any girl is really eager for a higher education it should not be denied us.⁹³

Rena Mann's opinion piece is, perhaps, exceptional in its forwardness. But the fact that it was published in the school paper suggests that the opinion did not exist in total isolation. Mann pointedly highlighted work in domestic labor in her critique of the school. But in a very perceptive manner, Mann did not pass a value judgment on domestic work itself. Rather her call was for choice in education. Her writing is compelling because she argues that choice should be available to her and other female students, yet implies that it is not, thus highlighting her and other students' clear awareness of the restrictions of the education offered them.

⁹³ Rena Mann "Higher Education for Indian Girls" *The Chemawa American*. August edition, (1910).

A comparison of curricula offered at Chemawa Indian School, versus public secondary schools in Oregon during this time, highlights why there was such a draw for Indigenous students who had no other secondary education options other than Chemawa, to push beyond this boundary in order to access public higher education. This contrast is even more stark when vocational education options for girls are compared.

Although by the 1930s, Indigenous youth could attend Salem public high school tuition free, they had to apply for funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs in order to board on the Chemawa campus so that they could commute daily to Salem High School. In a 1934 application submitted by Chemawa administration to the Office of Indian Affairs, five students were recommended for funding to attend Salem High School.

Included in the application was an explanation for each students' request;

- Bernice Clairmont, of the Flathead Agency, to secure better high school preparation before entrance to a hospital for nurse's training
- Francis Thomas, of the Warm Springs Agency, to secure a better foundation for college entrance and the further study of music
- Winfred Parker, of the Tongue River Agency, to secure better preparation for college entrance
- Dorothy Parker, of the Taholah Agency, to secure better preparation for college entrance
- Clarence Emmons, of the Yankton Agency, to secure better preparation for college entrance⁹⁴

In this example female Chemawa students were specifically requesting choice and options in their educational paths. All of these students were seeking curricular options outside of vocational education. These applicants, four out of five of whom were girls, all sought access to higher education and professional certifications that Chemawa could not offer, even with a four-year high school degree.

⁹⁴ RG 75 Chem Indian School Decimal Files '24-'55 Box 32: 809.2 'Tuition Public Schools', National Archives, Seattle WA

A comparison of the school curriculum at Chemawa and Salem High School, as well as several Portland area high schools during this period highlights the significant differences between academic and professional preparation from these schools and what it meant for post-graduation opportunities. The first public high school in Salem, Oregon opened in 1905, with its first graduating class in the spring of 1906. In 1907 seven of the nine high school faculty members held college degrees.⁹⁵ Upon its opening the high school immediately experienced high student demand and continually dealt with issues of over-crowding due to unexpectedly high enrollment. It is significant to note that there is evidence of Chemawa students requesting admittance to Salem High School in 1907, a year after its opening. Indigenous youth on the Chemawa campus, as with the local youth in Salem, saw the new public high school as a resource that they wanted to benefit from. By 1914 the school enrolled 752 students.

An article printed in the local Salem paper, *The Statesman*, the spring of 1905, stated “The average taxpayer feels that a graduate of the high school should have some practical knowledge in addition to book learning. There is a great need for a good commercial course, not a smattering course of one year, but a good four years’ commercial course to include literature, history and English. Such a course will be very popular in Salem and of practical value to the young people of Salem.”⁹⁶ The statement reflected the balance of curricula that would define Salem High School for the next several decades. A manual training program that included classes in free-hand drawing and clay modeling for all students and woodworking for boys and needlework for girls

⁹⁵ Constance Weinman, *A History of the Salem Public Schools 1893-1916*

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Oregon, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, August 1932, P. 58

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51

was introduced as an optional course in 1909. In 1913 an agricultural studies program was introduced into the curriculum. Although the school offered courses in commercial studies, and several vocational education courses, the academic curriculum defined the program. And, most significantly, the vocational and manual training courses were offered as electives, whereas the academic Course of Study was required. The 1915 Course of Study for Salem High School consisted of three different academic course offerings, Classical, Scientific and Literary [see table 3]:

Table 3: 1915 Course of Study for Salem High School

Freshman Year:

Classical- Grammar, Algebra, Greece, Latin, Rome
Scientific- Grammar, Algebra, Physical Geography, German
Literary- Grammar, Algebra, Physical Geography, Greece, Rome

Sophomore Year:

Classical-Rhetoric, Algebra, Medieval History, Latin, Plane Geometry
Scientific- Rhetoric, Algebra, Botany, German, Plane Geometry
Literary- Rhetoric, Algebra, Botany, Medieval History, Plane Geometry

Junior Year:

Classical- Plane Geometry, English Literature, Physics, Latin, Solid Geometry, German
Scientific- Plane Geometry, English Literature, Physics, German, Solid Geometry
Literary- Plane Geometry, English Literature, Physics, English History, Solid Geometry

Optional courses offered in addition to the three-branches of the Course of Study included classes in music, drawing, stenography, domestic science, typewriting and manual training.

Because of Chemawa’s Outing Program, a work program that placed female students in the homes of local white women to work as domestic help, Chemawa girls were attending Portland area public schools while working as domestic help in private homes. By 1928 thirty-three female Chemawa students were enrolled in Portland public schools.⁹⁷ Between 1913 and 1914, the breakdown of course of study of graduating seniors (12th grade) at Jefferson High School and Lincoln High School, both in Portland, Oregon, were as follows [see table 4]:

Table 4: Comparison

<p>1913- Jefferson High School: (12th grade co-ed) *optional courses of study, with selections marked by gender College Prep (15 girls/ 9 boys) Latin (9 girls/ 4 boys) English (7 girls/ 13 boys) German (6 girls/ 2 boys) Commercial (0 girls/ 6 boys) Teaching (7 girls/ 1 boy) Manual Training (2 boys)* boys only option Domestic Science (2 girls) *girls only option⁹⁸</p>	<p>1914-Lincoln High School: (12th grade co-ed) *optional courses of study, with selections marked by gender College Prep (1 girl/ 3 boys) Latin (2 girls/ 0 boys) English (3 girls/ 12 boys) German (6 girls/ 2 boys) Commercial (2 girls/ 3 boys) Teaching (6 girls/ 0 boys) Domestic Arts & Science (2 girls) *girls only option⁹⁹</p>
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In comparison, female students in the 10th grade, the highest grade offered at that point at Chemawa, were enrolled in the following courses [see table 5]:

Table 5: 1918 Chemawa: (10th grade girls’ Course of Study)

<p>*optional courses included sewing & cooking/ tailoring & nursing English (8/8) Child Study (8/8) Rural Economics (8/8) General Exercises (8/8)</p>
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⁹⁷ RG 75 Chem Indian School Decimal Files '24-'55 Box 28: Contracts & Public Schools '28-'38: file #803, National Archives, Seattle WA

⁹⁸ MS 1504: Jefferson High School commencement books: 24/8, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR

⁹⁹ MS 1504: Lincoln High School commencement books: 24/10, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR

Sewing & Cookery *5 of the 8 students in the class selected this course Tailoring & Nursing *1 out of 8 students in the class selected this course ¹⁰⁰
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According to 1917 exam cards from Chemawa, courses offered to both boys and girls were: arithmetic, civics, current events, drawing, English, geography, literary study, Nature study & gardening, penmanship, physiology, reading, spelling, physics. The vocational program offered girls, which consisted of half of their school day, consisted of courses in: Domestic Science (care of home, cooking & sewing, making menus, laundering, kitchen & gardening, poultry raising, care of milk & butter) and Domestic Arts (plain sewing, dress making, embroidering, weaving, millinery, buying and household accounts.)¹⁰¹

By 1924, Lincoln High School offered no courses in vocational education for graduating seniors. A comparison of Lincoln High School’s 12th grade course study in 1924 and Chemawa’s 12th grade course of study for girls, just four years later, is as follows [see table 6]

Table 6: Comparison

1924-Lincoln High School: (12th grade co-ed) *optional courses of study, with selections marked by gender College Prep (29 girls/8 boys) English (62 girls/ 38 boys) Scientific Course (1 girl/ 12 boys) Classical Course (8 girls/ 1 boy) Modern Language (3 girls/0 boys) Latin (1 girl/1 boy) ¹⁰²	1928 Chemawa: (12th grade) *required girls’ Course of Study English Physics Arithmetic American History Civics Rural Economics General Exercises Vocational: Home Economics ¹⁰³
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¹⁰⁰ Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, *1917-1930 Exam Records Chemawa Indian School*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² MS 1504: Lincoln High School commencement books: 24/10, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR

Vocational education still consisted of half of the school day for students at Chemawa in 1928. The only option for vocational study for female students was home economics.

Based on this comparative curricula data, several points stand out as significant. First, it is important to note that as early as 1910, the Portland Public School District offered a trade school for boys and offered domestic education courses, the girls' trade option, at various high schools.¹⁰⁴ By 1921 the district had a specific trade school campus for boys and for girls, as well as a co-educational campus designed for commercial education. This programming eliminated the need for specific trade courses at Lincoln, James John, Jefferson, Washington and Franklin high schools, all of which offered more classical education courses, including Latin, English, German, Science and College Preparation.¹⁰⁵ No doubt these programming changes were largely in response to the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act and the opportunities for federal funds through the implementation of a vocational education option in the district.

The second significant point about these curricular findings is that despite the growth of vocational education in Salem and Portland public schools, there was always curricular choice for both boys and girls. And Portland area girls voted with their feet in response to these choices. In 1921, 484 girls were enrolled in the Polytechnic vocational school, which offered them courses in domestic arts, domestic science, millinery,

¹⁰³ Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, *1917-1930 Exam Records Chemawa Indian School*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

¹⁰⁴ Records of Portland Public Schools (Or.), *1910 Annual Report of the Public Schools of Portland, Oregon*, Hathi Trust Digital Library <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000522526>

¹⁰⁵ Records of Portland Public Schools (Or.), *1921 Annual Report of the Public Schools of Portland, Oregon*, Hathi Trust Digital Library <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000522526>

Industrial Art, Metal Art, English, Arithmetic, Civics, History, music, home nursing, hygiene, and physical education. The curriculum of the Polytechnic school largely mirrored that of the curriculum of Chemawa, yet this course of study was optional for Portland area girls. Also in 1921 the co-educational High School of Commerce, which offered a business course, enrolled 536 girls. At the same time 4,166 girls were enrolled in the five other high schools, which offered classical education courses, including college preparation. In her 1921 Annual Report on female students in the Portland School District, Dean of Girls Caroline Holman wrote, "That the desire for continuing study beyond the regular four years of a high school course has become almost universal is evidenced by the number of [female] graduates who return for additional subjects and also by the number of self-supporting [female] students who are forming definite plans for going to college."¹⁰⁶ By 1924 girls at Lincoln High School made up the majority of students in the college preparatory program, the English program and the Classical program. Fifty two percent of that years' graduating class were girls.¹⁰⁷

The idea of vocational education was being promoted for all educational communities across the United States during this period, not just federal boarding schools. In a report called 'The Vocational Education of Females' from the National Education Association in 1910, domestic-service was described as "the higher function which woman can never surrender". This report was re-printed in the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report 1918-1920, in an effort to justify the implementation of domestic education courses in public schools

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ MS 1504: Lincoln High School commencement books: 24/10, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR

across the country and in response to funding from the Smith-Hughes Act.¹⁰⁸ Domestic education curricula were instituted in response to the top-down, somewhat arbitrary decisions to direct federal funds towards such programs, contrary to student demand. According to the thirty-fourth annual report for Seattle Public Schools, covering the years 1916-1921, only four percent of all female students chose to register in Home Economics courses.¹⁰⁹ It is significant to note that Home Economics as a course of study was, as in Portland public schools, offered as an option for female students in Seattle Public High Schools, not a requirement. All public high school students were offered an academic track targeted towards admittance to institutions of higher education.

Enrollment of Chemawa students in regional public high schools during this period represented not only the determination of these Indigenous youths to acculturate to educational opportunities that empowered, instead of disenfranchised them. It also was in response to the stagnant vocational curricula offered at Chemawa that clearly did not reflect the educational aspirations of Chemawa girls or the larger economic trends developing across the nation in the labor market. This trend of greater and greater numbers of Chemawa students seeking extended education through public high schools, highlighted the extreme differences of opportunity between the domestic education focus of Chemawa and the academic curricula of most high schools. It also shows that Indigenous students at Chemawa were aware of these differences.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Kelly Dawn Matika "Manual Training in the Seattle Public Schools 1890-1930: An Examination of Curricular Change." University of Washington, 2000. P. 89

¹⁰⁹ Seattle Public Schools, *Thirty-fourth Annual Report 1916-1921*, Seattle Public Schools Archives, Seattle, WA

¹¹⁰ The first evidence in student files of students requesting and gaining access to Salem High School is 1907 Chemawa graduate Elizabeth Frazier, a member of the Klamath tribe. In 1909 Frazier filed a claim through the United States Department of the Interior against Chemawa. The claim stated that in May of 1905, at the age 13, Frazier was induced by fraud and misrepresentation by an Indian agent

Chemawa Student Voices: Advocating for Choice

Unlike public high schools in Portland and elsewhere around the nation, Chemawa rarely offered curricular choice. Female students responded to this lack of choice in multiple and remarkable ways. Their ability to communicate and negotiate with Chemawa administrators demonstrated both student determination in defining their own trajectories beyond the walls of Chemawa as well as the flexibility of local BIA leadership.

“They are trying to make me work in the sewing room and I’ve made up my mind not to even if it gets me in trouble. I won’t do it. People think they can just do as they please with me because I’ve been easy and take things as they come. But not so now and if you don’t get me a place inside of two weeks I’ll just as soon go to the dogs as because you know I don’t like it here and I won’t make good as long as I stay here.”¹¹¹ Esther Napoleon, a student at Chemawa Indian School, wrote these words in a letter to her white patron, Washington State Representative and member of the Congressional Education Committee R.D. Shutt, in June of 1911. At the time she wrote this letter to State Representative Shutt, Esther Napoleon had been a student at Chemawa for five years and

to desert her family, without parental consent, and attend Chemawa. Upon her arrival at Chemawa Frazier’s hand was crushed when she was forced to work, unsupervised, on an ironing mangle in the laundry department.¹¹⁰ Frazier went on to attend Salem High School and then Willamette University the year prior to her lawsuit, and later worked as a teacher for the United States Indian School service. By 1921 Chemawa Principal Iliff writes that the “majority” of Chemawa graduates were going on to finish their high school degrees at Salem High School. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chemawa Student File, *Elizabeth Frazier file #139*, National Archives, Seattle, WA. Chemawa Student File, *Marguerite Chamberlin File #317*, National Archives, Seattle, WA.

¹¹¹ Chemawa Student File, *Esther Napoleon File #186*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

wished to leave to pursue a career in nursing, a profession that Chemawa could not train her for.

Esther was an orphan and a member of the Puyallup tribe. Upon her arrival at Chemawa in February of 1906, Representative Shutt managed her tribal land allotment money and Superintendent Chalcraft became her guardian, dictating when she could leave the school and where she could go. This paternal guardianship and financial oversight of students by white, male school administrators was common at Chemawa. After writing the above letter to Representative Shutt, Esther wrote a letter to Superintendent Chalcraft in which she implored, “it seems impossible for me to leave [Chemawa] without having your word. I want to take up nurse training again and I know I cant take it here. I wrote to Mr. Shutt and asked him if he could get me a place but he didn’t seem to answer and I think the reason is he wants me to ask you although he did not say so and I wish you could help me to get a place as I don’t want to stay here all my life and not doing anything that I like to do because doing so I begin to have a grudge against this place.”¹¹² Both of these letters were written after Esther had completed her course work at Chemawa yet was not permitted to leave the campus by her guardians in their attempt to monitor her and prevent her from taking up ‘bad company.’¹¹³

In the surviving archived correspondence between Esther and her guardians, as she negotiated her financial and social independence, there is no evidence that Representative Shutt and Superintendent Chalcraft ever assisted her in her pursuit of further education in professional nursing.¹¹⁴ By 1912 Esther had left Chemawa, without

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ The National Archives not established until 1934 and guidelines for collecting documents was established there after. Chemawa administrators and leadership in the Bureau of Indian Affairs kept

the consent of Chalcraft, moved to Wapato, Washington and gotten married. The forcefulness and directness of Esther Napoleon's communication to her patrons and her will to change her situation is significant, especially considering that she was voicing this discontent to white men who had considerable power over not only her life, but the lives of many Indigenous youths across the Pacific Northwest. The passionate emotion behind Esther's message highlights a trend at Chemawa as female students were responding to the restrictions of limited and limiting education offered them through the United States government Bureau of Indian Affairs.

A closer investigation into the individual voices of female Indigenous students at Chemawa reveals their discontent with the curricula Chemawa offered them, their strong desires to seek extending educational opportunities and the two-way relationship of negotiation between female students and Chemawa leaders. Their educational experiences also disrupt the paradigm that off-reservation boarding schools were isolated, impenetrable compounds that were systematically regulated. In a number of cases, the extended educational opportunities female students were advocating for were professional certification programs, a number of which required a four-year high school diploma and experience in higher education. According the graduate student files from Chemawa, between 1900 and 1930, five female graduates went on to pursue higher education degrees at Willamette University, Washington State University and Oregon Agricultural College, which would later become Oregon State University. These students had to attain a high-school diploma, beyond Chemawa, in order to gain admittance to

extensive and detailed documentation on Indigenous students in BIA schools. This oversight was a way of monitoring Indigenous assets and resources, which was especially significant to the government's paternalistic role after the passage of the Dawes Act.

these universities. Throughout the writings in student files there is also regular mention of students' interest in pursuing higher education degrees.

Indigenous students during this era of vocational educational implementation courageously worked to determine their own identities and opportunities in the face of educational, social and civic discrimination. A significant element of this self-determination involved re-defining the prescriptions of United States citizenship. The case of Elizabeth Frazier is an especially powerful example of the complex line students at Chemawa walked between resistance and acceptance of the contradictory educational program. In 1909 Elizabeth Frazier, a member of the Klamath tribe and a graduate of Chemawa Indian School, filed a claim through the Department of the Interior against Chemawa claiming that in May of 1905, at the age 13, Frazier was 'induced by fraud and misrepresentation' by an Indian agent to desert her family, without parental consent, and attend Chemawa. In her abduction, she was lied to by the agent who claimed that she was attending a World's Fair in Portland, but instead he took her to Chemawa. After 1893 it was illegal for superintendents or Indian agents to send a child to an off-reservation school without the full consent of the parents.¹¹⁵ Yet, the illegal practice of coercing children to off-reservation schools, without parental consent, was perpetuated and even encouraged as late 1907, under the endorsement of then Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Francis Leupp.¹¹⁶ Upon her arrival at Chemawa in 1905, Frazier was immediately forced to work in the laundry department.¹¹⁷ While working unsupervised

¹¹⁵ David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction*, p. 65

¹¹⁶ Brenda J. Child *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families 1900-1940*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. P. 13

¹¹⁷ Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chemawa Student File, *Elizabeth Frazier file #139*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

on an ironing mangle, Frazier's hand was caught and crushed. Her entire hand would later be amputated by incompetent doctors commissioned by the school.

Elizabeth Frazier graduated from Chemawa in 1907 and went on to complete her high school degree at Salem High School, five years after the high school opened. Frazier then attended Willamette University the year prior to her lawsuit, and then went to work as a teacher through the United States Indian School service.¹¹⁸ Frazier used her education to create opportunity for herself and clearly she interpreted her education as an asset, considering that she encouraged Superintendent Chalcraft to educate children in her hometown who were not going to school. In a letter to Superintendent Chalcraft in the fall of 1907, while she was still a student at the school, Elizabeth Frazier requested that Chalcraft come to Happy Camp, California and personally encourage local Indigenous children to attend public school or Chemawa so that they could gain the opportunity to learn English and get an education. Yet Frazier also made a bold statement about the injustice of that exact same system by filing a claim against the school, calling out the illegality of her forced attendance as well as the dangerous, abusive working conditions within the school. Also, by filing a legal claim through the federal government against Chemawa, Frazier was both demanding her rights as a United States Citizen and exposing the contradictions of the federal government that did not afford full legal rights to those Indigenous people who claimed citizenship.

Laura Won, a 1922 graduate of Chemawa whose mother was a member of the Swinomish tribe and whose father was a Chinese immigrant, wrote in a letter to Chemawa Superintendent Hall, the fall after her graduation, "I am waiting every day to

¹¹⁸ Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chemawa Student File, *Elizabeth Frazier file #139*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

hear about the high school course at Chemawa. The high school here begins the first of October and expect to enter this fall if Chemawa couldn't get the two more grades."¹¹⁹ Laura's 1922 diploma from Chemawa only certified her with education through the tenth grade, with a degree in Home Economics. Based on letters written by her and the Swinomish reservation agent, laboring in the Anacortes cannery was one of the few employment options for her in her hometown. This work, according to the reservation agent, was both unsafe and "immoral conduct is great there."¹²⁰ Her tenth grade education in Home Economics from Chemawa did not greatly expand her professional opportunities. Laura understood that a high school diploma presented an opportunity out of low-pay and unsafe manual labor. Interestingly, Laura preferred to complete her high school degree at Chemawa rather than attending public high school in her hometown of La Conner, Washington.

In September of 1926, Chemawa student Harriett Hill, a member of the Klamath tribe, wrote a letter to Superintendent McGregor asking for a recommendation from him allowing her to access her 'Indian money' so that she can take courses in Latin. McGregor's response was that Latin was not offered at Chemawa and might be difficult for her to access and she should stick with the regular course of study at Chemawa and maybe they can find someone to tutor her in Latin.¹²¹ Latin and Classical study, beyond an elementary level, was a fundamental part of a rigorous academic program because it was an essential requirement for university admittance.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Chemawa Student File, *Laura Won File #372*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Chemawa Student File, *Harriet Hill File #440*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

¹²² Kim Tolley, in her work on science education of American girls provides important context for understanding what was considered academically rigorous during this period, what curriculum was necessary for university admittance and what gendered education looked like in the late nineteenth

In addition to seeking access to higher education through regional public high schools, female Chemawa students were also seeking access to professional training in commercial education at Capital Business College, established in 1889, in Salem, Oregon. In student files between 1900 and 1922, there is evidence of fourteen female students completing two-year certification courses at Capital Business College while they were attending Chemawa. According to a 1900 school catalog, the business course, the track most commonly chosen by Chemawa students, included courses in bookkeeping, commercial arithmetic, commercial law, business writing, office practice in wholesale banking and freight, as well as practice in local and intercommunication, business legal forms, grammar and spelling.¹²³

In a letter written in July of 1912 by Superintendent Wadsworth to Chemawa student Dorothy Case, Wadsworth asked Dorothy to come back to school to finish her studies. He stated that he knew she wanted a business course and he claimed he was trying to establish one at the school. Wadsworth explained, "...you wish to take a business course, and as I am now trying to make arrangements for such a course here at the school, I felt sure that you would be interested. I think we will have this new course in operation this fall, but in case we do not, we can let you stay at the school and attend the business college at Salem, as you wish."¹²⁴ According to exam records from the school, beginning in 1917, there are only two years, 1917 to 1918 and 1926 to 1927, in which female students could take a minimal commercial course at Chemawa and the

and early twentieth century. Tolley's work highlights the role curriculum played in providing access and opportunity for female students. Tolley explains that Latin and Classical study, beyond an elementary level, was a fundamental part of a rigorous academic program because it was an essential requirement for university admittance. Kim Tolley *The Science Education of American Girls: A Historical Perspective* (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2003) p. 149-158

¹²³ MS 1504: *Capital Business College Catalog: 29/10*, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR

¹²⁴ Chemawa Student File, *Dorothy Case File #181*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

school never offered a full credited program in commercial studies.¹²⁵ Because of the shortcomings of the professional training offered at Chemawa in Commercial Education, many female students made specific requests to school leaders asking for assistance in attending commercial courses at Capital Business College.

Because the Bureau of Indian Affairs would not cover costs of any courses outside of the standard BIA school curriculum, students had to pay independently for courses at Capital Business College.¹²⁶ Despite the extreme level of poverty most Chemawa students came from, there is evidence of female students, as early as 1909, requesting, even imploring their families for funding to attend classes at Capital Business College. Monthly rate of tuition at Capital Business College was ten dollars, or sixty dollars for the full nine-month tuition. The closing statement in the 1900 course catalog reads, “Cheap tuition means cheap instruction by the wholesale plan. Our instruction is special, direct and thorough. As a result our students, on leaving us, are competent. Our school is a working school; no idlers are allowed.”¹²⁷ The institution took itself seriously and so did the ambitious young women who attended the program.

Commercial education courses became incredibly popular in the early twentieth century, especially for female students. Commercial training, including training for office, clerical and cashier jobs, including skills in stenography, bookkeeping, typing, and sales did offer opportunities that could be financially stable and offer a respectable living for women. This was an emerging and popular sector of professional employment for

¹²⁵ Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1917-1918, 1923-1924, 1926-1927, 1929-1930 Exam Records Chemawa Indian School, National Archives, Seattle, WA

¹²⁶ Chemawa Student File, Alberta Bringham File #245, National Archives, Seattle, WA. In a response letter to Alberta and her mother in December of 2014, Superintendent Wadsworth explains that the Department of Indian Affairs refuses to grant financial support to students wishing to attend Capital Business College.

¹²⁷ MS 1504: *Capital Business College Catalog: 29/10*, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR

women entering the labor market in the early 1900s.¹²⁸ The commercial field represented not only an alternative to young marriage and domestic service but it also “motivated them [single Indigenous women] to expand their gender roles beyond the prescriptions of industrial education.”¹²⁹ In 1896 President Cleveland amended civil services rules to open placement opportunities in the fast growing Bureau of Indian Affairs to American Indians. Although Indigenous women in commercial positions at the BIA earned significantly less than men, the professional field offered one of the very few options of employment that was stable, respectable and not physically labor intensive. Commercial courses were so popular at Haskell Institute that by 1908 girls made up seventy four percent of the entire group of students who graduated from Haskell’s Business Department.¹³⁰ Despite the demand for commercial education by female students at Chemawa and the opportunities it offered Indigenous women, Chemawa did not offer degrees in commercial education. Chemawa students had to creatively seek out opportunities elsewhere in order to further their professional and education goals in commercial work.

Even once courses with a more professional track, outside of Home Economics, such as commercial training and nursing, were offered in the Chemawa curriculum, these courses were offered sporadically and without certification. They were also in some cases resisted by school leaders. In 1959 Ruby Paul, a 1928 Chemawa graduate and member of the Blackfoot tribe, would write multiple letters to the school requesting evidence of credits taken in the Chemawa Nursing program between 1926 and 1928. In

¹²⁸ Jane Bernard Powers, *The 'Girls Question' in Education: Vocational Education for Young Women in the Progressive Era* (Washington D.C.: The Falmer Press, 1992).

¹²⁹ Kim Cary Warren. *The Quest for Citizenship: African American and Native American Education in Kansas, 1880-1935*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. p. 84

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 83

response, Chemawa administrators claimed they could not find evidence of the program or Paul's participation in it. In her third attempt to gain documents, Paul writes,

This is the third time I am trying to get my credits for my two years in the Chemawa Nursing school from Sept. 1926 through June 1928 with Barbara Boreland and Mrs. Clark as the first Supervisors then in the 1927 Mildred Wright and Mrs. Clark with Dr. Walter Johnson as the Resident, Dr. under the arrangement of the time we could finish at one of the Portland hospitals or Spokane when we had completed the two years in Chemawa's Hospital Training School, so wont you please see if you can find some sort of records to prove we did have a nursing school? I am in the midterm of the Skagit Valley Practical Nursing Course and I do so need these transcripts in order to finish. *I might add that Mr. Oscar Lipps was the Superintendent in 1928 and disapproved of the nursing school very much. I never did learn why but he did not want to continue this sort of training* [italics added for emphasis].¹³¹

Interestingly, according to the 1923-1924 and in the 1929-1930 exam records, the only vocational training offered senior-level female students was Home Economics.¹³²

In 1921 Chemawa briefly offered an accredited nursing program, recognized by the Oregon State Board of Nursing Examiners. Unfortunately, the program was abandoned after only one year and never was re-instated.¹³³ Clearly, as Ruby Paul described, the program did not have the support from some administrators to continue, despite the demand for the program from female students. In order for students to gain professional certifications in nursing, they had to apply to mainstream American hospital training programs, for which the Chemawa curriculum did not offer the necessary science courses for admission. Despite these obstacles, some female students persevered, seeking

¹³¹ Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chemawa Student File, *Ruby Paul file #487*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

¹³² Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, *1917-1932 Examination Scores Chemawa Indian School*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

¹³³ Clifford E. Trafzer, Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, Lorene Sisquoc, ed. *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue: Voices and Images from Sherman Institute*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2012. P. 96

education beyond Chemawa in order to attain their professional nursing goals. One of these students was Catherine Reed.

In September of 1915 Catherine Reed, a member of the Lower Umpqua tribe, wrote a letter to Chemawa Superintendent Wadsworth stating that she wanted to attend Chemawa in order to attain a teaching certification or to learn another trade, such as nursing. Once she began her studies at Chemawa, Reed focused on a path towards nursing. She graduated from Chemawa in 1918, the only student that year to complete a Chemawa degree in nursing, as opposed to Home Economics. Reed had to make special requests to school authorities to allow her to focus on nurse training, as it was not an official course of study at the school at this time. In a letter written to Superintendent Wadsworth during Reed's second year at Chemawa, her teacher Mr. Taylor wrote, "The teachers report that Catherine Reed finished the eighth grade work and one year in high school before coming. That she is wasting her time in the academic department. Catherine wishes to become a trained nurse and the teachers recommend that she be excused from further work in the academic department. Please assign her to Mrs. Douglass for work in her department solely."¹³⁴ Reed went on to complete a nursing degree in Marshfield, Oregon and then returned to Chemawa as school nurse in 1919. In 1920 she continued further nurse training at a Portland hospital and went on to attain her Registered Nurse's degree in Portland, Oregon.¹³⁵ In 1930 Catherine Reed was one of

¹³⁴ Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chemawa Student File, *Catherine Reed file #295*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

the first Indigenous nurses, with an RN degree, to be hired by the Sherman Institute, an off-reservation Indian boarding school in Riverside, California.¹³⁶

Ellen Bell, a member of the Colville tribe, also made specific requests to study nursing at Chemawa but was not as fortunate as Catherine Reed to have support from the school. Yet Bell was able to navigate the system, despite obstacles, in order to attain higher education and training. Bell left Chemawa in 1920 but requested to return to the school in 1921, hoping specifically to finish her studies with a certification in nursing. She wrote multiple letters to then Chemawa Superintendent Harwood Hall requesting training as a nurse and she was repeatedly told such courses were not available and she should redirect her focus to Home Economics. Hall wrote to Bell in November of 1921, “Answering your letter of November 22nd will say that our hospital just at this time is not organized in as much as the nurses are changing. How would you like to take up your Domestic Science and then carry on your academic work which you did not complete, as you say.”¹³⁷

Ellen Bell did complete her studies at Chemawa, focusing on Home Economics and went on to receive a high school diploma at Salem High School. In 1936 Bell wrote to Chemawa inquiring about a position as teacher or possible work in the school hospital. At that time Bell had completed a Bachelor’s Degree in Science from Washington State University, she was divorced and had to financially support herself and, despite her University degree, was struggling to do so. Bell wrote in her letter, “Well, my opportunities are more limited now than ever, seeing that I have to finance my own way,

¹³⁶ Clifford E. Trafzer, Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, Lorene Sisquoc, ed. *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue* 2012. P. 97

¹³⁷ Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chemawa Student File, *Ellen Bell file #336*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

ha ha. Well, maybe better days are in store, who knows.”¹³⁸ Bell’s circumstances highlight the challenges especially Indigenous women faced in their quest for financial and social stability and independence, even when they attained high levels of education and professional training. The obstacles they faced were not just in government educational institutions but also beyond the school walls, in broader society.

Nursing, as a professional outlet, was both powerful and symbolic in what it could provide for Indigenous women professionally, financially and socially, especially when offered in place of Home Economics. Jean A. Keller, in her research on the nursing program at Sherman Institute in the early twentieth century, speaks to this;

Over the following fifty years, the nursing program at Sherman Institute evolved and ultimately strayed far from the original intentions of its creator but, despite all its permutations, provided genuine career opportunities for its graduates. It accomplished more than this, however as designed in 1907, Sherman Institutes’ nursing student program recognized the intelligence and talent of Indian girls, and brought them out of the realm of 'domestic science' to which they had been relegated for decades in the boarding school system.¹³⁹

Indigenous girls at Chemawa, and the Sherman Institute as well, were seeking out opportunities for educational and professional advancement, in areas where their skills and intellect would be valued. These opportunities, and the self-advocacy students engaged in to attain them, represented a resistance to the restrictive Home Economics agenda of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The paradox of the education offered at Chemawa was that, despite student and administrative advocacy for educational options for students beyond Chemawa, the Chemawa curriculum itself remained stagnant and narrowly focused on domestic education. Female students at Chemawa understood the realities of their situation yet,

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Clifford E. Trafzer, Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, Lorene Sisquoc, ed. *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue* 2012. P. 81

despite these obstacles, pursued opportunities within and beyond Chemawa. Despite the fact that Home Economics persisted as the dominant course of study required of Chemawa female students between 1900 and 1930, there are ample examples of students requesting more and different opportunities from their education. And, in response, multiple examples of the school administration promising to provide these opportunities, in an effort to retain students, yet failing to fulfill these promises.

For many young Chemawa women, their reaction to what was offered them once they arrived at school was disappointment and a desire for more opportunity. Female students wrote about these reactions, not only in the school paper, but also in letters to family members as well as school administrators. Based on the information in the letters written by and about Elenorah McCulley, a member of the Kake tribe and 1914 graduate of Chemawa, several points are clear. McCully and her guardians saw access to education as one of the very few avenues to empowerment and autonomy and they actively sought her admission into Chemawa Indian School.¹⁴⁰ All of the authors of the letters in McCully's file clearly highlight the importance of Elenorah graduating from Chemawa and pursuing further education. They all saw value in her education and worked together to ensure that she could remain at Chemawa through her senior year, despite her struggles with Tuberculosis. Yet Elenorah and her family focused on commercial education and an academic track towards professionalization, not domestic education, as the empowering path for Elenorah.

In a letter from Elenorah's uncle to Superintendent Wadsworth, T.J. McCully writes, "Ella speaks very strong of wanting to learn stenography work. In my opinion it

¹⁴⁰ Joel Spring. *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality*

would not hurt her to fund another two years to her schooling and I know she will not regret it. I believe she should attend a school like the Haskell Institute. The climate will suit her very much. That is my view of the case and now I shall let you, Mr. Wadsworth, and Ella decide which course to take.”¹⁴¹ This passage highlights that commercial training and the opportunity for skilled clerical work, such as stenography work, was seen as a boon and a worthy path for Elenorah, so much so that her uncle was interested in paying for outside courses in stenography, courses that were not offered in the Chemawa curriculum. This demonstrates the importance of education that led to financial independence and professionalization for students at Chemawa. Elenorah and her uncle both understood that commercial education provided an outlet and she actively sought this as her educational focus despite the restrictions at Chemawa.

Based on the communications in Elenorah’s file it is also clear that her identity as an Indigenous person had an impact on her opportunities as both a student and a young woman. In a letter from the Superintendent of Chemawa, to McCully’s home town Presbyterian minister in Juneau, Alaska, Superintendent Wadsworth writes, “Ella is a very good girl and desirable pupil and a girl of a good deal of promise. I think her uncle if he knew her would be proud of her. She has all the appearance of a white girl and with some help will develop into a good and capable woman.”¹⁴² An Indigenous girl’s proximity to white identity directly impacted her success and opportunities in the world. Ironically, Wadsworth went on to write, “The department requires two vouchers from disinterested persons as to the degree of Indian blood, school facilities at home and

¹⁴¹ Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chemawa Student File, *Elenorah McCulley file #236*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

etc..”¹⁴³ Elenorah’s success resided in her ability to be as white as possible, yet she could not gain access to an education without proving her ‘Indianness’. Superintendent Wadsworth’s letter highlights the racial paradox of the Bureau of Indian Affairs education policies.

Employment restrictions due to social perception and racism were a reality for students at Chemawa. In a letter written by field matron Maria Johnson to Chemawa superintendent Campbell in 1908, regarding a recent student, Johnson explained, “She is busy sewing for others, even white women are glad to have her do their sewing.”¹⁴⁴ The battle Indigenous girls fought to gain access and opportunity through education was extremely challenging yet the embedded racism and sexism they faced emphasized the necessity of the battle itself.

Cora Zeigler, a 1914 graduate of Chemawa and member of the Hupa tribe, wrote in a letter to Superintendent Wadsworth in the summer after her graduation, once she had returned to her home in Hupa Indian country, China Flat, California, “Hoopa does not afford nearly as good an opportunity for broadening a student’s mind as Chemawa does; there is no drilling, no associations or societies and the children have few chances there that Chemawa affords of coming out in public or learning to speak for themselves.”¹⁴⁵ Cora was trying to enlist children from the local Hupa Indian school to come to Chemawa. Her case for Chemawa is interesting because of what Cora chose to highlight as assets of the education it afforded. She spoke of broadening her mind, being in public and being outspoken. Cora did not speak to the benefits of domestic education and the

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chemawa Student File, *Nora Van Pelt file #146*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

¹⁴⁵ Chemawa Student File, *Cora Zeigler File #242*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

manual labor training in the domestic field that was the focus of her education at Chemawa, during her two years at the school. In fact, later that same summer, Cora wrote again to Superintendent Wadsworth sharing her request to complete a high school degree at Salem High School. Cora's desire to pursue more education, with an academic direction, highlights the short-comings of the Chemawa curriculum, especially in light of the virtues of education that she deemed most significant, including a broadened mind, opportunities in the public sphere and the power to speak for herself.

Female Chemawa students during the era of vocational educational implementation courageously worked to determine their own identities and opportunities in the face of educational and social discrimination. A significant element of this self-determination involved bending the boundaries of BIA schools as well as re-defining prescriptions of American citizenship, particularly cultural citizenship. By continually challenging the boundaries of BIA education, within and beyond the walls of Chemawa Indian School, Indigenous girls worked to define their own educational experiences based on their own needs and desires. In this way, these Indigenous youth were active participants in their own processes of acculturation.

Image 1

*Image courtesy of the National Archives, Seattle, WA
Chemawa Student File, Emily Johnston File #403*

CHAPTER 3: Navigating the Liminal Space Between Ward and Citizen *BIA Responses to Chemawa Student Demands, 1920's*

“..the children of the first of all Americans are looked upon as aliens and regarded as unjust burdens of the community.”
-Chemawa Superintendent Lipps, 1928

Shifting Government Policies and the Subjectivity of Identity

The 1920s were a confusing and paradoxical time in federal Indian policy. The vagaries of federal policy around Indigenous rights, land ownership, taxation and citizenship are reflected in Native American historical scholarship. Alexandra Harmon, David Wallace Adams, Fredrick Hoxie and Francis Prucha all speak to the complexities, inconsistencies and nebulous character of federal Indian policy during this period. Because of the ambiguity around implementation of federal policy, including the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 and the preceding Dawes Act of 1887, which continued to define Indigenous' rights after the Indian Citizenship Act, local impact of these policies also varied. Thus, although the broad outline of Indian education policy in this period is known, much remains to be discovered about how these policies interacted with individual institutional administrations, local school conditions, and specifically student and community demands. The following critical analysis of how shifting federal policies impacted localized scenarios sheds light on both the deep dysfunctions of federal Indian policies during this period as well as the creative agency Indigenous youth employed to navigate BIA and public education systems when both institutions were changing, but still largely failing Indigenous youth.

The passage of the Dawes Act of 1887 was significant in that it set a precedent for the dismantling of tribal land. But the vagaries of its implementation made its terms difficult to navigate for Indigenous people. It left wide-open various opportunities for Indigenous peoples to be manipulated by non-Natives, as well as opportunities for different people, including BIA administrators to interpret and administer policy in different ways. The Indian Citizenship Act, passed nearly forty years later in 1924, sought to resolve the complexities of Indigenous rights and identity once and for all by bestowing citizenship on all Indigenous peoples. But it too was inconsistent in its implementation, due in large part to underfunding and poor management of the BIA.¹⁴⁶ Although with the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act all Indigenous peoples supposedly were afforded citizenship and the associated rights and responsibilities the reality of this transition did not occur for many Indigenous people. Instead they continued to exist in a liminal space between ward and citizen. Citizenship did not necessarily translate into a withdrawal from the protective guardianship of the federal government and the status of wardship was maintained for Indigenous peoples who still held land allotments.¹⁴⁷ This liminal positioning created tensions between local government and the federal government with regards to who was responsible for the education of Indigenous youth.

The purpose of BIA education, particularly with the passage of the Dawes Act, was to facilitate the transition of Indigenous youth from ward to citizen. After the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act, however, this position underwent an extended period of redefinition and confusion; now that Indigenous peoples were all supposedly

¹⁴⁶ Francis Paul Prucha. *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. P. 792

¹⁴⁷ Prucha. *The Great Father*. P. 794

citizens, what was the purpose of differentiated Indian education? The problematic question that persisted through this period, unanswered, was should Indigenous youth have access to the same education as other citizens and, if so, who was financially responsible for this education?

Indigenous people, as wards under the Dawes Act and continuing under the Indian Citizenship Act, did not pay taxes on their lands allotments which were held in trust by the federal government. Indigenous people were wards of the federal government, while most property taxes were assessed by local governments. The disparities amongst federal Indian policy and local taxation policy was particularly problematic with regards to Indigenous access to public schools because public schools were funded almost entirely by local taxes. Public school attendance assumed residence within a local school district supported by local property taxes. As wards of the government and boarding students whose families lived far away, Chemawa students did not seem to match this description. Thus their admission to local public schools was not assured, but something that had to be negotiated between Chemawa administrators and local public school officials.

Through the period of this study, between 1900 and the 1930s, Indigenous youth used Chemawa as a launch pad for continuing education. After the passage of Indian Citizenship Act, when the status of many Indigenous youth ostensibly changed to that of citizen, BIA officials struggled to assess the implications of this change for Chemawa students who sought access to local schools as citizens but also continued to be wards of the federal government under the land allotment system. In this liminal space as both wards and citizens, students were caught in complex scenarios, navigating multiple

education systems. This chapter focuses on reactions from both BIA administrators and public school officials who were responding to Indigenous youth demands for multiple forms of educational access, to both Chemawa and regional public schools. I argue that in this liminal and shifting space, Chemawa students sought out educational opportunities and, in the process, played a role in shaping and defining local administrative responses and enforcement of BIA policy. Responses to student demands on the part of Chemawa administrators, particularly Chemawa Superintendent Lipps, are illuminating in that they highlight the vagaries, complexities and inconsistencies of federal Indian policy, especially when it conflicted with highly localized systems of school funding and administration. Lipps' own confusion and frustration is evidence of the difficult, paradoxical position Indigenous youth occupied. It is clear from the exchanges between Superintendent Lipps and public school administrators that he understood that Chemawa students wanted greater access to choice in education and that he saw his role as that of advocating on their behalf. The tensioned exchanges between Lipps and public school administrators also reflected a moment when federal policy was presumably changing, in response to the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act and the beginning of the dismantling of the BIA, as public support and federal funding for the BIA greatly decreased. Evidence from the Chemawa case suggests that further research into changes in the funding of BIA Education programs after the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act is warranted. Such research would add additional context and understanding to Lipps' and others' responses to Indigenous youth education demands in both BIA schools and the public education system.

These tensions around Indigenous youth education and its funding played out amongst other changes in the definition of citizenship in American society. At the same time as the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act, the National Origins Act passed in 1924, establishing a powerful paradigm of racialized exclusion of certain groups from immigration and naturalization.¹⁴⁸ This time marked a high point in anti-immigration sentiment in the United States and the National Origins Act was buttressed by growing sentiment in the government that non-white immigrants were largely un-assimilable.¹⁴⁹ This period also marked the culmination of Fredrick Hoxie's second phase of assimilation in which, as Hoxie describes, Indigenous peoples were "defined and treated as peripheral people-partial members of the commonwealth- and a web of attitudes, beliefs, and practices soon appeared to bind them in a state of economic dependence and political powerlessness."¹⁵⁰ It is a great irony that in this moment Indigenous people were afforded citizenship. The reality was that access to the rights and privileges of citizenship, including suffrage and public education were still largely out of reach for many Indigenous people. And their compounded identities as wards and citizens placed them in a liminal space of limited access and rights. It was within this space were Indigenous students at Chemawa craftily navigated two education systems in attempts to define the education they needed and desired.

¹⁴⁸ In particular, the National Origins Act institutionalized exclusion of Asians from immigration and naturalization. At the same time, as Mae Ngai and Natalia Molina have detailed, the Act lay the groundwork for subsequent attempts to exclude Mexicans and other Central and South Americans from citizenship as well.

¹⁴⁹ Frank Van Nuys. *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizenship, 1890-1930*. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002. P. 187

¹⁵⁰ Frederick E. Hoxie *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. P. xix

In their efforts to define their identities beyond the confines of the BIA agenda of racial and gender assimilation female students at Chemawa navigated a tensioned line between forced assimilation and self-guided acculturation. Beyond this, Chemawa students walked the even more paradoxical and ironic line of being assigned both Indigenous and outsider status and having to find their space as citizens and members within this problematic space. The challenging paradoxes of the identity struggle that Indigenous girls were navigating at Chemawa are synthesized in Alexandra Harmon's description of the contradictory federal Indian policy itself. Harmon explains,

At the heart of late-nineteenth-century United States Indian policy was a contradiction. Policy makers promised to solve 'the Indian problem' by promoting Indians' absorption into the general population. Although they proclaimed that race was no barrier to this absorption, they conceived of Indians as a distinct race of people whose customary life-ways were incompatible with American civilization. Special laws and institutions seemed necessary for Indians' protection until their anomalous traits disappeared. Yet those laws and institutions tended to perpetuate the racial category they aimed to eliminate.¹⁵¹

Harmon speaks to both the complexity and duplicity of Indigenous people's status as wards of the government who ostensibly were somewhere on the path to citizenship under the terms of the Dawes Act. This convoluted path to citizenship was especially paradoxical through the 1920s as federal policy further blurred the lines between who was designated a citizen and who was not, and the great variances therein.

A news article in the *Salem Capital Journal*, published in July of 1921, titled 'School Board Faced By Problem: Should Indians Pay Tuition' highlighted the growing tensions around Indigenous enrollment in public schools. That year alone thirteen Chemawa graduates were attending Salem High School. Members of the school board issued statements expressing concern about balancing the school budget. Meanwhile,

¹⁵¹ Alexandra Harmon. *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities around Puget Sound*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000. P. 160

Chemawa Superintendent Hall argued adamantly in favor of allowing Indigenous youth to attend tuition-free, as he claimed was the practice in other regions of Oregon and California.¹⁵² Although several board members did support enrolling Indigenous youth without cost, it is clear that a definite resolution failed and as late as 1934 Chemawa administrators had to submit applications through the Bureau of Indian Affairs for student room and board tuition at Chemawa, while they attended Salem High School.¹⁵³ Between 1900 and 1930, Indigenous youth were able to access government contracts which allowed them to attend public schools, despite not paying local property taxes on reservation lands. By 1927 37,000 Indigenous youth were under such contract.¹⁵⁴ It is significant to note that this contract system continued years after the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act, at a time when all Indigenous youth were ostensibly deemed citizens. That such a large number of Indigenous youth were still under contract as late as 1927 speaks to the significant number of Indigenous youth who existed in this liminal space as both wards and citizens. They required the contracts because their federal wardship status, consequential tax exemption, and often remote home locations problematized regular access to locally-funded public schools.

The complexities of the situation were highlighted in a letter written in 1928 by Chemawa Superintendent Lipps to State Superintendent of Public Instruction, C.A. Howard, in which Superintendent Lipps argued for tuition-free enrollment of Indigenous youth at Salem High School on constitutional grounds;

¹⁵² Salem 'Capital Journal' Friday, July 29th, 1921 'School Board Faced By Problem; Should Indians Pay Tuition?'

¹⁵³ RG 75 Chemawa Indian School Decimal Files '24-'55 Box 32: 809.2 "Tuition Public Schools"

¹⁵⁴ K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa McCarty. *To Remain an Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*. Multicultural Education Series. Edited by James A. Banks New York: Teachers College Press, 2006. P. 47

There appears to be a great deal of misunderstanding throughout the country regarding the Government's responsibility to the Indians. Only those Indians who are wards of the Government or under federal supervision are, strictly speaking, eligible for enrollment in a Government school. The payment of tuition for Indian children attending public school is done only where Indians have lands held in trusts by the Government, such land not being taxable. The Indians of Western Oregon are practically all citizens and are entitled to all the privileges and subject to all the laws just the same as other citizens. The Indians think it strange that the children of Japanese and other foreigners are freely admitted to the public schools of the State while the children of the first of all Americans are looked upon as aliens and regarded as unjust burdens of the community. Unless the parents of these Indian children have lands in the school district that are held in trust by the Government and therefore exempt from taxation, the Government could not pay tuition for them.¹⁵⁵

Superintendent Lipps' advocacy on behalf of Chemawa students underscores the complexity of BIA policy itself. His writing also shines a spotlight on the confusing implications of federal policy at the local level. When he wrote of the 'Government's responsibility to the Indians', Lipps was clearly advocating for the citizenship rights ostensibly awarded all Indigenous people by the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act, passed four years prior to this letter. At the same time he also highlighted the paradox of the simultaneous requirement that Indigenous youth be wards of the government in order to attend Chemawa. His final sentence emphasizes the impossibility of this paradox. Chemawa was an off-reservation boarding school enrolling students primarily from reservations and other remote locations. It was highly unlikely that students or their families held allotment lands within Salem or other local school districts. And yet Lipps sought access to public schools for Chemawa students as local citizens. Lipps' somewhat contorted argument suggests the possibility that he was trying to respond to changes in federal policy and particularly to decreased funding for BIA schools and Indigenous youth enrollment in public education. It is likely that funding for the contract program

¹⁵⁵ RG 75 Chem Indian School Decimal Files '24-'55 Box 32: 809.2 'Tuition Public Schools

that allocated federal funds to support Indigenous youth attendance at public schools was coming to an end. This left local BIA administrators like Lipps in the complicated position of advocating for public school enrollment of Indigenous youth while those same programs were being dismantled.

In order to understand the scenario Lipps described in this letter it is important to look back at changing government policy towards Indigenous peoples, starting with the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887, and continuing through the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924. In his letter, Lipps referred to conditions of Indigenous legal identity, most of which were shaped by the Dawes Act. The primary focus of the Dawes Act of 1887 was to break apart the reservation systems, pushing Indigenous people away from a communal, tribal concept of land, and toward a paradigm of self-sufficiency and individual land ownership and resource extraction. The act authorized the President to identify and select reservation lands suitable for allotment, and partition the selected allotments to individual Indigenous heads of household. When allotment was designated, the allottees were also supposed to be granted citizenship, which put them in a liminal space of being citizens yet still treated as wards of the government without the full privileges and rights of citizenship, though also without the obligation to pay taxes on those land allotments. These allotments would be held 'in trust' by the federal government for twenty five years, at which point, they were to be turned over legally to the allottees, who would be granted all legal rights and duties within that title, including the payment of taxes. The goal of this twenty-five year waiting period was to provide time for allottees to successfully assimilate to white lifeways. This designation of land held in trust established Indigenous peoples as wards of the government by positioning the government, literally, as a paternal

figure which could control the financial, geographic and political assets of Indigenous individuals.

The Dawes Act stated that reservation land that was “advantageous for agricultural or grazing purposes” was to be allotted to individuals and that “every Indian born within the territorial limits of the United States to whom allotments shall have been made under the provisions of this act, or under any law or treaty, and every Indian born within the territorial limits of the United States who has voluntarily taken up, within said limits, his residence separate and apart from any tribe of Indians therein, and has adopted the habits of civilized life, is hereby declared to be a citizen of the United States.”¹⁵⁶ The act stipulated that Indigenous people, in order to gain access to the privileges of citizenship, must work and live in accordance to a prescribed paradigm of individual homesteading. This paradigm rigidly defined how this work looked, particularly in relation to land use and individual family formation, specifically in opposition to tribal community membership. How Indigenous people used their land, or worked on white people’s land, largely determined their legal status in American society. For Indigenous girls and women, their roles in this model were as domestic helpmates, in the home. It is also significant to note that the specific circumstances of the allotment system, while Indigenous peoples existed in this space of wardship, restricted the ability of Indigenous youth to become fully self-sufficient. Indigenous youth at government boarding schools who held claims to allotments could not manage or control their lands, which in many cases lay fallow or were used illegally by whites, although they did sometimes earn income on such allotments through leases. The proceeds from such leases, however,

¹⁵⁶ Dawes Act: Introduction and Section 6. The Avalon Project, Yale Law School.
<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc>.

were managed “in trust” by BIA officials, who were often the Superintendent or administrators of the BIA schools they attended.¹⁵⁷ It is for this reason that many Chemawa student files include correspondence written by students and their family members requesting permission or assistance from school leadership to allocate such income toward various educational purposes, such as enrollment in Capital Business College. Officials retained the power to deny such requests, however; thereby potentially constraining the capacity of wards to use the proceeds from their allotments as they saw fit.

Both implementation and enforcement of the Dawes Act was problematic in that it ostensibly granted citizenship to Indigenous people whom it simultaneously regarded as incompetent to enjoy full civil liberties.¹⁵⁸ A number of subsequent acts were passed in an attempt to facilitate the success of assimilation through allotment. The Burke Act in 1906 amended the Dawes Act by revising the conditions of the twenty-five year trust period. It made citizenship available only after the full twenty-five year trust period was complete. It also allowed the government to extend the trust period of people whose conditions warranted it and it reinforced the status of wardship by stating that those allottees whose lands were held in trust were “subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States.”¹⁵⁹ Conversely, it allowed individuals who were deemed “competent and

¹⁵⁷ Francis Paul Prucha. *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. P. 670

¹⁵⁸ Alexandra Harmon documents many examples, after the passage of the Dawes Act, of Indigenous individuals and whole tribes of the Puget Sound region having their rights and privileges as citizens rescinded in a court of law because the justice system found them incompetent to function as land-holding citizens. A 1894 high court decision reversed the citizenship of the Puyallup tribe, who had received citizenship through land patents with Dawes. This stripped their legal rights to defend reservation lands, specifically their valuable waterfront, tidelands, Commencement Bay properties. Alexandra Harmon. *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities around Puget Sound*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000. P. 134

¹⁵⁹ Prucha. *The Great Father* p. 875

capable of managing his or her affairs” the opportunity to apply for a fee patent to their land before the end of the trust period.¹⁶⁰

The Burke Act set a precedent for the significant role education would play in the assimilation of Indigenous youth as it strove to solve the paradoxical position of Indigenous peoples as either wards of the government or full citizens. The effect was to make citizenship more restrictive and difficult to attain and to institute more monitoring to assess the competency of Indigenous peoples who were seeking a path to citizenship through allotment. BIA boarding schools would play a pivotal role in the implementation of this policy as they operated as a monitoring mechanism for Indigenous assimilation and citizenship competency. The Omnibus Act of 1910 would enforce the principles of the Burke Act, allowing the Office of Indian Affairs to create ‘Competency Commissions’ whose purpose was to examine the citizenship competency of Indigenous peoples living on allotted lands and issue citizenship certificates to those determined competent.

This practice of certifying worthiness for citizenship was effectively rationalized through BIA schools in 1917 when then Commissioner Cato Sells began issuing declarations of citizenship competency to Indigenous students who had completed a full course of study through a BIA school.¹⁶¹ After the passage of the 1910 Omnibus Act, BIA administrators had the power to determine the citizenship competency of Indigenous youth in BIA schools. They also were able to define competency qualifications, as they related specifically to Indigenous youth. A letter of citizenship competency, issued by then BIA Commissioner Cato Sells to 1919 Chemawa graduate Mae Adams, reveals what model citizenry looked like, particularly for Indigenous women. The following letter was

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction*, p. 145

written a year and a half after Adams had completed the Course of Study in Domestic Education at Chemawa. At the time, Adams, a member of the Shasta tribe, was working as a domestic in Corvallis, Oregon;

No assistance from others can equal self-help in developing the individuality which nature expects every man and woman to respect and assert. The child's delight when it first stands alone and walks unaided is the natural beginning of the pride of complete self-support that everyone should achieve. If in health see that you provide your own living. Make all the money you can honestly; save all you can without being stingy. If you have land, or hereafter acquire it, do not encumber it with debt. Study how to make it productive and profitable. Poverty is always a serious handicap; surmount it by spending less than you earn. Let your industry show itself in valuable property. There is no better working motto than 'Thrift'; it will fit you to overcome many difficulties; it will build you a well-ordered home, and happy homes are the best part of civilization. I extend my best wishes for your future health and success and shall be glad to have you write me at anytime about your plans and prospects. I hope also to receive a year hence favorable reports from your school and reservation superintendents concerning your progress in self-support. The enclosed certificate will have weight, if presented in determining whether under existing law you may be given full control of your land or other property should that question arise. Sincerely yours, Cato Sells.¹⁶²

Four values emerge as the defining elements of a worthy Indigenous-American citizen, as defined by the Bureau of Indian Affairs: individuality, thrift, self-support and a well-ordered home. These values were repeatedly re-enforced in Chemawa's Domestic Education Course of Study. In the case of Mae Adams it is significant to note that included in her file is a letter dated April of 1920 from Chemawa Superintendent Harwood Hall to Siletz Agent Chalcraft stating that there was a rumor that Mae Adams had given birth to baby with red hair and another Indigenous woman was caring for it. Superintendent Hall wrote to Chalcraft, "Under the circumstances I hesitate to deliver [letter of competency from Sells] for it is only to those graduates who deserve are these

¹⁶² Chemawa Student File, *Mae Adams #290*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

certificate intended.”¹⁶³ Adams’ questionable competence as the result of having a red-haired baby out of wedlock, despite having completed the Chemawa Domestic Education Course of Study, highlights the gendered restrictions of model citizenry that was imposed upon Indigenous women. As demonstrated in Mae Adams’ case, citizenship qualifications went well beyond basic literacy or even academic competency, extending into fixed racial and gender perceptions of appropriate behavior and, especially in the case of Indigenous women, appropriate motherhood.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Nancy Beadie, in her recent insightful article *War, Education and the State Formation: Problems of Territorial and Political Integration in the United States, 1848-1912* explains in great detail the connections between education, citizenship rights and state formation in the US West at the turn of the nineteenth century. As she summarizes, “In the US West as in the US South, education-based qualifications on political power were always highly racialised.” (p. 16) Beadie focuses on the oppressive power of literacy tests, largely imposed through educational policy, to restrict which identity groups had access to citizenship. Nancy Beadie. "War, Education and the State Formation: Problems of Territorial and Political Integration in the United States, 1848-1912." *Paedagogica Historica* DOI: 10.1080/00309230.2015.1133672 (2016): p. 16

Image 2

*1919 Chemawa Graduation photo of Mae Adams
Courtesy of the National Archives, Seattle, WA*

In 1924, with the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act, all Indigenous peoples were ostensibly granted citizenship. The impetus for the passage of this act was the considerable role Indigenous men played fighting for the United States in World War I. Indigenous communities' support for the war and Indigenous soldiers' integration in military units and successes on the battlefield championed the idea that they had already successfully integrated in American culture. Yet the vagaries of citizenship and legal rights of Indigenous people continued, as Lipps alluded to in his letter written four years after the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act. The Act simply stated;

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all noncitizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States be, and they are hereby, declared to be citizens of the United States: Provided, That the granting of such citizenship shall not in any manner impair or otherwise affect the right of any Indian to tribal or other property.¹⁶⁵

Lipps referred to the problematic paradox of this ward-citizen status when he wrote, "The payment of tuition for Indian children attending public school is done only where Indians have lands held in trusts by the Government, such land not being taxable. The Indians of Western Oregon are practically all citizens and are entitled to all the privileges and subject to all the laws just the same as other citizens."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Public Law 68-175, 43 STAT 253, Indian Citizenship Act. National Archives.

<https://www.archives.gov/historical-docs>

¹⁶⁶ RG 75 Chem Indian School Decimal Files '24-'55 Box 32: 809.2 "Tuition Public Schools

Superintendent Lipps' letter highlights another dilemma for Indigenous youth, namely conflicts between BIA administrators and public education officials. For various reasons which are explained in further detail in chapter four, many Chemawa students could not access public high schools in their local communities. A number of students who did have access to local public high schools requested admittance to Chemawa. For some Indigenous youth, citizen or not, Chemawa represented, in their assessment, the best option for secondary education. They were using Chemawa as a launch pad to access Salem High School, despite the fact that in most cases their families did not live or pay taxes in Salem. Many Indigenous youth were stuck in this liminal space of negotiating public education access even as citizens. An important element of this story is that by 1925 there were actually more Indigenous youth attending government schools, 23,761, than there were in 1900, 22,124.¹⁶⁷ A significant reason for this was access. Chemawa offered access to public high school for students, many who could not gain access to a public high school in their hometowns, or had no stable or safe housing in their home communities. Other students did not feel safe in the public school system and actively sought admittance to BIA schools despite having access to regional public school. Again, this liminal space where many Chemawa students existed put school administrators, such as Lipps, in a tensioned place of negotiating for Indigenous youths' rights as simultaneously citizens and wards.

During this same period a similar struggle over finances played out between Chemawa leaders and Portland Public School district leaders. Female Chemawa students in the Outing Program were placed in Portland area homes through the school year. They

¹⁶⁷ David Wallace Adams. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995. P. 319

worked part time in these homes, doing domestic labor, and attended Portland area high schools. The Portland Board of Education repeatedly requested funds from Chemawa and the BIA to pay tuition costs for these Chemawa students who were attending Portland high schools. In 1928, Chemawa Superintendent Lipps, in response to a tuition request of \$115 annually per Indigenous student from Superintendent of the Public Schools of Portland, Charles A. Rice, wrote,

There are 33 of these girls in Portland and vicinity living in homes as members of the family and attending public schools. They are living in residence sections located in different parts of the city and in suburban sections outside the city limits....These girls live in well-to-do families who are tax payers, under the relationship of parent and child. The Outing Mothers furnish these girls their books and Chemawa furnishes a part of their clothing and the girls buy the rest themselves with their earnings... If we are required to pay tuition for these girls who are attending the Portland Public Schools, we will simply bring them back to Chemawa.¹⁶⁸

This debate over funding responsibility between local BIA administrators and public school administrators was part of a larger debate unfolding around the entire Pacific Northwest region about, at its core, access to resources. As Harmon explains in her rich history of the region, these rights, liabilities and, especially, the definitions of Indigenous identity, were constantly being re-negotiated “Lawmakers and administrators simultaneously devised ways to remove people from the ranks of government-supervised Indians and increased the oversight of people who remained in those ranks.”¹⁶⁹ The Chemawa girls who were enrolled in Portland public schools, working as domestics in local homes, were in a complex, liminal space because they were considered Indians, in need of special resources, such as a BIA education. Yet they were also encouraged to

¹⁶⁸ RG 75 Chemawa Indian School Decimal Files '24-'55 Box 28: Contracts & Public Schools '28-'38: file #803

¹⁶⁹ Alexandra Harmon. *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities around Puget Sound*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000. P. 162

assimilate and become full citizens of the country. Meanwhile, as wards of the federal government, they were not treated with the same level of rights as other ordinary residents in the local community.

The policy for admissions into Chemawa Indian School, from the opening year of the institution, was to provide schooling for Indigenous youth who did not have access to public education in their local regions. Indigenous youth were, in fact, encouraged, under BIA policy, to first and foremost pursue public education.¹⁷⁰ In reality, legal rights, lack of transportation access, or an unstable home frequently prohibited this possibility. In the case of both Salem public schools and Portland public schools, Indigenous youth, as Superintendent Lipps wrote, “are looked upon as aliens and regarded as unjust burdens of the community.”¹⁷¹ Lipps’ claim that Chemawa students were treated as aliens and burdens of the community, while Japanese American students were freely admitted to public schools points to the racial perceptions that further complicated Indigenous youths’ access to civic rights. In this statement Lipps was focusing on racial bigotry as the detrimental factor impacting education access for Indigenous youth. Although clearly racism played a significant role in civic rights, the pivotal issues of funding seems missing from Lipps’ argument. Lipps was left advocating for Chemawa students, who were stuck in a liminal space as both wards and citizens, because they were not financially supported by the failing BIA system as well as local and federal education policy. Rather than argue his case for Chemawa students on financial grounds, Lipps opted to argue on norms of racialized exclusion.

¹⁷⁰ David Wallace Adams. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995. P. 319-320

¹⁷¹ RG 75 Chem Indian School Decimal Files '24-'55 Box 28: Contracts & Public Schools '28-'38: file #803

In his 1928 letter to the Oregon State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Chemawa Superintendent Lipps referred to the irony of government sanctioned segregation of Indigenous youth when he wrote, “The Indians think it strange that the children of Japanese and other foreigners are freely admitted to the public schools of the State while the children of the first of all Americans are looked upon as aliens and regarded as unjust burdens of the community.”¹⁷² Some cities on the West Coast, such as San Francisco did have a history of enforced racial segregation against Asian students in their public school systems. Salem, however, like Seattle, had a nominally integrated public education system though segregative urban planning policies and real estate practices created segregated communities in both cities. In this context it is important to make the distinction that public education access did not mean full access to citizenship rights and privileges for Japanese Americans in the Pacific Northwest. At the same time Indigenous peoples gained citizenship through the 1924 Citizenship Act, the 1924 National Origins Act reinforced decades-old policies of excluding most Asians from immigration and naturalization. More informal practices of segregation and exclusion also occurred. In her research on Japanese American experiences in Pre-World War II Seattle, Shelley Sang-Hee Lee is explicit in her examples of anti-Asian racism that impacted the daily experiences of Japanese American students in Seattle public schools.¹⁷³

Although Seattle and Salem never explicitly segregated immigrants in their public schools, as, for example, the State of California did, a long history of brutal racism, and legal, financial and social disenfranchisement against Asian Americans existed in the

¹⁷² RG 75 Chem Indian School Decimal Files '24-'55 Box 32: 809.2 "Tuition Public Schools"

¹⁷³ Shelley Sang-Hee Lee. *Claiming the Oriental Gateway: Prewar Seattle and Japanese America*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2011. Chapter 4

Pacific Northwest. This history is also defined by federally mandated restrictions to immigration and citizenship due to racial assumptions about the inability of Asians to assimilate to white American culture. The National Origins Act, passed in the same year as the Indian Citizenship Act, restricted the immigration of Japanese to the United States. Although the systematic exclusion of Japanese immigrants was argued on economic grounds, many policy makers saw the National Origins Act as national policy to restrict immigration of the inassimilable.¹⁷⁴ Japanese immigrants' access to citizenship, like that of Indigenous people, was heavily contingent upon white perceptions of their ability to assimilate to white culture and was also impacted by pervasive racial discrimination.

By comparing Chemawa students' access to public schooling to Japanese American youths' access, Superintendent Lipps highlighted the complex racial hierarchies built into federal policies. Lipps' statement also highlights the irony of the Indian Citizenship Act and the Origins Act passing in the same year, one setting a precedent of severe immigration and naturalization exclusions particularly for Chinese, Japanese, and other Asian immigrants and one supposedly opening the door to citizenship for Indigenous peoples. By invoking this racialized restriction on Japanese citizenship to argue that Chemawa students should be admitted to public schools tuition-free, Lipps effectively reinforced that racial hierarchy even as he ostensibly challenged it.

At the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act, F.S. Hall, director of the Washington State Museum wrote, "All signs of the aboriginal inhabitants have disappeared except in certain allotted reservations and the occasional visits to our cities of the wrinkled-faced basket sellers and of members of the younger generation, who are

¹⁷⁴ Frank Van Nuys. *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizenship, 1890-1930*. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002. P. 187

as much Americanized in dress and appearances as their white neighbors.”¹⁷⁵ Yet the passage of this act still did not grant equal access to the rights and privileges of citizenship to Indigenous Americans. New Mexico and Arizona continued to deny Indigenous Americans the right to vote after 1924.¹⁷⁶ The passage of the Citizenship Act of 1924 also did not end the government’s assimilationist agenda or paternalistic oversight of Indigenous lands and actions.¹⁷⁷ U.S. Government Reservation agents continued to monitor the progress and welfare of Chemawa students, making recommendations that would supersede the requests or needs of Indigenous parents.¹⁷⁸ Government supervision of Indigenous youth continued, despite, as F.S. Hall described their “Americanized dress and appearances as their white neighbors”. They would continue to be regarded as Indians first and Americans second.

The Image of Indigenous Citizenship and The Persistence of Vocational Education after the Indian Citizenship Act

After 1924 the purpose and meaning of education at Chemawa became even more contested, as both students and BIA administrators struggled to define Indigenous rights

¹⁷⁵ Alexandra Harmon. *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities around Puget Sound*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000. P. 174

¹⁷⁶ Clifford E. Trafzer, Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, Lorene Sisquoc, ed. *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue: Voices and Images from Sherman Institute*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2012. P. 29

¹⁷⁷ Alexandra Harmon highlights the continued governmental wardship of Indigenous fishing rights as well as regional BIA superintendents continued efforts to control and manipulate Indigenous timber use after the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act. Alexandra Harmon. *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities around Puget Sound*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000. Chapter 6

¹⁷⁸ In 1925 Yakima agent Estep wrote a letter to Chemawa Superintendent explaining why Evelyn Iyall would be better served in boarding school than at public school. At Estep’s request, Evelyn remained at Chemawa until her graduation in 1927, despite having access to a local, four year public high school in her hometown of Toppenish, Washington: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chemawa Student File, *Evelyn Iyall file #441*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

and BIA responsibilities. The outcome of these debates, as the school entered the Depression Era of the 1930s, was an even deeper entrenchment in a rigid vocational education curricula that restricted Indigenous girls' training to no or low-pay domestic labor. This meant fewer choices in educational and professional opportunities for Chemawa girls. With the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act, Chemawa implemented two new required classes for the 12th grade, Citizenship and American History. Otherwise the curricula and vocational focus of the school did not change after 1924. In a 1928 pamphlet published by the Department of the Interior's Office of Indian Affairs titled "The Social Heritage of the Indian Girl", whose intended audience were BIA field agents and BIA school administrators, stated in its conclusion,

The Indian young people are now leaving the reservations. They are seeking occupations in towns and cities. Whether they wish it or not they are losing their sense of tribal life, and they are becoming a real part of the communities which they are entering. In these communities the same mutual understanding and regard which is needed in schools is needed day by day, especially for these first years of adjustment to the new privileges and responsibilities as citizens of organized communities.¹⁷⁹

Although citizenship training, especially regarding cultural, political and economic assimilation, was an essential component of the BIA's agenda, how these messages were translated on the local level varied among schools and various school leaders. The mutual understanding of what was needed on a day-to-day basis for Indigenous students translated into a deeper entrenchment in sex-segregated vocational training. The Chemawa curricula in the early 1930s, which is discussed in greater detail in chapter four, determined that the ideal Indigenous American woman showed her civic pride and duty by providing unpaid labor in her home or low-paid labor in white women's homes.

¹⁷⁹ The Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *The Social Heritage of the Indian Girl*, Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs. Haskell Printing Department, Lawrence, Kansas, 1928. National Archives, Seattle, WA

Lomawaima and McCarty address the marginalizing characteristics of citizenship education as it was experienced by subaltern youth, when they write,

Public education in the United States was founded on the principle of local control, but that right, like citizenship, was not immediately offered to all Americans. For American Indians, African Americans, immigrants, and others, schooling has been an engine of standardization, not of parental choice and control, as powerful interests within the dominant society endeavored to fit diverse Americans for their assigned places within established economic and social hierarchies.¹⁸⁰

Choice, as highlighted by Lomawaima and McCarty, as well as by Chemawa student Rena Mann in her 1910 editorial piece in *The Chemawa American*, was key to empowering education. Although choice in education and lifeways as it was administered by the BIA was not considered one of the values of United States citizenship education for Indigenous youth, choice was actually expressed by Indigenous youth as they advocated for their educational options. For many Indigenous young women the curricular choices they were advocating for, in opposition to domestic vocational education, contradicted the values of a civilized home that were evaluated to determine an Indigenous girl's civic competency.

In an Introduction written for the September 1936 edition of the monthly field letter published by Office of Indian Affairs, Willard Beatty, Director of US Indian Education, acknowledged the incongruent implementation of BIA policy when he wrote,

One of the most serious handicaps to the development of a unified policy in the Indian Education Service, lies in the fact that our area extends from sea to sea....Possibility for personal conference are thereby limited and of necessity the greater number of our personnel find themselves forced to do the best they can with little or no help from the central office.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain An Indian*, p. 5

¹⁸¹ Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Indian Education: Fortnightly Field Letter of the Education on United States Office of Indian Affairs, Nos. 1-14 1936-1937*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

The negotiability of local education policy at schools like Chemawa represented the disparate and complex ways in which citizenship education was put into practice by local school leaders, and pointed to the ways in which the opportunities for agency on the part of Indigenous students were possible.

The tensions among school leaders regarding the role of vocational education for Indigenous youth resulted in a complex and shifting BIA policy. These debates stood out in the Chemawa annual reports spanning the 1920s. In the cover letter for the 1920 annual report then Superintendent Harwood Hall emphasized the two primary concerns facing Chemawa administrators: one, a lack of qualified and capable vocational education teachers and two, economic and social hardships facing Chemawa graduates who return to reservation life. In describing the hardships of graduates, Hall wrote, “When our pupils have finished ten years of school with perhaps a large part of the time spent away from home, and return to the reservation the problem which confronts them is a hard and a pathetic one in many cases. They have been fitted for better things; we cannot do less than fit them for things far above the old reservation surroundings.”¹⁸² This reveals an awareness on the part of the administration of the widening chasm between impoverished Indigenous communities and predominantly white, urban communities.

As Hall stated in his first point, the vocational program at Chemawa was, in fact, failing to fit students for better things. Hall actually suggested broadening the field of vocational courses offered at Chemawa. He wrote, “I think we should have an opportunity for pupils to take a brief business course and I believe we should provide at least a two-year normal training course which would give our people an opportunity to fit

¹⁸² Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, *1916-1940 Annual Reports, Chemawa Indian School*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

for the teaching of their own people and in their own vocational schools.”¹⁸³ The 1921 Annual Report mentioned improvements in the boys vocational education programs, including the addition of a machine shop and automobile shop. There was no mention of implementing business courses or normal training or any improvements in girls’ vocational courses. In his 1923 annual report cover letter, Hall wrote under the heading ‘Vocational Girls’, “Since many of our girls use their industrial training to further their education, the work in the vocational department at Chemawa is twofold in its purpose. The object is to fit our students for home making, in all that word implies, and a desire to be leaders in their community, as well as in the activities which have a clearly defined wage earning character as cooking, serving, care of children, needle workers and general housekeeping.”¹⁸⁴ All following annual reports, through 1933, include no description of vocational education or improvements therein.

The role Chemawa administrators played in the education of female students is complicated and reveals the convolutions of the broader Bureau of Indian Affairs objectives for Indigenous youth. It is clear in the majority of the correspondence between female students and Chemawa leaders that students held school administrators in high esteem and chose to describe them largely as advocates and allies in their writings. No doubt these written descriptions were on some level strategic in the students’ efforts to navigate the educational system at Chemawa. In personal letters students regularly expressed deep gratitude and love for school leaders. A letter written by the white father of Grace Johnston, whose mother was a member of the Esquimeaux tribe, demonstrates this level of appreciation. Wallace Johnston wrote the following to Chemawa

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Superintendent Hall in 1921, “We feel that the Government is doing a great work for our children in training and educating them to be good, true, faithful men and women and we wanted known that we greatly appreciate the chance our children have to go to such a school, conducted under so able a management, and I know from what our daughter writes that the children adore you and Mrs. Hall and when there is such a feeling amongst the pupils they certainly will do their best to learn and progress in their work.”¹⁸⁵

There are many instances of Chemawa administrators emphatically advocating for students both in the broader Bureau of Indian Affairs bureaucracy but also in regional spaces of government, for instance with Oregon public education. Superintendent Lipps’ interactions with both Salem and Portland Superintendents of Public Instruction demonstrate a level of advocacy on behalf of Indigenous youth that merits acknowledgement and understanding. On multiple occasions Lipps fought for Indigenous youths to gain access to public high schools on the principle that they were citizens and deserved access to quality public education. In 1928, Superintendent Lipps wrote the following letter to the Klamath reservation agent on behalf of Chemawa student Harriet Hill, a member of the Klamath tribe who wished to pursue commercial education at Capital Business College while boarding at Chemawa; “In cases where students are deserving and are financially unable to pay tuition while remaining at Chemawa and attending one of the educational institutions in Salem, no effort is made to collect from them. Harriett is a bright, intelligent girl and appears anxious to make the most of her opportunities.”¹⁸⁶ This was one case perhaps of many where Lipps succeeded in gaining

¹⁸⁵ Chemawa Student File, *Grace Johnston file #442*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

¹⁸⁶ Chemawa Student File, *Harriet Hill file #440*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

permission for a Chemawa graduate to maintain free room and board at the school, while she went on to pursue a higher degree or certification.

In the 1936/37 edition of the Office of Indian Affairs publication *Indian Education* reporting on issues regarding the U.S. Government's role in Indian education, Willard W. Beatty, then director of Indian education in the U.S. Department of the Interior, provides insight into the conflicted assumptions held by government agents and administrators with regards to Indigenous youth. In his opening remarks for that edition of the publication Beatty cited contemporary research that confirmed the lack of inherent difference between Indigenous ability versus white ability. Beatty went on to make the claim that the 'Indian problem' in government education was in actuality a problem of the educators and their policies, rather than that of Indigenous youth. Beatty wrote, "After a few months of this type of experience I reached the conclusion that many of our so called 'Indian' problems were called that because the persons who encountered them as problems, had been with Indians just long enough to forget how white children behave under similar circumstances."¹⁸⁷ These reflections of someone with the power to shape Indigenous education, as well as challenge the then normative assumptions of the white members of society in regard to Indigenous youths, speak to his sensibility, his sense of racial equity, and his faith in Indigenous youths' intellectual ability. It places the responsibility of outcome not on Indigenous youth but rather on the ability of teachers within the system to successfully educate and encourage them.

Yet, despite these astute reflections about the inherent equal abilities of Indigenous and white youth, Beatty went on to make some pointed statements about the

¹⁸⁷ Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Indian Education: Fortnightly Field Letters of the Education of United States Office of Indian Affairs*, Washington DC (Vol: 1, Nos. 1 to 14, September 1936-May 1937), Chapter 2. National Archives, Seattle, WA

role of both vocational and higher education for Indigenous youths. In the third chapter of the same edition of *Indian Education*, titled 'Educational Loans', Beatty wrote

There are times when one fears that too much emphasis may have been placed on higher education for Indians. One finds Indian boys and girls talking about a college education as if somehow or other the very fact of walking through the halls of a college, conveyed economic security and a permanent white-color job. Nothing could be further from the truth. A large majority of Indian boys and girls would be much better off if they were adequately trained to take full advantage of the economic assets of their own reservations. So long as the Indian land is leased to whites for grazing purposes, for farming purposes, and for the carrying on of activities from which white people become economically self-supporting, Indian boys and girls would be much wiser to seek a training which would prepare them to exploit for themselves, their own resources which are now in the hands of whites. Our Indian schools today are better prepared to help students do this than ever before. However, there, there are undoubtedly a limited number of Indian boys and girls, just as there are a limited number of white boys and girls, who may profit from a college education.¹⁸⁸

It is indeed paradoxical that Beatty claimed on the one hand that there was no difference in ability between Indigenous and white youth, and yet still he pushed for an Indigenous vocational trajectory targeted at manual labor, specifically on reservations that were obviously plagued with extreme poverty. This again led to an agenda for Indigenous youth that promoted segregation and disenfranchisement instead of equity and empowerment. Beatty's conflicting claims amount to a stark denial of the social and economic opportunities professional certification and higher degrees did, in fact, provide especially for Indigenous women. This paradox helps explain the actions of Chemawa leaders such as Superintendent Lipps, who continually advocated for Indigenous students yet still maintained a vocational education agenda on the Chemawa campus.

¹⁸⁸ Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Indian Education: Fortnightly Field Letters of the Education of United States Office of Indian Affairs*, Washington DC (Vol: 1, Nos. 1 to 14, September 1936-May 1937), Ch. 3, National Archives, Seattle, WA

The liminal positioning of Indigenous youth in the 1920s created great debate regarding the purpose and responsibilities of the BIA to Indigenous students. Yet it also afforded Indigenous youth a space of negotiation within and beyond Chemawa. Just as local public school and BIA administrators were navigating their responsibilities to Indigenous youth, the Chemawa students themselves were navigating spaces in which they could gain educational access despite the vagaries of their civic identity and their rights. In this liminal and shifting space, Chemawa students sought out educational opportunities despite the fact that the Chemawa curriculum was becoming more deeply entrenched in gender-segregated vocational education.

CHAPTER 4:
Understanding Chemawa Girls' Call for Choice in Education
A Comparison of Two School Reports

*"Because I have higher ambition."
-Clementine Hughes, 9th Grade Chemawa Student, 1933*

Contextualizing Girls' Choices in Vocational Education

It is clear from the foundational scholarship in vocational education of the Progressive Era that there was a great dis-connect between what education policy leaders wanted to create through the implementation of vocational education, versus what was happening on the ground, in the labor force and with regard to what female students really wanted for themselves and their futures. This disconnect between policy and reality was especially poignant for female students in Indian boarding schools, who were restrictively tracked in domestic education courses with minimal alternative options for study and professional development. By integrating an understanding of Indigenous girls' educational experiences in BIA schools and public schools during the Progressive Era, we can apprehend the broader impact of vocational education philosophy. Girls' experiences in vocational education during this period were the antithesis of adaptation to social change. Vocational education policy, and specifically domestic education, effectively resisted girls' expanding economic, social and political roles. The prejudiced assumptions about female identity imbedded in vocational education policy did not go unnoticed and in turn were strongly resisted by many female students. For Indigenous girls, this resistance was not simply against gender but also racial and cultural disenfranchisement. How female Indigenous students negotiated vocational curricula in

order to determine their own opportunities during this period reveals much about the normative assumptions rooted in this education policy.

Previous scholarship on vocational education has focused primarily on the impact of the Smith-Hughes Act. The intention of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 was to provide work training for students in public secondary education. It is a relevant distinction that the funding in the act was provided only for girls' courses in domestic education; no funding was provided for girls' courses in commercial, office or business training or for various kinds of skills-based industrial training, which was reserved exclusively for boys.¹⁸⁹ The impetus for the Smith-Hughes act was a philosophical and political calling for industrial efficiency in American society and education. David Snedden, perhaps the most vocal proponent of vocational education, who spent years rallying for its implementation leading up to 1917, questioned the relevance of certain subjects, such as history, in secondary education. Rather, Snedden argued that efficiency standards in vocational education, rather than humanities and the arts, were at the heart of the new industrial society.¹⁹⁰

As political negotiations occurred among lobbying organizations such as the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education (NSPIE), and the American Federation of Labor (AFL), early drafts of the Smith-Hughes bill gained prominence and support from leaders in industry, politics and education. This included some female labor leaders. Florence Marshall, director of the Manhattan Trade School for Girls and Agnes Nestor, president of the International Glove Worker's Union were appointed in 1914 to the Commission on

¹⁸⁹ Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work* p. 178

¹⁹⁰ Kliebard, *Schooled to Work* p. 122

National Aid to Education to help draft the bill. Both these women eagerly pushed for the inclusion of industrial education in the girls' vocational curriculum. Yet their efforts were resisted by the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), which lobbied vigorously in favor of a promotion of home economics in place of industrial education for girls. In the end, the philosophy of women as homemakers, encouraged by the GFWC, won out.¹⁹¹

Political and social leaders who encouraged an emphasis on domestic education for girls in the bill knew that women were working in greater numbers outside of the home, yet they felt a need to emphasize the value of women in the home as wives and mothers, rather than encouraging the emerging image of women as skilled workers and professionals outside of the home. Ella Flagg Young, former superintendent of Chicago public schools (1909-1915) and a vocal opponent of vocational education and, especially domestic education, warned against the exclusion of skilled training for girls in vocational curricula, particularly criticizing the domestic education focus on training girls for un-paid labor in domestic services in the home, rather than training for vocations outside of the home that offered financial stability and independence.¹⁹²

The result of the philosophical debate amongst leaders in education, industry and politics regarding the role of women in society was a two-fold proposition in the bill; balancing preparation for home and motherhood with training for the labor market. Yet this was based on the assumption that women would work in the labor market only briefly before marrying and settling into a domestic routine.¹⁹³ Significantly,

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 135

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 135

¹⁹³ Kantor, *Learning to Earn*, p. 71-73

commercial education for girls was not funded by the Smith-Hughes Act. Yet, not surprisingly, commercial education became the most popular curriculum offered to girls in the vocational education sector in public secondary schools, as employment in the commercial sector was one of the highest paid and most stable areas of work available to women during this period.¹⁹⁴

In 1918, a year after the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act, members of the National Education Association's Commission for the Reorganization of Secondary Education drafted the Cardinal Principles of Education, a policy report aimed at establishing the primary objectives of secondary education. The report was directly and significantly influenced by the Smith-Hughes Act and the shifting policy values towards vocational education. Sex-segregated labor training was reflected in the document. The Cardinal Principles outlined the primary objectives of public secondary education as, health, command of fundamental processes, worthy home membership, vocation, citizenship, worthy use of leisure and ethical character.¹⁹⁵ In the description of the third goal, worthy home membership, the report explicitly stated,

In the education of every high-school girl, the household arts should have a prominent place because of their importance to the girl herself and to others whose welfare will be directly in her keeping. The attention now devoted to this phase of education is inadequate, and especially so for girls preparing for occupations not related to the household arts and for girls planning for higher institutions. The majority of girls who enter wage-earning occupations directly from the high school remain in them for only a few years, after which home making becomes their lifelong occupation. For them the high school period offers the only assured opportunity to prepare for that lifelong occupation, and it is

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63-64

¹⁹⁵ Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education: A Report on the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, Appointed by the National Education Association*. Bulletin 1918, No. 35. Washington, D.C., United States Government Printing Office, 1928.

during this period that they are mostly likely to form their ideals of life's duties and responsibilities.¹⁹⁶

The justification for deliberate funding and expansion of domestic education in public high schools, as outlined by the NEA, was a model of social efficiency that assumed women were temporary and insignificant members of the labor force and their "lifelong occupation" consisted of unpaid work in the home as wives and mothers. Additionally telling, the NEA's objective in this statement was also to ensure that, through girls' domestic education, female students would be indoctrinated with the values of female labor in the home, something the authors of the *Cardinal Principles* were concerned would be lost on girls who pursued wage-earning occupations or higher education.

The rationale for the philosophical shift in education policy towards a social efficiency model of training workers for their positions in society, largely a response to the Industrial Revolution and attempts by capitalists to better control the labor force, can be found in the scholarly and policy writings of progressive era educational theorist Elwood P. Cubberley. In 1909 Cubberley wrote the following in his education text *Changing Conceptions of Education*, "Whether we like it or not, we are beginning to see that we are pitted against the world in a gigantic battle of brains and skill, with the markets of the world, work for our people and internal peace and contentment as the prizes at stake."¹⁹⁷ Written five years before the beginning of World War I, and in the heyday of the Industrial Revolution, Cubberley made the passionate argument that national peace and prosperity were dependent upon the nation's schools' adjustment to the industrialization of American work and society. And he argued that social efficiency

¹⁹⁶ Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, p. 8

¹⁹⁷ Elwood P. Cubberley *Changing Conceptions of Education*. New York: Hough Mifflin Co., 1909. P. 50

models of vocational training in schools were foundational to this success. The arguments made in the 1934 Vocational Education Report, discussed later in this chapter, echo this same claim of significance for vocational educational as a promotion of social efficiency and stability.

But these assessments of changes to the labor market in Cubberley's work, as well as the Smith-Hughes Act and the following Cardinal Principles, missed the mark of women's roles in the changing Industrial world. Herbert M. Kleibard astutely writes in his assessment of the Smith-Hughes Act,

If Smith-Hughes actually was meant to tie school job training to the workplace, then in the case of women at least, the legislation was bungled. By emphasizing industrial training in manufacturing and vocational agriculture rather than in commercial subjects, the framers of Smith-Hughes were firing at the wrong target with regard to the education of women- and probably men as well.¹⁹⁸

Female student responses in the 1933 Chemawa Survey analyzed in this chapter are just one example of the strong demand on the part of girls for professional training in wage-earning labor. The irony of this educational shift toward social efficiency in the era of industrialization is that it counter-productively assumed exclusion of women from labor markets, thus restricting both efficiency and production.

It is also important to understand that the changing roles and opportunities for women in the labor market were experienced very differently by white women versus women of color. Robert A. Trennert's informative article 'Educating Indian Girls at Nonreservation Boarding Schools, 1878-1920', outlines the broader influences of vocational education on the experiences of Indigenous girls in off-reservation Boarding schools, leading up to and through the boom of vocational education in the early

¹⁹⁸ Herbert M. Kliebard *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876-1946*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1999. P. 139

twentieth century.¹⁹⁹ Trennert is thorough in detailing not only the oppressive impact of domestic manual labor that was forced upon the female students in government boarding schools, but also the complexities of female students' experiences with commercial education, particularly at Haskell Institute. Haskell was one of the very few government-run Indian schools to make a professional certified commercial program available to Indigenous female students. But the harsh realities of employment beyond school for Indigenous girls were extremely restrictive. As Trennert explains that employment opportunities for educated Native girls, particularly in off-reservation communities, was restricted to the lowest menial jobs.²⁰⁰

Despite the complex layers of discrimination women faced in the labor market, female students themselves, realizing the changing social and economic trends as well as economic necessities, redefined vocational education through their curricular and work choices. Harvey Kantor's study of the implementation of vocational education policy in the State of California addresses how educational leaders both mis-read and were slow to respond to broader social and economic changes occurring at this time, particularly as they related to changes in gender norms in the working world. Vocational education policy in the early twentieth century was out of step with labor trends as well as the demands and ambitions of female students. Kantor states that the outcomes of the vocational education movement, especially in the field of commercial work, were not what was originally intended by policy makers and education leaders. The growing emphasis on gender as a distinguishing marker in education was not lost on students.

¹⁹⁹ Robert A. Trennert "Educating Indian Girls at Nonreservation Boarding Schools, 1878-1920." In *The Western Historical Quarterly* (13:3, 1982), 271-90.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 278

This was especially true for female students as they actively resisted domestic education courses, choosing instead to take commercial and professional education courses.²⁰¹

Although many education historians acknowledge the implicit sex segregation in vocational curricula, many do not go on to analyze the impact that particularly gender, layered amongst race, class and culture, played in the educational enfranchisement or disenfranchisement of students. Herbert M. Kliebard follows the evolution of job training as it grew into an educational ideal between 1876 and 1946. Focusing on national policy organizations such as the National Education Association's Commission for the Reorganization of Secondary Education, which issued the influential Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education in 1918, Kliebard misses the significance of the response from female students to changes in curricula. His and Harvey Kantor's scholarship on vocational education abounds with generalized statements about vocational education. Even though they both acknowledge that boys did not take cooking, sewing or nursing classes and girls did not take bench work, cabinet making or industrial drawing, the implications of these curricular distinctions seem lost on them.

The significance of gender in vocational education was certainly not lost on David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot, in their research on co-education in the early twentieth century. Tyack and Hansot's research directly addressed the gender identity issue that was not pursued in either Kliebard or Kantor's research. From a methodological perspective, Tyack and Hansot were especially interested in student experiences and educational policy transformations through a gendered lens. Citing Adrienne Rich, in her call for a "re-vision- the act of looking back, of seeing with new eyes", Tyack and

²⁰¹ Harvey Kantor *Learning to Earn: School, Work and Vocational Reform in California, 1880-1930* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 60-70

Hansot reevaluated the coeducation of public schools as a gendered policy and practice.²⁰² Unlike Kliebard and Kantor, they paid close attention to the different curricula offered girls and boys through vocational education, critically analyzing the political, economic and social elements that determined what boys versus girls ought to be learning and why.

Tyack and Hansot's premise was that education policy, particularly gender practices in education policy, are often disconnected from actual changes in social norms. They argued that this disconnect between policy aimed at influencing gender norms in youth and actual experiences of boys and girls can be especially apparent in the co-educational public system. Sex-segregated vocational education of the Progressive Era is a prime example of this disconnect. In their call for greater attention to gender, not just in education policy, but even in broader societal understanding, Tyack and Hansot explained, "Institutional convenience, the preference of educators for familiar ways, the demographic and economic pressures often have had more to do with the introduction or retention of gender practices in the schools than conscious reforms or gender ideology."²⁰³ Tyack and Hansot's gendered lens of education analysis is invaluable in that it reveals not only the disconnect between policy and the real world, but also highlights the impacts of education policy that were different from the intended outcomes. This lens of analysis that Tyack and Hansot apply specifically to public co-education is necessary for a deeper understanding of gendered education policy in other education institutions outside of co-educational public education.

²⁰² David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Learning Together: A History of Coeducation in American Schools* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 2.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 292

K. Tsianina Lomaiwama, another scholar who has looked specifically at gender, also looks at how Indigenous identity is a distinguishing marker in education. Her work emblemizes the significance of the mundane daily work of sewing and washing that girls in BIA schools were forced to do. Lomaiwama, in her story of student resistance at Chilocco Indian School in Oklahoma, describes the historical narrative of the federal Indian boarding school experience as a corpus that has, as she explains,

been resurrected from the bones of official archival documents. Spoken, individual voice occasionally augments the inscribed voice of authority, but it still speaks from a position of power: the commissioner of Indian Affairs, the superintendent of Indian schools, school administrators and teachers, the researcher as expert witness. What has become of the thousands of Indian voices who spoke the breath of boarding-school life?²⁰⁴

Lomawaima's account of students' lives at Chilocco Indian School in the 1920's and 1930's draws on sixty personal narratives of alumni who attended the school during this period. Lomawaima's story of the school links domesticity, subservience training and the daily control of female students' bodies through uniforms, rituals and work. By drawing on stories of subversive resistance within the daily, mundane rituals of school life, Lomawaima powerfully demonstrates the failure of the BIA assimilation program through the resistance of students' subversive action. As she writes, "I intend to show there was more going on in the boarding schools than just teaching Indian girls how to make a bed or sew a straight line."²⁰⁵

The evidence from the narratives Lomawaima works with focuses on a resistance to practice that largely took the form of rebellious action outside of the classroom, in liminal spaces where the authoritative gaze of matrons and teachers was less present,

²⁰⁴ K. Tsianina Lomawaima. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. P. xii

²⁰⁵ Lomawaima. *They Called It Prairie Light*. p. 87

such as at school dances, in bathrooms and in dormitories. The bloomer stories, told by many Chilocco alum, becomes a focal point of Lomawaima's analysis of female students' affirmations of their individuality amidst the restrictions of the school. In the stories, female students found multiple ways to deceitfully dispose of the large, bulky bloomers that were required for the girls' uniform. But, in an especially clever strategy, female students hid their disposed-of bloomers in strategic spaces and, working in teams, were able to put them quickly back on during uniform inspections. The stories reveal camaraderie, intelligence, bold determination and also a great sense of humor on the part of the female students at Chilocco, who were resolute in their efforts to literally shape their own bodies as they so chose.

As with Lomawaima's work, I also bring student voice to the fore in this historical understanding of the Indian boarding school experience. Whereas Lomawaima focuses on student experience outside of the classroom, particularly with regards to resistance to student uniforms and, for girls, resistance to bloomers, I look specifically at female student resistance inside the classroom, with regards to curricular choice. Although Lomawaima provides rich historical context for vocational domestic education in BIA boarding schools, her analysis misses specific forms of student resistance that targeted learning and curricula. At Chemawa, female students crafted their own educational choices in learning despite the restrictions of BIA education. And their bold ambitions to shape the content of their education at Chemawa was targeted at long-term ambitions to shape how and where they worked later in their lives. A deeper understanding of the intersections of both the racial and gendered experiences of students at Chemawa Indian School, and their acts of curricular resistance and advocacy, reveals

normative assumptions about not just women's place in American society but, specifically, Indigenous women's place in American working society.

As we understand the intersections of race and gender in the BIA vocational education at Chemawa we gain a more complex understanding of how vocational education fit into larger gender and racial systems of disenfranchisement and societal perception. Previous scholarship on Indian boarding schools in the late nineteenth century provides context for the early foundation of vocational education. This foundation was characterized by societal assumptions about gender and, as historian James Anderson stated with respect to the parallel models of vocational education for Blacks, this was the enforcement of a racial caste system.²⁰⁶ Previous scholarship on vocational education in public schools in the Progressive Era has been written as though school-based vocational education began in the 20th century, when it had actually been the model of education for Indigenous Americans, Native Hawaiians and African Americans for over a century by that time. Future scholarship on vocational education will be enriched by our understanding of this connection and longer history. As Harvey Kantor explains in his research on vocational education reform in California during the Progressive Era, vocational education advocates repeatedly misread and were slow to respond to important changes in the labor market. One root of these errors was “the movement's attitude toward girls”, an attitude dependent upon colonial, patriarchal gender norms and steeped in racial and class assumptions and prejudices.²⁰⁷ This attitude was foundational to early Indian education policy but vocational education's implementation in government boarding schools operated within a colonizing paradigm which specifically positioned

²⁰⁶ James D. Anderson *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988. p. 28

²⁰⁷ Kantor, *Learning to Earn*, p. xiii

Indigenous girls in narrowed tracks of domestic labor, with minimal choices for academic study and professional training. Again, Indigenous girls' educational experiences in BIA schools was much more limited than the educational experiences of white girls in public schools.

Two Reports Put In Conversation

By bringing student voice into the historical analysis of curricular choice, and comparing it to the “bones of official archival documents”, what emerges is an understanding that BIA administrators, on both the local and national level, failed to grasp and effectively respond to the specific needs of Indigenous girls.²⁰⁸ Although there were examples of local Chemawa leaders advocating on the part of students, Chemawa leaders were largely ignorant of or chose to resist the changing educational needs and desires of Indigenous girls, especially in the context of the changing roles of women workers in the larger economy. One powerful example of this disconnect between female student ambitions and administrative policy is the comparison of two school reports, one in the form of a survey taken in 1933 and the other a vocational education report published in 1934. The 1933 Student Survey, administered by the school with the goal of assessing student options if the school were to close, provides a direct view into the personal, individual assessments of students regarding their own perceptions of their education and their future ambitions. In the survey, students were asked a number of direct yes or no questions regarding school access, financial resources and home

²⁰⁸ K. Tsianina Lomawaima. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. P. xii

environments. They also had opportunities, through open-ended questions, to write personally crafted responses to questions about their future. These student responses, in particular to the open-ended questions, are rich examples of student voice, accessed through a medium which specifically asked students to be honest and thorough in their responses. The 1934 Vocational Education report, on the other hand, represents an assessment of the school and its future based on observations made by school faculty and vocational educational policy makers. This reports reflects the perspectives of educators at the school, without, specifically, any assessment of girls' curricular preferences or student opinion in general. It is a report void of student voice but highly reflective of larger administrative and BIA policy goals at a time when the value of BIA schools generally was being questioned.

When these two reports are put into conversation with one another, we can juxtapose female student voice with administrative voice. Lomawaima's work on the female students at Chilocco reveals student resistance to bodily control, from the minute use of muscles in domestic work to the precise fitting of bulky and oppressive clothing, all of which worked to physically change the Indigenous body. If white educators could physically change Indigenous girls' bodies to look and act like white girls, then, presumably, their minds could 'advance' to think like that of white women's minds.²⁰⁹

The juxtaposition of the 1933 Chemawa Student Survey and the 1934 Vocational

²⁰⁹ Lomawaima compares the physical assimilationist project at Chilocco to the Industrial education of Blacks at Tuskegee and the turn of century belief in the connection of racial inferiority connected to physical and mental inferiority. Lomawaima cites the writing of Estelle Reel, who worked as the superintendent of Indians schools between 1898 and 1910, and was a fundamental architect of the girls' Uniform Course of Study. "In short, the Indian instincts and nerves and muscles and bones are adjusted one to another, and all to the habits of the race for uncounted generations, and his offspring cannot be taught like the children of the white man until they are taught to do like them." K. Tsianina Lomawaima. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. P.93

Education reports reveals a different layer of control on the part of BIA policy in its efforts to influence girls' minds and ultimately, the work they were expected to perform with their bodies. It also reveals the resistance and advocacy of female students to determine how, when and where they chose to learn, to think and to work.

1933 Student Survey

Charles M. Buchanan, superintendent of Tulalip Indian Reservation School in Marysville, Washington between 1894 and 1920, wrote the following passage in his personal papers,

The majority of Indian girls who go off to the larger boarding schools are educated above their station. They are inspired with high and beautiful ideals, but ideals which are impossible in the life to which they are to return... The majority of them return to their people, firmly resolved to show their benighted people the light... Well, you have been brought up in the white people's way, what have you got to show for it? Money? No. Work? No. What is there here for you to do? Nothing. ...Here lies the terrible tragedy, repeated a hundred times over year after year in every Indian community of any size.²¹⁰

Buchanan wrote these words as a reflection on the many Indigenous girls who attended the Tulalip Indian school and went on to study at Chemawa.²¹¹ Buchanan saw the academic education of Indigenous girls as a terrible tragedy. Buchanan's reflection demonstrates the paradox of education for Indigenous youth in the early twentieth century. Education had the possibility of representing hope, opportunity and empowerment. Yet Buchanan's claim was that existing structures of society and reservation life offered no way to deploy those ideals and, thus white people's form of

²¹⁰ Charles M. Buchanan, *Private Papers and Research* (1894-1920) Archives at Allen Library Special Collections, University of Washington, Seattle, WA

²¹¹ Sue Ann Reddick "The Evolution of Chemawa Indian School: From Red River to Salem, 1825-1885," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* (2000): 444-465.

education was lost on Indigenous youth, girls in particular. Buchanan argued that to offer education that represented hope and high ideals would only result in tragedy.

A deeper layer of irony in Buchanan's observations was that the education offered Indigenous girls at Chemawa in reality did not educate them above their station, but instead worked to place them firmly in a domestic labor station. But what it did offer was hope and a window into greater educational opportunity, especially beyond the walls of Chemawa. Vocational education, which squarely focused on domestic education for girls, rather than classical education or professional certifications, came to define Chemawa curricula through the early twentieth century. Yet it is clear from the voices and actions of girls at Chemawa during this period that they were directly seeking education that did empower them with 'high and beautiful ideals' and opportunities to expand their roles in greater society.

In 1933, over a decade after Buchanan ended his tenure with the BIA, Chemawa administrators administered a survey to students to determine the future of the school, based on the needs and objectives of the students themselves. The survey responses provide insight into individual student experience and positionality at Chemawa. They also reveal much about what students wanted directly, from their perspective. Through the early 1900s an interesting tension over curricula is evident in the sporadic curricular changes, especially to girls' curriculum, and debates amongst local school leaders with regards to what was best for Indigenous youth. In the spring of 1933, at a time when school administrators saw the school's closure, due to financial reasons and the fallout from the Meriam Report, as a looming possibility, the school distributed a survey to the students body.

By 1933, Chemawa had ended its elementary education program and only offered schooling for secondary education students. The student body surveyed ranged in age from thirteen to nineteen. The purpose of the survey was to assess where students would go if the school closed but also what the students' goals for education and work were beyond Chemawa. By 1919 only Indigenous youth who were living under government supervision could attend government schools such as Chemawa and they needed to prove they could not access regional public schools.²¹² Unfortunately, it is unclear how this survey was used after it was administered. There is no reference to the survey in future administrative reports. Considering that the school went to the effort of surveying the entire student body, it is logical that on some basic level that the student responses were tallied and reported, at minimum, to then Superintendent James T. Ryan. For the purpose of this research investigation, I selectively analyzed female student survey responses. In total, three hundred female students were surveyed. The one-page survey read as follows [see table 7]:²¹³

²¹² Chemawa Student File, *May Belle Heay File #303*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

²¹³ RG 75 Box 1 'Student Survey Response Forms' 1933. National Archives, Seattle WA

Table 7: 1933 Survey Instructions

Below is confidential information to be used in determining whetherby Chemawa Vocational School should be retained or abolished. Please answer each question honestly and carefully:

Name/ Age/ Tribe/ Blood

1. If Chemawa is closed where will you go to school?
2. Is your father alive? Is your mother alive?
3. Number in your family of school age?
4. Is your father employed? How is he employed?
5. What income do your parents have?
6. Do you have any source of personal income? How much is your personal income?
7. Can your parents afford to buy schoolbooks and clothes and pay your transportation to school?
8. What grade will you be in next year?
9. How far do you live from public school?
10. Where do you live? Can you ride to school in a school bus?
11. What is the highest grade taught in your home school?
12. Do your parents have a permanent home where they live? How many rooms?
13. What vocation are you studying?
14. Could you learn this vocation in your home school?
15. How do you plan to earn your living when you graduate?
16. Do you wish to live permanently at your present home? If not, why not?

Based on student responses, 213 of the 300 female students surveyed did not have access to a four-year public high school in their home communities. By comparison, eighty-seven students wrote that they did have access, financially and geographically, to a four-year public high school. Fourteen of the eighty-seven students specifically requested that they attend another off-reservation BIA boarding school if Chemawa were to close.

Seven of these fourteen students did have access to a local public high school but stated that they would prefer to be at a BIA boarding school. One hundred and ninety nine of the three hundred students stated they did not have any access to personal income. Based on notes made by students with and without access to personal income, predominantly this income took the form of lease or rent money from a land allotment.

In terms of female student intentions for future work and school, thirty-nine students specifically noted that they intended to pursue higher education, in the form of college, business school, a nurse certification training program or normal school. In response to question fifteen, *How do you plan to earn your living when you graduate?*, sixty-two specified nursing, thirty-seven specified commercial work in a business, twenty-eight specified domestic work, twenty-one students specified teaching, and nine specified working as a seamstress. It is important to note that over half of the students, mostly those under the age of sixteen, left questions #13-15, regarding their future study and work plans, blank or wrote undecided.

Half of the female students surveyed, one hundred and fifty, stated that they did *not* wish to live permanently at their present home (question #16). The written responses to the second part of this question, *If not, why not?*, reveal a great deal regarding not only what female students' ambitions were, but also the restrictions and obstacles the girls themselves saw as hindering their own ambitions. Their responses also further support the idea that for many Indigenous youth, Chemawa was perceived as a launch pad for greater opportunity, opportunity that necessitated empowering education and financial stability. For many of these Indigenous girls, Chemawa was not perceived as an isolating environment, or 'total institution', but rather a gateway through which they could connect to other communities and especially to work and continuing educational opportunities.

Student responses as to why they did not want to live in their home communities (question #16) can be categorized under four major themes; educational opportunity, financial independence, family support, and home environment. The majority of students who responded that they would not like to live permanently in their present home, and

provided explanations as to why, wrote specifically about seeking greater educational and financial opportunities, which they perceived as not available in their home communities.

A sampling of responses include:

- “Because I want to go to college and make a living of my own.”
- “Because I cannot finish my schooling at home for if I go home I will have to work for my living for my mother will not be able to keep me home.”
- “Because I have higher ambition.”
- “I wish to be away so I can get a good education.”
- “No. If at home [I] would be unable to attend school. Father too poor to send all to public school. [I] would have to take care of the home and give younger children a chance.”
- “Because I want to get an education and earn my own living.”
- “No chance of getting the education I want. No position worth while.”
- “I wish to learn other ways.”
- “Because I am planning on finishing my education.”
- “Because there is no chance of me getting ahead over here.”
- “Does not [offer] opportunity for advancement.”
- “Because I like Chemawa because it gives me lots of opportunity for education.”
- “Because I want to get out into the world.”
- “Because I want to get out and away from the place and learn about different people about the world.”
- “We have no way to send me to school. I want an education”²¹⁴

Many students also wrote about a stark lack of employment opportunities in their home communities. Many of these students lived on or near tribal reservations or in remote, rural regions. Responses in the category of financial independence include;

- “I would like to work for myself.”
- “Because jobs are not so good there.”
- “Because I want to earn my own living.”
- “Because I would like to go out and work for myself.”
- “Because I can’t get work that would suit me. Live too far from town and cant get any kind of work.”
- “Not if I can help it. There is nothing I can do [there]. Can’t get to the kind of work I can do.”
- “There is no work on the reservation where I live.”
- “I have to earn a living for myself.”
- “Not enough opportunities to make a success of myself.”
- “I am not satisfied with the standard of living.”

²¹⁴ RG 75 Box 1 ‘Student Survey Response Forms’ 1933. National Archives, Seattle WA

“There are no opportunities for obtaining work and earning a living.”
“I want to go where I have more advantages.”
“So I can make my own living.”²¹⁵

Considering that two thirds, or 199, of the female students had no access to any form of personal income, and the majority of those students’ families also had minimal or no income, many of these students were self-advocating in response to their situations of extreme poverty. These female students clearly connected their future work opportunities with their educational opportunities, as many stated directly in their written responses. They were also seeking employment that provided financial stability, in many cases not just for themselves but also for their families. And they clearly identified these opportunities as existing outside of their home communities.

The third and fourth themes that emerged in the responses to question #16 also related to financial independence and survival. A number of students wrote about their desire to either not be a burden on their impoverished families by leaving home or sought to financially assist their families through their work in a stable profession. Responses in this vein include;

“I want to work and not live my life off my parents.”
“I wish to help send my brothers through school.”
“Because I want to go out and see people and I want to earn my own living so that I can help my parents.”
“Because I would like to get around in the world and make my own living and not to depend upon my parents.”
“Because there are six in our family and my parents will have too many to support and I would like to work somewhere to help my parents and get an education.”²¹⁶

A number of students connected their survival away from their home communities as not simply financial, but also physical and emotional. Students alluded to instances of abuse

²¹⁵ RG 75 Box 1 ‘Student Survey Response Forms’ 1933. National Archives, Seattle WA

²¹⁶ RG 75 Box 1 ‘Student Survey Response Forms’ 1933. National Archives, Seattle WA

and neglect. A number of the students were orphans and a number of students did not know where their parents lived and had no permanent home. Student responses in this theme included;

“Because the community isn’t a proper place for anyone who wants to become something later on in life.”

“Because I know I would do better away. Poor environment.”

“My parents have no living quarters.”

“Bad environment- nothing to do- no permanent home.”

“Because there isn’t anything for a person of my age [17 years old] to do around there but lay around.”

“Because there is too much trouble.”

“My father and mother are separated and move around and I don’t know where they are.”²¹⁷

Significantly, some of the students who did have access to local four-year high school programs specifically requested that they either stay on at Chemawa or attend another BIA boarding school program because they desperately wanted to finish their education and their family did not have a permanent home for them to stay in while they attended their local public high school. One example of this scenario was 17-year-old Rita Ging, a member of the Assiniboine tribe from Poplar, Montana. Rita did have access to a local four-year public high school in Poplar, but her family had no permanent home, which would make regular attendance for her at the school very difficult. Another example was thirteen-year old Alta Tom, a member of the Rouge River tribe, from Siletz, Oregon. Alta did have access to a four-year public high school in Siletz but wrote, in her explanation as to why she would prefer to not live permanently at her present home,

²¹⁷ RG 75 Box 1 ‘Student Survey Response Forms’ 1933. National Archives, Seattle WA

“Because the people are not nice people. They drink too much. I cannot get the kind of work that makes me amount to much.”²¹⁸

The results of the student surveys signify that female students wanted access education that provided them financial stability and opportunity. But access to that path was complex and students had to deftly navigate many challenging circumstances in order to attain a path to financial and social stability. These students were poor and they saw their access to financial independence through education and professionalization, including nursing, teaching and commercial work. Although twenty-eight students specified that they planned to make a living employed as domestic workers, a number of these students specified that they would do this work in order to pay for more schooling. Domestic labor, although it might be a stepping-stone, was not the goal for many of these young women. In their clarity regarding these goals, these young women were actively seeking to re-define what their ‘station’ in life could be.

1934 Vocational Education Report

A year after the student survey was conducted, a report was drafted by faculty at Chemawa, in cooperation with faculty at Oregon State Agricultural College, with the purpose of making recommendations for vocational curricula at Chemawa. The two primary authors of the report, William Sherman and William Allen, were electrical and shop instructors at Chemawa, as well as students at Oregon State Agricultural College. This report was part of their course research at the college. Sherman and Allen also worked in cooperation with O.D. Adams, State Director for Vocational Education for the

²¹⁸ RG 75 Box 1 ‘Student Survey Response Forms’ 1933. National Archives, Seattle WA

State of Oregon. And their research and concluding report was supported by then Chemawa Superintendent James T. Ryan, who provided them full access to Chemawa for the purpose of the project. Ryan was also the Superintendent in 1933, at the time of the student survey. This report, as a response to the evolution of the curricula and mission of Chemawa, singled out vocational manual labor as the primary goal of the school and the broader mission of BIA education. In the conclusion of the report on curricula at Chemawa, the authors made the claim that in order to ensure the survival and relevancy of Chemawa, the school must significantly bolster its focus on vocational education. Three points emerge in a comparison between the 1934 Vocational Education report and the 1933 Student Surveys. First, the authors of the 1934 Vocational Education report intentionally excluded girls from their evaluation. Second, the 1934 report assessment of the Chemawa curricula, particularly with their exclusion of an analysis of girls' curriculum, misses many of the real circumstances and needs of Indigenous youth. Third, the 1934 report assessment of opportunities after school for Chemawa graduates is also largely disconnected from the realities facing, particularly, female students at Chemawa.

The report came a year after the school nearly lost all government funding and had to close its doors for several months, partly due to the broader economic fall out of the Great Depression, but also due to low enrollment rates of the school. The general statement regarding the purpose of the report stated:

In recent years the Indian Office has expressed considerable doubt as to the advisability of continuing the non-reservation boarding schools unless training was more definite in character. No doubt there is a good foundation for this belief. The non-reservation Indian Schools have not and cannot under the frequent changes of administration maintain a standard of training equal to that of the locally controlled district school. Since the political and economic disturbance of 1933, Indian children are encouraged, wherever possible, to take advantage of the facilities offered by the local schools, or, if conditions warrant, new reservation

schools are built, and those already established improved to meet the change in educational policy. This change raises the question- if the non-reservation boarding schools are to aid in furthering the education of Indian youth, how can they be made effective under present conditions?²¹⁹

At the time of the 1934 vocational education report Chemawa still followed a curricular pattern in which half the day was spent on academics and half the day was spent on vocationally-targeted manual labor, work which largely kept the school facilities, such as food production, laundry etc., in operation. This was also a point in which, as mentioned in the purpose of the report, as well as evidenced by student responses in the 1933 survey, more and more youth were gaining access to public secondary education, as more urban and rural districts around the nation were opening public high schools. The expansion of public high schools made the question of Chemawa's purpose and necessity immediate.

The courses offered Chemawa students in the year of the report were [see table 8]:

Table 8: Chemwa Curriculum 1933-1934

Boys & Girls- two-year commercial course

Girls- Practical nursing [which did not offer any form of professional certification], cosmetology, child-care & home economics

Boys- Auto mechanics, Carpentry, Blacksmithing, Gas Welding, Shoe repair, House wiring, Barbering, Tailoring, Machine shop practice, Plumbing and sheet metal work, Spotting, cleaning & Pressing, Restaurant and camp cooking, Stationary steam engineering, Painting and house decorating, Dairying, farming & gardening, Job printing

It is clear that boys at Chemawa had many more options of study than girls, yet those options were clearly positioned in the field of vocational and manual labor. It is also clear that the options offered girls were not targeted towards professional certification or

²¹⁹ RG 75 Box 28 'A Survey of Vocation Education' 1934 by Harold L. Shilling, William A. Sherman & William L. Allen of Oregon State Agricultural College & with State Board for Vocational Ed, Salem OR. National Archives, Seattle WA

access to higher education, but rather targeted towards manual labor work predominantly in the home and domestic arena.

When the 1934 Report is compared to the female student responses in the 1933 survey, one incredibly significant point emerges regarding the issue of who was listening to whom. Girls' curricula was completely excluded from the 1934 Vocational report. The authors of the 1934 report were clear and specific with regards to why they focused their analytical lens specifically on the education of boys. They wrote in their introduction, "The field is too large and the time too short to include both boys and girls and since the boys are the potential wages earners of the future to a larger extent than the girls, the scope of this paper will be limited to the former."²²⁰ This justification for excluding girls from the report, on the assumption that they would largely not be wage earners, is profoundly ironic when compared to the female student survey responses, collected just a year prior to the vocational education report. The majority of female students in the 1933 surveys reported that they wished to continue with secondary and, in many cases, higher and extending education, and also wished to leave their home communities in order to attain access to secure employment and financial stability as wage earners.

Lomawaima notes in her study of Chilocco that the voices of administrators in positions of power largely come to define what is recorded and remembered about U.S. government Indian boarding schools. By comparing the student voices in the 1933 survey and the administrative voice in the 1934 report, we can bring the Indigenous voices to the fore and also uncover where these voices failed to hear each other. It is not

²²⁰ RG 75 Box 28 'A Survey of Vocation Education' 1934 by Harold L. Shilling, William A. Sherman & William L. Allen of Oregon State Agricultural College & with State Board for Vocational Ed, Salem OR. National Archives, Seattle WA, p. 7

clear whether the authors of the 1934 Vocational Education report read the student survey responses from the prior year, or, perhaps selectively chose to review only the boys' responses. Again, considering that the authors of the report were faculty at Chemawa during the time the student survey was conducted, and considering that Superintendent Ryan commissioned both the 1933 survey and the 1934 report, it seems logical that William Sherman and William Allen, who were both teachers at Chemawa, did know of the student surveys. The unanswered question is, did they choose to not review female student survey responses based on their strategy to exclude girls from their report, under the assumption that girls would not be wage earners and worth considering?

In the introduction to the 1934 Vocational Education report, authors Sherman and Allen cite a report presented by then Supervisor of Industrial Training James Arentson at the Conference of Vocational Education in Indian Schools in Fort Collins, Colorado in 1931. In his presentation, Arentson outlined the three primary problems facing educators of Indigenous youth. He explained,

The development of the Indian into a self-respecting and self-sustaining citizen has been generally accepted as the objective of all Indian Bureau activities... There remains, therefore, for the educator, three rather distinct problems to be met in shaping his course:

1. The Indian who is already living in such close association with the whites and who has intermarried with the whites to such an extent that the problem of his education becomes much the same as that of the whites. For these the public school or a type of school similar appears best to serve his purpose except in instances where a racial handicap or special interest would lead the pupil into a vocational course in lieu of public schooling, or where vocational training or other specific type of training is an outstanding need not provided by available public schools.
2. The reservation Indian who has little contact with the whites, the future of whose children will be spent, in the majority of the cases, on the reservation. For this group, the central thought of the educator should be a program designed to develop within the child capacity to lift himself to a higher level of life than his parents attained through a better use of the resources and opportunities his reservation offers.

3. The third group to be served is composed of those pupils who have acquired through the instruction offered in the reservation school or otherwise an ambition for a special type of training that will fit them to find places in gainful occupations in white communities and away from the reservation.²²¹

Authors Sherman and Allen of the 1934 report, squarely positioned Chemawa as filling a need created by the second and third categories, students who did not have access to public schools or to white culture, and needed special training for specific jobs. Their conclusion was to continue focusing on a half-work-day, half-academic-day schedule, with a vocational, manual training-focused program. In their assessment of the vocational focus of the school they provided a skeptical assessment of a high school track focused on academics and higher education. Rather, they argued for a program focused on vocational manual labor training. They went into greater detail in their description of boys' vocational training.

A very thorough and accurate survey should be made of the opportunities offered the Indian for making a living. If an individual has a land allotment which can be farmed, this fact should be given very serious consideration and instead of training him to be a cook, painter, or electrician, he should be encouraged to major in farm shop, agriculture or any allied course which can aid him in securing a better living from the legacy he already possesses. The same is true of the Indian who fishes for a living. Power boats are used and courses in gas or Diesel engines would be applicable. Many Coast Indians receive their yearly income from the sale of forest products, yet few, if any know when a tree is ready for the saw or how to figure its contents in board measurement. Courses in scaling, lumber grading, reforestation are not difficult to organize, and much of them especially the related work, can be taught advantageously at this school. For those Indians who have no allotments and are supporting themselves by irregular and unskilled work, carefully selected trade courses can do much to further their economic independence.²²²

²²¹ RG 75 Box 28 'A Survey of Vocation Education' 1934 by Harold L. Shilling, William A. Sherman & William L. Allen of Oregon State Agricultural College & with State Board for Vocational Ed, Salem OR. National Archives, Seattle WA, p. 12-13

²²² RG 75 Box 28 'A Survey of Vocation Education' 1934 by Harold L. Shilling, William A. Sherman & William L. Allen of Oregon State Agricultural College & with State Board for Vocational Ed, Salem OR. National Archives, Seattle WA

This description of boys' manual training, and justification thereof, echoes the same justifications outlined in the 1918 Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, and the larger philosophy of social efficiency that was propelling vocational education in public education at this time. The introduction to the Cardinal Principles, in The Goal of Education in a Democracy, stated,

The purpose of democracy is so to organize society that each member may develop his personality primarily through activities designed for well-being of his fellow members and of society as a whole. This ideal demands that human activities be placed upon a high level of efficiency; that to this efficiency be added an appreciation of the significance of these activities and loyalty to the best ideals involved; and that the individual choose that vocation and those forms of social service in which his personality may develop and become most effective.²²³

The educational philosophy of social efficiency assumed a status quo in which future opportunities were to be defined by the limits of opportunities in the present economy. Individuals were to be trained for specific positions in society and, most significantly, race, class and gender had a profound impact on what those positions were. For Indigenous youth, these positions of manual labor were also heavily influenced by the assimilationist goals of the Dawes Act and later Burke Act, which stipulated that Indigenous people, in order to gain access to the privileges of citizenship, must work and live in accordance to a prescribed paradigm of individual homesteading.

The authors of the 1934 Vocational Education report began their justification for manual labor training with the argument that traditional academics, curricula with a trajectory for professionalism and higher education, was a waste for Indigenous youth. It is significant that academic curricula aimed at higher education or professionalization

²²³ Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education: A Report on the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, Appointed by the National Education Association*. Bulletin 1918, No. 35. Washington, D.C., United States Government Printing Office, 1928. P. 6

was characterized as an ‘injustice’, thus claiming that this educational trajectory did not adhere to the prescribed paradigm of lifeways intended for Indigenous people. In fact, the authors claimed that due to Indians ‘passiveness,’ professionalization and higher education were simply not reasonable goals. This sentiment echoes the reflections of Charles Buchanan, who described the academic education of Indigenous girls as a terrible tragedy. Sherman and Allen write,

Impatience with the Indian’s apparent passiveness and failure to consider his background, traditions, and social environment have had a direct bearing on the character of teaching. In curriculum building, little effort has ever been made to analyze these factors and the customary high school courses are considered sufficiently unsatisfactory to meet his collective needs. It seems to the writers an injustice to train the individual in an occupation for which he is unfitted, to bolster and encourage his belief that he can go out and succeed in his chosen field, only to have him find in a short time defeat and disillusionment.²²⁴

The sentiments of Sherman and Allen in the report reflect the philosophy of social efficiency in education that encouraged the vocational training of specific identity groups for specific forms of labor. Sherman and Allen justified the perpetuation of the vocational training program at Chemawa, accompanied by a minimalist academic program, based on assumptions about the passivity of Indigenous youth.

Again, when this curricular assessment is compared to the responses from female students in the 1933 survey, it is clear that there was a great disconnect, either intentional or unintentional, between the needs and desires specifically of female students and the administrative agenda of the school leaders. Consider the responses of students from the 1933 survey, who wished to pursue professional occupations and financial independence, but did not have access to academic and professional training, in comparison to the 1934

²²⁴ RG 75 Box 28 ‘A Survey of Vocation Education’ 1934 by Harold L. Shilling, William A. Sherman & William L. Allen of Oregon State Agricultural College & with State Board for Vocational Ed, Salem OR. National Archives, Seattle WA

conclusion that Chemawa should remain specifically vocational in training and specifically not offer a path for Indigenous youth to higher education. Yet again, bearing in mind that the authors intentionally excluded girls from their study, it is very likely they did not consider the 1933 survey responses from female students.

The third point of significance in the comparison of the 1934 report and the 1933 survey is the report assessment of opportunities for Chemawa graduates, compared to the individual assessments of opportunities made by female Chemawa students. In the 1934 report on job placement opportunities, Sherman and Allen wrote,

The placement area about the Salem Indian school is large and the varieties of occupational opportunities are many. Portland, the industrial center of Oregon which is only 45 miles from the school, Salem, and the surrounding small towns and farming communities offer opportunities for placement in all the trades and industries that are offered with the possible exception of commercial work (which is at the present much overcrowded). *There are also many job opportunities near the Indian pupils' own homes or on their reservations.* Race prejudice is not a very important factor. The consensus of opinion generally is that if an Indian boy or girls is well trained, his chances of placement rank well with those of white people.²²⁵

The assessment of the report was that Indigenous graduates from Chemawa should be encouraged to return to their home, reservation communities to pursue work in the vocational fields for which they had been trained. Considering the diversity of manual and professional training options that were afforded male students at Chemawa in the year prior to report, which included courses in auto mechanics, carpentry, blacksmithing, tailoring, dairying and farming to name a few, it seems likely that there were employment opportunities, even professional employment opportunities for male graduates in their home communities.

²²⁵ RG 75 Box 28 'A Survey of Vocation Education' 1934 by Harold L. Shilling, William A. Sherman & William L. Allen of Oregon State Agricultural College & with State Board for Vocational Ed, Salem OR. National Archives, Seattle WA, p. 14

When these assessments from the 1934 report are compared to the female student survey responses taken just a year earlier, it is clear once again that there was a significant disconnect between administrative policy assessment and the actual needs and desires of female Chemawa students. Consider female student responses to the final question of the 1933 survey, in which they were asked *Do you wish to live permanently at your present home? If not, why not?* Again, half of the female students responded that they did not wish to live in their home communities and the majority of these responses cited a distinct lack of opportunity for work and stability in those communities. Again, this reflects a clear disconnect between female students' ambitions and the administrative assessments of the purpose of the school. Female students clearly were seeking access to financial stability and security in employment and they felt strongly that this was not available in their home communities. It is especially compelling that a number of students who did have access to four year public high schools in their home communities, wished to continue their education at Chemawa or another BIA off-reservation boarding school, citing specifically the lack of opportunity and even the abusive environment in their home communities.

Correspondences in female Chemawa student files prior to the 1933 survey support this circumstance in which many female students did not see their home schools as viable options for their academic and professional success. One specific example is Evelyn Iyall, a member of the Yakima tribe and 1927 graduate of Chemawa. Evelyn had attended Toppenish public schools up through the eleventh grade. In 1925 Yakima Agent Estep wrote a letter to the Chemawa Superintendent explaining why Evelyn would have a

better chance of completing her education at Chemawa than at her local public high school. Estep wrote,

An Indian girl around here has to be a pretty strong character to stand out long against the idle 'gentlemen' who sport their father's automobile at night when father is asleep and don't know his car is out. We should have a school of our own where we could handle such cases. There are many cases of girls only 16 or 17 who are carrying babies around with no father for them even under the very favorable rules of the Dept. on the matter of marriage by 'tribal custom' With this outfit nothing suits them; when they had a boarding school they wanted to send the children to public schools; when they had them in public school and the boarding school was abandoned they wanted that school reestablished.²²⁶

May Belle Heay, a member of the Makah tribe, whose family lived in Seattle, is another example of an Indigenous youth who sought enrollment at Chemawa despite having access to a local public high school. In August of 1915 May Belle's father, James Heay, wrote to Chemawa Superintendent Harwood Hall asking for his daughter's admittance to the school. He wrote, "I would like to know if you send them to high school there. I would like her [May Belle] to go through high school. I know she will if under your guidance but if left here she wont and I want to see these children have a chance in life which I feel they will if with you. But if left up here they wont and they are continually get knocked with the other children here."²²⁷ At the time of this letter Chemawa did not offer a four-year high school course of study but as early as 1907, a year after Salem High School opened its doors, students from Chemawa began attending the public high school.²²⁸ Perhaps James Heay knew that this was a possible option for his daughter to complete her high school degree in Salem. The first public high school in

²²⁶ Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chemawa Student File, *Evelyn Iyall file #441*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

²²⁷ Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chemawa Student File, *May Belle Haey file #303*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

²²⁸ See Chemawa Student File, *Elizabeth Frazier file #139*, National Archives, Seattle, WA and Chemawa Student File, *Annie Loftus File #259*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

Seattle opened in 1889. By 1919 the district had six public high schools throughout the city.²²⁹ It is very likely that May Belle, living in her father's home in the Ballard neighborhood, had access to a four-year Seattle public high school yet her father alluded to abuse in school and felt she would be more safe and more academically successful at Chemawa. May Belle Heay's story problematizes Sherman and Allen's assessment that "race prejudice is not a very important factor. The consensus of opinion generally is that if an Indian boy or girls is well trained, his chances of placement rank well with those of white people."²³⁰

Based on the Sherman and Allen's 1934 report, male graduates of Chemawa had ample opportunities for employment and financial stability in their home and reservation communities, even competing equally with whites, in environments devoid, as the authors claim, of racial prejudice. This was not a reality for Indigenous girls and women. Interestingly, in the 1934 report, authors Sherman and Allen do acknowledge that specifically commercial work was less available due to overcrowding of that labor market in Salem, Portland and surrounding areas. And quite likely, the jobs in the commercial sector were occupied by white women and largely unavailable to Indigenous women because of racial prejudice. Commercial training included training for office, clerical and cashier jobs, including skills in stenography, bookkeeping, typing, and sales.²³¹ It represented a vocational option for young women that offered financially stability and a respectable, professional living. Harvey Kantor, in his work on vocational education

²²⁹ Kelly Dawn Matika. "Manual Training in the Seattle Public Schools 1890-1930: An Examination of Curricular Change." University of Washington, 2000.

²³⁰ RG 75 Box 28 'A Survey of Vocation Education' 1934 by Harold L. Shilling, William A. Sherman & William L. Allen of Oregon State Agricultural College & with State Board for Vocational Ed, Salem OR. National Archives, Seattle WA, p. 14

²³¹ Jane Bernard Powers, *The 'Girls Question' in Education: Vocational Education for Young Women in the Progressive Era* (Washington D.C.: The Falmer Press, 1992).

reform between 1880 and 1930, explains that by 1920, young women around the nation were taking commercial courses in large numbers and were beginning to dominate office clerical positions.²³² This was one area of professional employment where many female Chemawa students wished to work, and stated in their responses to question #16 was not available in their home communities.

Female students at Chemawa, at the time both of these reports were conducted, perceived their education as a launch pad for future employment and social and financial stability. Interestingly, some of the students in the 1933 survey wrote specifically of a desire to stay at Chemawa because of the opportunities it and the extending environments afforded in terms of education and work opportunities. Yet, they were also seeking opportunities that predominantly existed outside of the restrictive, minimalist vocational curriculum that was offered at Chemawa. Jane Bernard Powers, in her historical work on girls' vocational education in the Progressive Era describes home economics as both traditional and feminist, as "it contains continuities and contradictions."²³³ The Chemawa education in this period operated in much the same complex way, operating as both oppressive and liberating. It was the actions and self-advocacy of Indigenous girls themselves that determined what was available for them in that space. The assessment of the authors of the 1934 report was that Chemawa should continue on the restrictive vocational path, specifically not offering academic and professional courses that many four-year public high schools were offering. Although the authors of the 1934

²³² Harvey Kantor, *Learning to Earn: School, Work and Vocational Reform in California, 1880-1930* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 64-73

²³³ Jane Bernard Powers. *The 'Girls Question' in Education: Vocational Education for Young Women in the Progressive Era*. Washington D.C.: The Falmer Press, 1992. P. 4

Vocational Education report did not see female Chemawa students as potential professional wages earners, the female students themselves certainly did.

Through the continual enforcement of a vocational education curriculum, curricula which narrowed Indigenous girls' opportunities to domestic manual labor, the recommendations of the 1934 report also perpetuated a broader governmental policy of fundamentally altering Indigenous peoples' relationship to the land. Lomawaima, in her research on vocational education at Chilocco Indian School during this period, clearly connects this policy to gender and racial norms. She writes, "The struggle to reform and reshape the Indian home targeted the education of young women. They would serve as the matrons of allotment households, promoting a Christian, civilized lifestyle and supporting their husbands in the difficult transition from hunter, or pastoralist, to farmer."²³⁴ The 1934 curriculum report reflected these colonizing perceptions, with its clear depictions of a division of labor and perceptions about Indigenous peoples' capabilities and values to society. By resisting this role, and seeking professional employment opportunities away from their reservation communities and their familial land allotments, female students at Chemawa resisted the broader racial and gender oppression imposed by the colonizing paradigm of the government's Indian education policies.

The 'Girl Question' in Education: Chemawa Girls Negotiating for Choice

²³⁴ K. Tsianina Lomawaima. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. P. 86

Highlighting that the real work of historians is to dispel myths of the past, Jane Bernard Powers writes, "In the vocational education movement, discussions about the appropriate content of courses and programs for young women were more symbolic than substantive. They represented the need for mainly middle and upper class women to reconcile nineteenth century ideals and social roles with the challenges of twentieth century life: industrialism, changing political roles for middle class women, and changing opportunities for working class women."²³⁵ Powers' astute comment suggests that vocational education policy was disconnected from the economic and social realities of most young women's lives during this period.

Jane Bernard Powers focuses on the important disconnect between what educational leaders provided for public secondary education girls and what girls and their families actually wanted and needed from school.²³⁶ Powers roots her historical inquiry on the 'girl question' in education, namely "Should schools provide training for young women who will be employed outside the home or for 'functional needs of the major group of girls who will be homemakers?'"²³⁷ And her response to this question is that policy was largely driven by not just economic forces but also, significantly by social and political forces. The result of which was that, despite economic trends of women's increased presence in the labor market, and expanding roles in the labor market, social and political forces, working largely in opposition to economic forces, pushed policy that answered this question roundly in the 'homemaker' category. Power's rich analysis of

²³⁵ Powers, *The 'Girls Question' in Education*, p. 9

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2

the broad implementation of vocational education and its implications for women's roles in society largely focuses on the experiences of white girls in public education.

Powers does astutely highlight that even during the formation of vocational education policy, prominent female progressive leaders in the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education (NSPIE) and National Women's Trade Union League (NWTUL), who would help shape the Smith-Hughes Act, specifically excluded the education of girls of color from their platform and policies.²³⁸ The exclusion of girls' of color from broader vocational education policy itself symbolizes the position of girls of color in the 'girl question' itself. The 'girl question' in education policy at the time was never even asked of Indigenous girls' educational opportunities, because of intersectionally-racist and sexist assumptions about their assumed position in society as domestic laborers. The labor of girls of color was not up for consideration or negotiation. Their future was to be firmly positioned in domestic manual labor, either in their own homes or in the homes of white women.

When we add the stories of Indigenous girls to Power's broader story of vocational education policy, two things emerge as significant. One, Indigenous girls' resistance to specifically domestic vocational education, and their advocacy for educational and career options, represents a response to this exclusion on the part of progressive vocational education reformers. Girls at Chemawa continually questioned their educational options and demonstrated clear and strategic ideas about their employment options. Their actions demanded that their education must be considered and debated and subject to change. Second, the story of Indigenous girls' negotiating

²³⁸ Powers, *The 'Girls Question' in Education*, p. 61

their educational options within vocational education demonstrates the power of choice in educational opportunity. Many female students at Chemawa fought to have the choice to attend public high school in Salem and Portland, after they completed their work at Chemawa. And some Chemawa students advocated for the opportunity to actually remain at Chemawa to complete their education, as opposed to attending their local public high schools. They navigated their options based on their complex and often times painfully difficult circumstances and they asked for the opportunity to make their own choices regarding what would best position them to attain their educational goals.

In her analysis of female students responses to implementation of vocational education, Powers comes to a similar conclusion that white girls worked to determine their own future opportunities, in the face of vocational curricula in public education. Powers writes, “What is surprising about the period is that most young women looked forward to work and many saw education as a means to that end.”²³⁹ Female students literally voted with their feet against the implementation of vocational education, especially in resistance to domestic education. Students understood that domestic labor was both devalued in society and underpaid, or not paid at all, or could be learned at home.²⁴⁰ Notably, the responses of female students to vocational education and the working opportunities resulting from it would vary based on race, culture and class. The

²³⁹ Powers, *The 'Girls Question' in Education*, p. 84

²⁴⁰ Kantor, *Learning to Earn*, p. xiii. Kantor addresses how vocational education advocates misread and were slow to respond to changes in the labor market. In responding to great concerns about girls outnumbering boys in high school and fear of loss of traditional female roles in the home, as many young women entered the workforce instead of marriage contracts, education policy leaders in the vocational education movement designed programs to keep women in ‘women’s sphere’. “Thus the movement neglected training for office jobs (which were employing greater and greater numbers of young women) in favor of industrial education, believing that classes in auto mechanics, sheet-metal work, and carpentry would attract boys to school, and it stressed the importance of home economics for all girls, no matter what their economic futures might be.”

availability of choice was central to the different experiences white girls versus Indigenous girls faced.

Again, it is an important distinction that white girls attended schools where curricular choices existed and they used those choices to resist expectation “with their feet.” In the absence of such opportunities to choose from, it was difficult for Chemawa female students to exercise effective resistance; nonetheless, Chemawa women navigated the educational system to the best of their ability, in search of opportunity. Paradoxically, the fact that they did so is evidence of their actual acculturation. In her survey of transformations in American education from the nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century, Paula Fass focuses her lens of critical analysis on experiences of minority groups, particularly European Immigrants, women, Blacks and Catholics. Although she never addresses the experiences of Indigenous American youth, her insights on the educational experiences of subaltern youth in this era of social efficiency and vocational education is especially insightful in understanding how these identity groups navigated an educational system that largely disenfranchised and marginalized them. Fass writes, “In expanding the definition of who shall be educated, the schools have tried to incorporate and control at the same time as they have been altered and expanded. They have also generated conflicts that often led to significant change.”²⁴¹ Fass speaks to the complex interrelationship between vocational education policy and student responses to such policy. Even though they faced a double bind of racial and gender discrimination, resulting in heavily restricted choice in education options, Indigenous girls’ advocacy in response to restrictive curricula enabled them to define their own educational paths.

²⁴¹ Paula S. Fass, *Outside In: Minorities and the Transformation of American Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) p. 9

John Rury's nation-wide analysis of vocational education in public secondary schools and the impact on women in the workforce, includes some rich, quantitative material on Seattle public schools and provides insight into the educational opportunities offered to and choices made by the predominantly white girls who attended Seattle public high schools during this period. Rury's analysis of George Counts' earlier statistical data of vocational education and work opportunities for women in Seattle is interesting because it highlights some regional differences. Young women in Seattle public high schools in the 1920s and 1930s were choosing academic curricula over vocational and domestic courses at a higher rate than any other region of the country.²⁴²

As discussed in the previous chapter, a similar trend of resistance to domestic education was also taking place in Portland public schools. By 1921, only nine percent of Portland area high school girls were choosing to enroll in domestic education programs at the regional vocational high school. Ten percent were choosing to enroll in commercial education programs of study. And *eighty* percent of Portland area girls were enrolled in the five co-educational high schools that offered courses in classical education and college preparation.²⁴³

The difference in curricula, opportunities and even expectations for girls in Seattle, Portland and Salem public high schools, versus Indigenous girls at Chemawa Indian School reveals the complex layers of both racial and gendered assumptions embedded in vocational education policies. These differences also explain the draw many Chemawa students felt toward public school and the options and opportunities both Portland and

²⁴² John L. Rury, *Education and Women's Work: Female Schooling and the Division of Labor in Urban America 1870-1930* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 196-197

²⁴³ Records of Portland Public Schools (Or.), *1921 Annual Report of the Public Schools of Portland, Oregon*, Hathi Trust Digital Library <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000522526>

Salem public schools offered. The Chemawa administrative policy of restrictive vocational education, enforced by the 1934 Vocational Education report, is an example of local interpretation of broader BIA policy and also reflects local leaders' enforcement of safety zones of assimilation. School leaders had to, within their local school communities, assess what was a threat and what was allowed as safe on the part of Indigenous youth action. Indigenous women's expanding role in the labor market, beyond domestic manual labor, was not perceived as desirable or safe. The 1933 student surveys also reveal the complex obstacles many Indigenous girls' faced on their path to opportunity. The changing economy and expanding role women were playing in the working world was directly impacting Indigenous girls' perceptions of their opportunity and their worth in the greater world and they did not chose to abide by policy that excluded them from those expanding roles and economic and social opportunities. Again, Chemawa, despite it restrictions, represented a conduit for opportunity for many Indigenous girls. Their advocacy to challenge the curriculum offered at Chemawa and the extending educational opportunities beyond Chemawa represent their deft self-determined acculturation. The entrenchment of the sex-segregated vocational curricula at Chemawa represented a formidable obstacle to these girls' advocacy for choice and self-definition. Yet their persistence in debating and negotiating these curricula further highlighted the changing roles of women in the work place, roles which were largely defined and determined by women themselves.

In the September 15th, 1936 edition of Chemawa Indian School's publication *Indian Education* an article was printed titled, 'Why The Boarding School Failed'. The author very thoroughly and directly outlined the many abusive practices and policies of

off-reservation BIA schools, including corporal punishment of young children, cultural isolation, intentional destruction of native languages and the homogenized groupings of young children from vastly different cultures. The vivid description was not only detailed but also intentionally emotional. The author wrote,

Not to be overly sentimental, imagine your own little six year old (if you have one) torn from you against your will and conveyed to Mexico or China; forbidden to speak English and among persons who talk a foreign tongue and to whom he could not make his wants known....Imagine him punished when he sought communion with the God you had taught him to love and trust. Imagine him at night, herded into bed in a vast, cheerless, colorless room with a hundred other motherless, homesick boys.²⁴⁴

This image is both heart-wrenching and accurate in regard to the realities of BIA off-reservation boarding school life. It is surprising that this level of insight into the devastating impact of assimilation education was understood and the details published by agents and administrators within the Federal Office of Indian Affairs, at a time when a number of these schools, including Chemawa, were still in operation. This powerful description highlighted the very real abusive treatment of Indigenous children in BIA schools. But what the analysis missed was a critical assessment of how vocational curricula and lack of educational choice was part of the weakness, and an abusive element, of the system.

In the 1937 edition of the same publication, in an article titled ‘What [To] Teach? How [To] Measure Success?’, the BIA administrator who authored the report advocated for an increased focus on vocational education for Indigenous youth aimed at self-sufficiency through manual and domestic labor. The author writes,

It therefore remains for the Indian school to help the student to make voluntarily the only decision compatible with self-respect. The school must then assume the

²⁴⁴ RG 75 BIA Chemawa Indian School publication ‘Indian Education’- Sept 15 1936- May 15 1937 edition, p. 7

greater task -to provide the skill and the experience through application of which self-support may be won. *The traditional academic program of the American high school has no place in this picture. Learning for learning's sake is a luxury which can be bought only at the price of permanent shiftlessness for many of our Indian young people. The Indian schools must teach the boys and girls to make a living- in a majority of cases from the assets in their immediate environment* [italics added for emphasis].²⁴⁵

This administrative call for vocational education that explicitly excluded academic learning and paths towards professionalization and higher education was antithetical to the ambitions of hundreds of female Chemawa students between 1900 and the time of this report. In claiming that Indigenous youth must be educated differently from white youth, the report ran in striking opposition to the mission of BIA education, which was to assimilate Indigenous youth into white culture and lifeways. This stagnation of curricula was antithetical to Chemawa student demands and the larger changes happening in the labor market. The report was a reflection of a greater resistance to Indigenous people's changing and expanding roles in society and, I argue, subversively resistant to women's changing roles in society. The self-advocacy on the part of female students at Chemawa represented their demand for learning for learning's sake, not as a luxury but as a right and a necessity.

Sex-segregated vocational education, as a tool in a broader assimilation project, represented a major obstacle to female students in the BIA educational system. That so many BIA policy makers and administrators failed to see it as such, despite the resistance from Indigenous students, marked a massive long-term failing of government Indian education. The complex strategies of self-advocacy and acculturation students at Chemawa were engaged in was not in fact a resistance to education itself, but rather a

²⁴⁵ RG 75 BIA Chem Indian School publication 'Indian Education'- Sept 15 1936- May 15 1937 edition, p. 1-2

resistance to a type of education that was oppressive, demeaning and disenfranchising. These circumstances were especially stark for Indigenous girls. Yet girls at Chemawa Indian School were demanding more of their education, instead of turning away from it.

CONCLUSION: Historical Narratives that Bring Forth a New Day

Indigenous Girls Piloting Themselves

Turning the Power

A document published in 1928 by the Office of Indian Affairs titled ‘The Social Heritage of the Indian Girl’, reflected the pivotal role that girls’ vocational education and gender role assignment were expected to play in the U.S. policy towards Indigenous communities in the second phase of assimilation. The document stated in its introduction “During her school days the Indian girl must be helped to make her adjustment to a new world. She must begin to assume the great responsibility of piloting her people as well as herself from a primitive to a highly complex civilization. In comparatively few years her people are hurrying through those centuries which other races have found necessary for their gradual development.”²⁴⁶ Policy makers in the Office of Indian Affairs acknowledged both the change that Indigenous cultures were going through and also the significant role Indigenous women played in this transformation. A debate played out in schools such as Chemawa between a settler colonial paradigm that aimed to control how an Indigenous girl ‘piloted her people’ and the aspirations and intentions of many Indigenous girls themselves who fought for choice and self-definition, on their own terms.

The story of Indigenous girls’ self- advocacy at and beyond Chemawa Indian School is one piece of many stories that are now being told of Indigenous youths’ action and agency, stories which collectively disrupt settler colonial narratives of Indigenous victimhood and passivity. Native American historical scholars, including Hopi historian

²⁴⁶ Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Rules, Guides for Indian School Service*, National Archives, Seattle, WA

Mathew Sakiestewa Gilbert, who has published extensively on the student experiences at Sherman Institute in Riverside, California, engage with the concept of ‘turning the power.’ Turning the power, introduced by Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller and Lorene Sisquoc, claims that Indigenous students in off-reservation Indian boarding schools actively and intentionally transformed their educational experiences into something that would benefit them and their communities. John R. Gram, in his recent work on Indigenous youths’ experience in New Mexico’s Indian boarding schools during the heyday of BIA Indian education, explains Gilbert’s engagement of ‘turning the power’; “Rather than succumbing to the disruptive and destructive force that Sherman might have been, Sakiestewa Gilbert argues that Hopi students used the experience to their advantage, as they ‘continued the cycle of Hopi tradition [of migrating in order to learn ways to be useful to Hopi society], and returned to the Hopi mesas with new responsibilities as Hopi people.’”²⁴⁷

Female students at Chemawa Indian School ‘turned the power’ of BIA educational policy by actively working to define their own education and advocating for choice in their learning and their professional options. But what ‘turning the power’ looked like specifically for girls at Chemawa was different than the image that Gilbert, Trafzer, Sisquoc et. al describe at Sherman Institute. In the edited compilation on Sherman Institute, Jean A. Keller, in her chapter on the nursing program at Sherman Institute, addresses the evolution of the school’s nursing program and the alternative options it offered young Indigenous women, beyond domestic labor. Keller’s story focuses on the school’s development of the program, specifically through the lens of the

²⁴⁷ John R. Gram *Education at the Edge of Empire: Negotiating Pueblo Identity in New Mexico's Indian Boarding Schools*. Seattle, Wa: University of Washington Press, 2015. P. 7

nursing program's directors, including Mary Israel, a white woman who also held an M.D. degree and worked tirelessly to shape the rigor and professionalism of the nursing program at Sherman between 1909 and 1911.²⁴⁸ Largely missing from Keller's story and the larger assessment of 'turning the power' at Sherman and other Indian schools, is female students' personal experiences, assessment of the program and involvement in actually shaping the curricula.

In this dissertation I argue that by seeking out secondary and higher education, and professional education that offered paths to financial independence, Chemawa female students defined how they would pilot themselves and their people in the changing world. Female students' resistance to vocational education took the form of advocacy for choice and self-definition. They were advocating for choice in their educational and work opportunities. They navigated multiple educational spaces, including Chemawa, a BIA off-reservation boarding school, as well as regional public schools and independent commercial certification programs. Their call for choice and flexibility in the types of education and opportunities afforded them transforms earlier narratives of government Indian education which depicted Indigenous students turning away from education and, in some cases, literally burning down the school. The story of female students at Chemawa is one of students turning towards education but negotiating education on their terms.

Female students at Chemawa also worked creatively to define themselves, largely in opposition to the image of the domesticated Indigenous wife and mother that settler colonialism worked to impose upon them. Vocational education policy was a form of

²⁴⁸ Clifford E. Trafzer, Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, Lorene Sisquoc, ed. *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue: Voices and Images from Sherman Institute*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2012.

resisting girls' expanding economic, social and political roles and Chemawa girls' self-definition largely revolved around how they chose to work in the world. Resistance on the part of girls at Chemawa embodied self-definition outside of the domesticated, no or low-pay labor that was expected of them in this educational paradigm. Female students at Chemawa actively sought education and professional opportunities that afforded them socially and financially stable work. The way Indigenous girls perceived their role in the changing Industrial world flew in the face of a social efficiency educational paradigm which tried to relegate them to positions of un-paid or low-paid domestic labor. The educational self-empowerment of these Indigenous women disrupted the perceived boundaries of control of BIA Indian boarding schools as well as threatened the intentions of the settler colonial paradigm, a paradigm which was designed to weaken and disenfranchise Indigenous identities. Chemawa became a distinctively negotiable learning space, unlike that which other scholars have described at Haskell Institute, Carlisle Indian School, and other eastern and central United States Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. By looking through a particular gendered lens, I reveal the ways in which the Chemawa girls courageously yet reverentially manipulated the boundaries of the BIA curricula in order to turn the power.

Bearing Witness

As the historical narrative of Indigenous youth experience in boarding schools allows for stories of agency and autonomy, not just victimhood, especially on the part of female students, the result is a transformed understanding of the malleability of BIA policy and also the malleability and, in fact weakness, of settler colonialism itself. The

individual stories coming directly from Indigenous girls about their resistance in school, in their classrooms, throughout their educational experiences, expose the fractures and failings of settler colonialism. My research on Indigenous girls at Chemawa expands our understanding of the ways in which gender norms operated in settler colonial spaces, particularly in the sexual division of labor and the reproduction of European notions of home. By directly challenging, through acculturation and self- advocacy, dominant European cultural norms of spaces of work and home, Indigenous girls also disrupted the accepted ideas of colonized female Indigenous behavior. Female students at Chemawa demonstrated their ability to influence how, what and when they learned, and for what purpose. Their advocacy for the curricular choices necessary for academic, social and economic advancement showed their keen awareness of the oppressive and bigoted character of the BIA, and the larger governmental and societal perceptions of Indigenous peoples. As Rena Mann so perceptively wrote in her 1910 article in *The Chemawa American*, “Are we all to be considered Indians, with all the limitations the word usually suggests? Are none of us to be considered as individuals?”²⁴⁹

How we remember the past has the enormous power to shape our understanding of the future. In her profound work documenting authentic Indigenous testimony of the on-going trauma of colonialism, Dian Million presents important narratives that run counter to victimology, by showing the power of Indigenous women negotiating social and political barriers with their voices. This testimonial power in turn allows for a new paradigm that exists beyond colonialism and oppression. As Million eloquently writes, “Further, indigenism must live in the halls of a paradigm where we must ‘bear witness’ to

²⁴⁹ Rena Mann "Higher Education for Indian Girls" *The Chemawa American*. August edition, (1910).

our pasts to bring forth our new day. Thus, any founding moments of indigenism- of self-determination rather than self-management- must understand the economy of violence, catharsis, and healing in the order that forms after World War II.”²⁵⁰ Chemawa female students’ narratives of advocacy for choice and self- definition are contributions among many to emerging Indigenous historical narratives of turning the power, stories that shift the past and thereby have the potential to transform the future.

²⁵⁰ Dian Million. *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2013. P. 73

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