

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

CHIKASHSHA POYA TINGBA'

COPING WITH THE DEVALUING OF DIVERSITY IN AMERICA:

A STUDY OF THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE CHICKASAW TRIBE

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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Norman, Oklahoma

2012

CHIKASHSHA POYA TINGBA'
COPING WITH THE DEVALUING OF DIVERSITY IN AMERICA:
A STUDY OF THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE CHICKASAW TRIBE

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIC
CURRICULUM

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the endless support, patience, and motivation of my loving husband, Stan, and beautiful children, Kyle, Madie, and Katie. They unselfishly sacrificed our time together as a family so that I could devote many hours to studying, researching, traveling, and writing. Many thanks are due to my in-laws Chris and Molly Goodnight, for their encouragement, prayers, and eagerness to assist with any family needs throughout the years. *Chiholloli*.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, chair, mentor, and friend, Dr. Neil Houser. His expertise, devotion, and commitment to helping me achieve success with the dissertation was inspirational—“*An Kana Chiya*”. This experience will forever be a highlight in my life. I would also like to thank my doctoral committee from the University of Oklahoma, they are each truly genuine and amazing individuals. I also offer a generous thank you to my extended family, all of my friends and peers, who provided on-going support and encouragement throughout the entire process.

A special heartfelt thank you to the Chickasaw Nation, and the Chickasaw people who graciously shared their knowledge, homes, cultural grounds, traditions, and personal experiences that made a valuable contribution to this research. I hold great respect for all. These shared experiences inspired me to re-connect to my Chickasaw heritage and culture, and to begin the journey of learning my Chickasaw language. For this, *Chokma 'shki*.

I am forever grateful to my Chickasaw grandparents, especially my great grandmother Brown, my grandmother Mary Odelia Sealey, and my mother Dean McManus. You are all unique Chickasaw women of honor and grace, and you had a vision for *our* future. You have inspired me to do the same for myself and for my children. *Chi'hollo'li*

Finally, I give all the glory and credit to *God*. *He* gave me the strength and guided me through to the end with his mercy, grace, and love.

Chipisala'cho
Karen Goodnight

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ABSTRACT

There is a critical problem in society today involving the devaluing of diversity, including multicultural perspectives, which prevents sociocultural equity. This is true for many societies past and present, including Native American communities in the United States. Educators need a greater appreciation of diversity in order to promote social and cultural justice and equity. One way to gain a greater appreciation of diversity could be through a deeper understanding of the perspectives of ethnic minority groups such as the Chickasaws and other Native American communities. A deeper understanding of one group could help illustrate the value of trying to understand other groups, and of trying to understand the value of diversity in general.

In the first chapter, I will introduce the problem of and need to understand and value diversity in society, provide a brief history of Native Americans, identify my research questions, and offer an outline for the remainder of the paper. In the second chapter, I will identify the theoretical lenses that will be used to interpret and analyze the data. Using a critical social and multicultural educational lens, I will explore ways in which oppression persists and ways multicultural education can be used to help students think about issues of power and privilege and language and identity, not only in schools, but also in society in general. In the third chapter, I will discuss the research methodology that will be used with this study. A critical ethnographic methodology based on constructivist assumptions will be used to investigate the perspectives of various members of the Chickasaw Tribe. In the

fourth chapter, I will present the findings of the study. In the fifth chapter, I will analyze the findings based on Paulo Freire's theoretical perspective and discuss multicultural educational possibilities based on the work of scholars like James Banks. I will conclude the dissertation with an overall summary of the findings of the study.

The goal of this study is to acknowledge our cultural differences and bring to light some of the underlying issues that provide a deeper understanding and heightened awareness into the socio-cultural and educational phenomenon of the devaluing of diversity. This could help not only the Chickasaw tribe but also perhaps others to develop a greater cultural understanding for a better society. It was also important for me, as a Chickasaw, to study my own tribe in search of a better understanding of these critical problems. In essence, I sought to gather Chickasaw perspectives, to find out how we coped with the devaluing of diversity we experienced in America, and to explore the role of education, (broadly defined) both as part of the problem and part of the solution.

CHAPTER (CHAFFA) ONE

INTRODUCTION

Coping with the Devaluing of Diversity in America

Our society is paradoxical. The process of assimilating Native Americans into predominately European American culture has been costly. The United States is one of the most diverse nations on earth; yet, it seems that society, in general, does not truly value diverse cultures or perspectives. This can lead to problems in society as well as schools. More than a century ago, Dewey (1902/1990) described society as “a number of people held together because they are working along common lines, in a common spirit, and with reference to common aims. These common needs and aims demand a growing interchange of thought and growing unity of sympathetic feeling” (p. 14). According to this statement, we might *wonder as a society* whether there is a common spirit and sympathetic feeling toward others that exists in the United States today.

A critical problem in society is a lack of understanding and valuing of diversity, including multicultural perspectives, which prevents socio-cultural equity. This problem of inequality is true for many societies past and present, including Native American communities within the United States. Educators need a greater understanding and appreciation of diversity in order to promote social and cultural justice and equity.

Devaluing diversity has long been contentious not only between European Americans and minority groups but can also exist within minority groups themselves (Lee, 1994). In contemporary society, issues such as immigration and the growing political clout among minority peoples causes friction between various minority groups. This friction may result in the reinforcement of cultural misunderstandings and heightened tensions. These examples could include the burgeoning competition among all groups of people in society, resulting in a striving for power and control that has only increased in recent years.

Aspects of the devaluing of diversity involve cultural misunderstandings such as racism, prejudice and discrimination, a lack of an ethic of caring, and lack of critical reflection (Greene, 1998; McIntosh, 1989; Nieto, 1996). Other scholars such as Houser and Kuzmic (2001) provide examples of continued domination of large groups of people at the hands of the few and the growth of an increasingly rigid culture of individualism.

These same attitudes that cause the pervasive problem of racism lead to a multitude of other prejudices we find in our society today. Noddings (1992) argues:

We do not yet live in an equal society. If we did, exclusion on the grounds of race, ethnicity, or gender would either be unthinkable or of little concern. Under present conditions, the expression “reverse discrimination” is practically meaningless. Discrimination only has practical import when the

people discriminating have the power to keep others from sharing in economic and cultural benefits of the larger society. (p. 122)

Discrimination has a long history, and we as a society may have problems recognizing its many different forms and understanding the impact it has on certain marginalized groups of people. Moreover, it makes little sense to blame the oppressed for creating the conditions of their oppression. Historically, Native Americans have been oppressed since the formation of the United States (Debo, 1970; Deloria, 1988; Zinn, 2005). McLuhan (1971) offers this summary:

The pain of the Indian, as he experienced the death of his way of life, has not been fully understood by the white man, and perhaps never will. When Black Elk, a holy man of the Oglala Sioux, speaks of “the beauty and strangeness of the earth” he speaks of reverence for the everyday environment, an environment that was integrally interwoven with Indian life. When the wild herds were killed, and the sacred lands of their ancestors over run, then at least one form of the will and spirit of the Indian nations dwindled and died. Who the Indians were, could not without serious loss be separated from where and how they lived. (p. 1)¹

Native Americans have experienced numerous challenges. These can be traced by examining the history of American Indians before European contact, during European arrival, in the establishment of the idea of the new “assimilated”

¹ McLuhan makes problematic singular references and at times borders on romanticizing American Indians. However, his compilation is powerful and well organized, and it preserves and presents many important original sources.

Indian, and in the history of particular groups such as the Chickasaws. Although the histories of all Native Americans are in some sense crucially interrelated, this particular paper will focus mainly on the Chickasaw Tribe. It was important for me to study the Chickasaw people because I am Chickasaw. I felt if I could first understand the perspectives of my own culture, I might be able to gain a better understanding of how this problem relates to other cultures and society in general. When the Europeans arrived on the continent during the time of colonization, Native Americans were forced to allow European society to define a new way of life for them. Basically, they were forced to adapt in order to survive. The world for Native Americans changed forever, and consequently the world their ancestors lived in no longer exists, but rather is extinct. Ironically, well into the 21st century, Native Americans are still trying to adapt and survive in the world today (Deloria, 1988; Zinn, 2005).

American Indians before European Contact

Before European contact, Native Americans were very different.² Zinn (2005) described it this way:

Columbus and his successors were not coming into an empty wilderness, but into a world which in some places was as densely populated as Europe itself, where the culture was complex, where human relations were more egalitarian than in Europe, and where the relations among men, women,

² The terms “Native American”, “Indian” and “American Indian” will be used interchangeably throughout the paper as they are commonly used terms within Native American cultures.

children, and nature were more beautifully worked out than perhaps any place in the world. They were people without a written language, but with their own laws, their poetry, their history kept in memory and passed on, in an oral vocabulary more complex than Europe's, accompanied by song, dance, and ceremonial drama. (p. 21)

When considering different viewpoints of a culture, better connections could be made toward understanding and appreciating our diverse society.

Additionally, Zinn (2005) describes his perspective in telling the history of the United States as different and attributing it to the inevitable taking of sides:

My viewpoint, in telling the history of the United States, is different: that we must not accept the memory of states as our own....I prefer to try to tell the story of the discovery of America from the viewpoint of the Arawaks, of the Constitution from the standpoint of the slaves, of Andrew Jackson as seen by the Cherokees, of the Civil War as seen by the New York Irish, of the Mexican war as seen by the deserting soldiers of Scott's army....And so on, to the limited extent that any one person, however he or she strains, can "see" history from the standpoint of others. (p. 10)

I believe our society today should strive to be a recognized place where diversity is embraced and celebrated as a common theme among all individuals, and cultures alike, in order to enhance unity. Nonetheless, the issue of the devaluing of diversity has been an on-going struggle for most diverse groups, especially Native Americans. Carnes (1995) writes:

Fear of the unknown has been a hidden cause of many human conflicts. From the earliest times, differences of skin color, language, customs and religion have made people suspicious of one another: What are those strangers talking about in their mysterious tongue? Differences challenge our natural assumptions about ourselves, about the “rightness” of the way we are. Often the easiest response is to assume that those who are different must be “wrong.” In 1492, Native Americans and Europeans seemed as different to each other as humans and space aliens would seem today. (p. 20)

From the viewpoint of Native Americans, McLuhan (1971) includes a statement by Vine Deloria, an acclaimed author and Native American activist, highlighting the struggles encountered by Native Americans:

If we surrender, we die. It isn't important that there are only 500,000 of us Indians....What is important is that we have a superior way of life. We Indians have a more human philosophy of life....What is the ultimate value of a man's life? That is the question. (p. 159)

In this quote, Deloria captures the essence of the devaluing of diversity as perceived by many Native Americans, validating that this historical problem has been present for some time.

European Arrival

Howard Zinn (2005) describes the infamous first encounter between Columbus and the Indians, arguing that many historical atrocities have been hidden or justified in the name of “progress”:

When Columbus and his sailors came ashore, carrying swords, speaking oddly, the Arawaks ran to greet them, brought them food, water, gifts. They...brought us parrots and balls of cotton and spears and many other things, which they exchanged for the glass beads and hawk’s bells. They willingly traded what they owned....They were well-built, with good bodies and handsome features....They do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They have no iron. Their spears are made of cane....They would make fine servants.... With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want. (p. 1)

We could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want. This is a powerful statement. With this journal entry alone, Columbus’s words distinctly reflect the worldview at the time: colonialism. Colonialism, as defined by Webster’s Dictionary (2004), is “control by one power over a dependent area or people”. During this time in history, colonialism at its root had little to do with people. It was about building an empire, acquiring more land, and obtaining material resources. From the perspective of Columbus, this new land was uncharted territory. When he encountered Indian people, he was not interested in

finding out who they were, nor was he concerned with their culture. He viewed them as mere obstacles (or opportunities) in the quest for progress. Perhaps when Columbus and his followers arrived on the land of the Arawak Indians, the colonizers' dominating presence established the beginning of certain power and privilege-relationships, which continue to impact our societies and cultures today.

In my opinion, it is only when society attempts to understand what has happened in the past, from the viewpoint of various cultures, in this particular instance Native Americans, that a more complete view of history and thus the present can be understood. Particular historical events such as the one described of Columbus, are distinct reflections of an era of empire building, not just among Europeans but among other groups as well. This was a time when the quest for money, gold and wealth, unapologetically exceeded the value of human life.

Although it is tempting to conclude that such perspectives and practices are a thing of the past, unsettling occurrences around the world suggest that the quest for power, control, and endless material gain still exists. Neocolonial theorists argue that current colonial impulses have the same essential essence or spirit as in the past, even though specific practices may not have the old look of sailing the seas taking others' land (Kincaid, 1988; Spivak, 1988). Although seizing foreign lands to enrich a mother country may largely be a thing of the past, the spirit of colonialism persists in the exporting of jobs and the degradation of people in an ongoing quest for a cheaper labor force in order to benefit multinational corporations.

Reflecting back some 500 years, the colonization many read about in history books involved the taking of land and the accumulation of material wealth. People who happened to live on the land were seen as an impediment to progress, were treated as commodities, or were simply viewed as byproducts. Neocolonialism no longer involves powerful dominating countries taking control of the lands of marginalized peoples, mainly because most of the usable land has already been taken for quite some time. Instead, today's new colonialism or "neocolonialism" takes the form of giant conglomerates and powerful business groups using their wealth, influence, and propaganda to exploit the resources of vulnerable countries and communities and the labor of their people. Rather than allowing vulnerable nations and groups of people to retain their resources, including their labor, to develop their own livelihoods and to affirm their diversity, many powerful business groups today seem to share the same bottom line as the colonizing nations of the past. Neocolonial theorists argue that, too often, the essential mentality remains: "What's in it for me, and how much can I get?"

However, important questions remain as to how to address these issues in education and society. Postcolonial theorists have tried to envision what it would take to reach a more just and equitable world (Spivak, 1988). Postcolonial theorists do not avoid looking at the truths of colonial exploitation that continue to exist in contemporary society. However, they do not stop with the critique. Instead, they ask what is required to address these problems in order to promote structural conditions that no longer support or condone colonialism of *any* kind. Postcolonial

thinkers advocate working both locally and globally, reaching beyond self-surviving greed, and going above and beyond one's self as a person, in order to connect and support all of humanity. A major goal is to move toward a postcolonial world to inform and affirm ourselves as well as others.

Many people throughout history provide positive examples of pre-colonial relationships that could be used to inform postcolonial efforts to move beyond colonial thinking. Various peoples have placed value on the simple things in life, with appreciation and gratitude for naturalistic ways of living, and kind acts of giving, sharing, and living within one's means. This suggests the need to reflect back on pre-colonial models of living as well as the examples of people who have coped with colonial aggression—both in the past and the present—while retaining some degree of their identity and integrity (Palmer, 1998). As we begin to look toward examples of “what could be,” we must draw on a variety of examples of how others have existed in the world. Of course, this does not stop just with examples of Native Americans, but includes countless other peoples throughout the world.

Assimilation and Removal

“To us the ashes of our ancestors are sacred and their resting place is hallowed ground.”

Chief Seattle of the Dwamish, upon surrendering his land to Governor Isaac Stevens in

1855

One way to begin to look at the social issue of the devaluing of diversity is by thinking about the idea of the New “Assimilated” Indian. From the very beginning when Native Americans were first “discovered” by Europeans, we have been in the process of trying to survive and thrive in the mainstream world in spite of various challenges ranging from processes of cultural assimilation to outright genocide (Debo, 1970; Deloria, 1988; Zinn, 2005). Paige, Bumpers and Littlefield (2010), authors of *Chickasaw Removal*, describe their view of the first encounter between the Europeans and Native Americans:

When Europeans first reached the North American continent, they found hundreds of tribes occupying a vast and rich country. The newcomers quickly recognized the wealth of natural resources. They were not, however, so quick or willing to recognize the spiritual, cultural, and intellectual riches of the people they called Indians...For American Indians, the consequences of their interaction with non-Indian people have been both productive and tragic. (p. 19)

Historical accounts reflect that Indians who were present at the time when the newcomers arrived were evidently capable of surviving and sustaining the land they lived on. Hoxie & Iverson (1998) state:

Present history and anthropological research has generated a database that forces us to reject the naïve notion that Americans before Columbus were either “primitive” or noble savages. Instead, this research has revealed a rich diversity of Native life-ways, each far more complex than was believed a century ago. (p. 17)

It was not until during the processes of cultural assimilation that Indians were forced to adapt to a life of which they no longer had control. This new way of life for Native Americans presented a different type of survival, one that included a fight for their very self-identity. Because of the way in which cultural assimilation occurred—the loss of land, loss of self-identity, loss of culture, and loss of language—it is little wonder that among the multitude of ethnic minorities that coexist together in America, some of the least understood, both historically and in present day, are Native Americans.

Assimilation and Removal went hand-in-hand. Angie Debo spent a substantial part of her life documenting and reporting historical events related to Native Americans. In her book entitled *And Still the Waters Run—The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes*, Debo (1940) describes the Indian Removal as a stage of dispossession in a story that is not generally known. She writes:

The tragic suffering of the exiles on the “Trail of Tears” is familiar to all students of American history. It is matched only by the saturnalia of exploitation to which they were subjected by land speculators who crowded them from their homes...the Indians emerged from this experience with the

most invincible determination to maintain their tribal autonomy in the West against the encroachments of territorial or state government, and to guard their tribal holdings against the white man's system of land tenure, when history should begin to repeat itself upon their new frontier. As soon as they were settled in their new homes these Indians made such remarkable social and political progress that they soon became known as the Five Civilized Tribes to distinguish them from their *wild* neighbors of the plains. (1940, p. 5, emphasis mine)

This account indicates that the devaluing of culture was a significant factor. It also hints at the tensions that could have arisen as a result of the oppressor's designation that some of the tribes were more "civilized" than others. Yet, even for those who may have been favored in the eyes of the oppressor, favorable designations and replacement lands were far from a satisfactory compensation.

Debo continues:

But the Indian grieved deeply as a man without a country; he cared nothing for the few paltry acres in his own name that had replaced the wide sweep of mountain and prairie, the winding rivers, and the deep forests that had all been his. (1940, p. 127)

Although much has changed during the last century, many Native peoples still struggle to maintain their identity. While they may want to embrace their heritage and maintain their cultural identity, pressures of assimilation and acculturation still exist. Rocky Robbins wrote an inspiring letter to his son, Red

Eagle, acknowledging the challenges his son has faced as he has tried to maintain his traditional ways. Robbins (2010) reflects on the racial prejudices and social pressures his son has encountered from childhood through adulthood:

For so long you fought like a warrior to resist complete assimilation, to keep even fragments of our tribal ways. As an urban Indian there were only a few tribal persons in our small city who even attempted to practice tribal rituals, ceremonial practices, and speak their native languages. But you traveled hundreds of miles, often by yourself as a teenager, to meet elders, and you learned the Choctaw language, and dozens of dances and songs. But out of high school, you became even angrier....you had ingested Indian medicine and remembered the true intelligence of our ceremonies and rituals. We were fortunate to have had these ways to teach us not only to accept our life circumstances with an awareness beyond cognition and self-absorbed emotion, but to let go of our self-centered judgments about what we think life should be like. This is the wisdom of our traditional people, who have learned it over the past 500 years after having been in the grip of death, despair, oppression, and genocide. (pp. 22 & 23)

These are powerful words given as a gift of affirmation and appreciation from a father to his son. They serve as recognition of the incredible hardships that are still endured by Native Americans who seek to maintain their tribal identity. This is a true testament of the importance of cultural identity, and it is a portrayal of

the great pride, strength, and determination of a father and his son as they find their way within the Universe.

The Chickasaws

“We are resilient—having survived as a Nation and culture despite repeated attempts by the federal government to assimilate our people into mainstream society and abolish tribal sovereignty. We are family based with remnants of the old matrilineal structures still in place in the Chickasaw social order.”

Jeannie Barbour, Chickasaw Historian/Artist, 2011

My people are Chickasaw. The Chickasaws have been recognized as fearless people and excellent warriors. Members of the Chickasaw Tribe are proud of our most famous recognition: Chickasaw warriors were noted as never having lost a battle in war. Our current Governor, Bill Anoatubby, rarely ends a public speech without reciting: “The Chickasaw Nation, the Unconquered, and Unconquerable Chickasaw Nation.” Like other Native American Tribes, the Chickasaws, after removal and assimilation, struggled to survive. Today the Chickasaws continue to prosper and stand as the third largest federally recognized tribe in the state of Oklahoma. However, the story of our survival, like the stories of all Native American tribes, is long and complex.

Tribal historian Jeannie Barbour explains:

Chickasaw people belong to the Muskogean linguistic group of Native people originating from the southeastern part of the United States.

Historically, we were an expansive and restless people. Our homelands are

located in the Tombigbee watershed. However, Chickasaw bands ranged eastward to the Atlantic and west to the edge of the Great Plains. (Barbour, 2011)

Many Native American people today recognize that they are members of persevering societies, with many tribal nations focusing on cultural and heritage preservation, as well as increased efforts to become self-sufficient through the development of successful tribal nations and tribal enterprises.

The Chickasaws are one of the 39 federally recognized tribes that exist in Oklahoma today. Currently, approximately 53,000 registered reside in the United States, mostly living in and around central Oklahoma (N = approximately 31,000). Among this population of more than 53,000 citizens, only 149 full-blood Chickasaws remain.³ This number is down from 165 full-blood Chickasaws who were listed on our tribal records as of June of 2010, at the beginning of this study. Over the last two years alone, we have lost 9% of our full-blood population, with the oldest Chickasaw elder passing away in April of 2012. These trends underscore the importance of keeping up the urgent pace to revitalize our culture and language. Revered in ancient times as “Spartans of the Lower Mississippi Valley,” the first contact with Europeans was with Hernando De Soto in 1540. Living in sophisticated town sites, the Chickasaws possessed a highly developed ruling system complete with laws and religion. They conducted successful trade business with other tribes and with the French and English, and lived largely an agrarian

³ These are the official numbers obtained from the Chickasaw Nation CDIB department in May of 2012. These numbers change periodically as individual Chickasaws register throughout the year, as they obtain their lineage documentation, or as they become of age to register as a Chickasaw citizen.

lifestyle, but were quick to go to battle if necessary (The Chickasaw Nation Official Website, 2010).

Carnes (1995) provides an excerpt from the document of the 1833 United States Government Treaty. This document depicts the perception of the Chickasaws by the United States government prior to the Great Removal:

The Chickasaw nation find themselves oppressed in their present situation—Being ignorant of the language and laws of the white man, they cannot understand or obey them. Rather than submit to this great evil, they prefer to seek a home in the west, where they may live and be governed by their own laws. (U.S. Treaty with the Chickasaws, 1833. p. 16)

This perception expressed by the United States government toward the Chickasaw people served as the ultimate depiction of a lack of understanding of a culture. The insinuation that our people “found ourselves oppressed” was undoubtedly one-sided, and did not reflect a valuing of our culture. Any Native American tribe living in that era could not have understood this foreign language or law because we, as Native peoples, had been living well on our own for centuries without it. Nor did we *prefer* to seek a home in the west. We were *forced* to find a home in the west.

In contrast, consider a different view described by the delegates of the Choctaws and Chickasaw Nation in Indian Territory, about 1895:

We desire to recall a little history of our people. The Choctaw and Chickasaw people have never cost the United States a cent for support.

They have always and are now self-sustaining. It will be admitted that but little over a half a century ago the Choctaws and the Chickasaws were happily located east of the Mississippi River. Their possessions were large and rich and valuable. (McLuhan, 1971, p. 96)

This statement reflects a very different perspective than that of the United States Government in 1833. The Chickasaw people moved to Indian Territory during the *Great Removal*, which is typically referred to in history books as the *Trail of Tears*. Other tribes forced to relocate were the Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole. Collectively, these were called the Five “Civilized” Tribes.⁴ They were given this designation because of their highly developed ruling systems and the similarities between these systems and the governments of the European settlers (Official Chickasaw Nation Website).

The Chickasaws were one of the last tribes to move. In 1837, the Treaty of Doaksville called for the resettlement of the Chickasaws among the Choctaw tribe in Indian Territory. In 1856, the Chickasaws, in order to restore direct authority over their government affairs, separated from the Choctaws and formed their own government (The Chickasaw Nation Official Website). This is important knowledge to have, because it demonstrates the persistence my ancestors had to fight for what was ours.

Because I am Chickasaw, reflecting on my own history helps me to understand how the problem of devaluing diversity has existed in the past and

⁴ The term “Civilized” has been a source of both pride and resentment among Native American peoples. Accepting this label could suggest acceptance that the powerful colonizers were worthy of judging the colonized.

remains present today. In the summer of 1954, my great grandmother, Mary Alice Brown, died of Tuberculosis (Figure 1). Almost my entire Chickasaw history (as



Figure 1. Calvin and Mary Alice Brown. c. 1911.

we knew it) died along with her. At the time, and in our family, communication was limited. Unfortunately, letters were not written, family history was not documented, and very few photographs of our Chickasaw relatives exist today. The transferring of family history came through various stories that were only passed down orally. This was a common occurrence that affected many cultures, especially in the Native American communities.

During this time, assimilation was essential to survival among many Native Americans. We were one of those families. Even in a time of increased fears and

uncertainties, my great grandmother Brown was thinking about her children and their future. She understood the importance of education and what it meant to their particular survival—no matter the price. The price our family paid was the loss of our Chickasaw language and some valuable traditional culture.

My grandmother, Mary Odelia Sealey (Figure 2), and her siblings were forbidden to speak the Chickasaw language while attending school or at home. Great Grandmother Brown thought if her children were to be successful in life, they would have to speak only *English*. If she allowed them to speak both languages, they would



Figure 2. Luchess. C. and Mary Odelia Sealey. 1935.

use *broken* English, and subsequently appear less educated. This meant that my mother, Lila Dean Sealey-McManus (Figure 3), did not have the opportunity to learn her native



Figure 3. Lila Dean Sealey-McManus. 1966.

language. Hence, our family lost its Tribal language and most of our traditional culture, and this loss served as a critical turning point in our history. All of this has caused our family (in particular, me) to experience some disconnect, and at times, some actual devaluing of my *own* Chickasaw culture. I did not realize how much this disconnection would affect me until after I had children of my own. As my children grew, I began to anticipate the questions they might ask me about our Chickasaw culture their own heritage, and I realized I would not have answers for them.

Hanging on the wall in the bedroom of my mother's house is an old black and white photo of Great Grandmother Brown and Great Grandfather Brown, both Chickasaw (see Figure 1). This is the only known picture we have of them. I have seen it a hundred times, but I never *really* looked at it until I started anticipating this study.

As I examined their faces, I felt a new connection. They are *Chickasaw* people, legendary examples (to our family) of two distinguished Native Americans who not only survived but also managed to thrive during a critical point in the history of our world. Their faces tell the story—they were proud, dignified, and progressive. Decades later and generations apart, I realize I am not so very different than Great Grandmother Brown. I have many of the same aspirations for my children as she had for hers. My desire for them is that they be viewed equally with others in school and in life. This personally and culturally motivated desire was the impetus for this research.

It has been many years since Columbus first set foot on this continent, and we still live in a world where diversity continues to be devalued. This is true not only of Native Americans, but many other people and cultures as well. There is an urgent need for educators and members of society alike to seek ways to better understand our unique yet dynamic diversity. The more we understand about the histories of oppressed peoples, the better we will be prepared to value each other and avoid the mistakes of the past.

Devaluing Diversity in Schools and Society

The devaluing of diversity does not exist in a vacuum. It exists in many of society's social institutions, including its schools. These problems can be perpetuated in our schools through the kinds of curriculum, relationships, and instructional methods that are used. One example involves Native American Boarding Schools. Like other experiences, Native American boarding schools have generated mixed feelings among Indian students. While some Native Americans recall harsh atmospheres, unpleasant treatment, restrictions on speaking their native languages, and feelings of homesickness, others remember beneficial educational activities and recall good times with other Indian children. It is possible that the quality of the particular Indians' experiences depended on the nature of the schools, the aims of the individuals in question, and the relationships between the Indians and those who ran the schools. The experiences may have been more tolerable for those who wished to assimilate than for those who wanted to retain their traditional cultures.

According to Linda Hogan, editor for the Chickasaw Nation, the schools were a mixed blessing. She writes: "The purpose of education in Indian Territory, as throughout the continent, was to acculturate the children. They learned the knowledge systems of the European American, but lost significant parts of their lives as Indians, those valuable and rich traditions that we now are reviving" (2000, p. 3). The problem is that children, who were the main targets of the boarding

schools, would not have been in a position to make fully informed decisions about activities that have had long-term effects on their cultural identities.

More recently, Susan Philips studied the perspectives of an Indian community in the State of Oregon. She wanted to understand why Native American students at the Warm Springs Indian Reservation experienced high levels of failure in school. Using an anthropological approach, Philips (1972) compared the students' actions in different settings, including their schools and homes. Her investigations took place at the first- and sixth-grade levels. Some of the children attended all-Indian classes at the reservation grammar school, while others were in predominantly non-Indian or white classes at another grammar school. In order to gain a more authentic perspective, Philips lived among the Warm Springs Indian people and within their society, and she observed larger group interactions as well as face-to-face personal interactions at school and at home. Philips (1972) states:

The purpose here is to define the communicative contexts in which Indian and non-Indian behavior and participation differ, and to describe ways in which they differ... (The end goal of this discussion will be to demonstrate that the social conditions that define when a person uses speech in Indian social situations are present in classroom situations in which Indian students use speech a great deal, and absent in the more prevalent classroom situations in which they fail to participate verbally. (p. 371)

According to Philips, previous studies showed that in many ways Indian children were not culturally oriented to the ways in which traditional classroom

learning was conducted. She noted, for example, that “Indian children show a great deal of reluctance to talk in class, and they participate less and less in verbal interaction as they go through school” (p. 371). This was an important study because it showed that problems can occur when school curriculum and instruction do not match the experiences and participation structures of the students, which still exists for Native Americans, as well as members of other cultural minority groups.

These problems are not just a thing of the past. In a report on the “effects of a developmentally based intervention with teachers on Native American and White adolescents’ schooling adjustments in rural settings,” Hamm, Farmer, Robertson, Dadisman, Murray and Meece (2010) found that a faculty who maintains a developmentally based understanding of students’ needs and interests... (and whose practices) reflect this developmental understanding, is foundational to student success (pp. 345 & 346). The larger point of this study concludes there needs to be a greater match between teachers’ approaches and students’ experiences, and that interventions that create this understanding can positively affect student achievement and attitudes toward school.

These findings reinforce Philips’ (1972) findings that Native American students tend to benefit from classroom situations that promote cultural appreciation and acceptance. This research reinforces the idea that many Native American students may interact and thereby learn differently from mainstream students. Educators who recognize these cultural differences by seeking a deeper

understanding with regard to Native American students can provide success for both students and teachers in the classroom.

Of course, the devaluing of diversity in schools has not just existed in the past, and it has affected other children besides Native Americans. In a qualitative study of her own classroom, Paley noticed a particular problem involving her kindergarten students. She recognized that even at this young age, the children were responsible for developing a ruling system that involved allowing some students to display power and control over others. Paley realized that even at this grade level, a structure was already beginning to be revealed where certain children will have the right to limit the social experiences of their classmates. In light of this problem, she conducted a study with her twenty-five classroom students as well as a third and a fifth grade class at her school. Therefore, her desire was to understand this unique phenomenon by observing the development of exclusion and the habit of rejection among children.

After several months of careful observation and informal interviews, Paley (1992) introduced a new concept or rule, “*You can’t say you can’t play,*” to her students. The reasoning behind the rule was to give every child a chance in the classroom to be *included*, instead of being *rejected* and *excluded* from play. It was also established to see if the rule would be accepted by all of the children, in particular those who had a tendency to exclude others by using their dominating characteristics and displaying certain levels of authority. Paley (1992) explains her perspective on play:

First of all, play, in and out of itself, gives pleasure. It is certainly attached to friendship but the equator is a tricky one. Play flows out of friendship and friendship flows out of play. The relationship works both ways and equally well, but the children are not convinced that this is so, a suspicion that grows stronger as they grow older. (p. 21)

Paley had observed that not all of her students were allowed to play. In fact, ultimate exclusion was taking place in her classroom, leaving some children feeling rejected and alone. Along with the establishment of the new rule, Paley used a series of discussions with the students as well as a children's story she had written about loneliness and rejection. Through a participatory process, Paley and her students began to think about and discuss such issues and compared them with their own life experiences. She found, after implementation of the new rule, the classroom began to change, especially for the rejected children. She noticed the children participated more and began to adjust to their newfound status with others.

Paley's findings concluded that the majority of the students approved of the new rule, with the exception of members of a third grade who decided it could only work for certain people but not their class. The outcome of these findings reinforce the idea that when educators incorporate ways that allow students to value and respect each other at a young age, it can make a dramatic impact on the way in which they value themselves, others in society, and different cultures they encounter throughout their lifetime.

Another pertinent study also revealed the devaluing of diversity in schools. Kenneth and Mamie Clark were well-known psychologists who dedicated their life's work to conducting important research among children. They are well known for an experiment using dolls to study children's attitude about race. One of their most famous studies is known as the "Doll Experiment." The Clarks (1996) "conducted research on racial awareness among black children, a study that used black and white dolls to test the impact of segregation on the self-awareness and identity and self-image of black children" (Markowitz & Rosner, p. 23). The Clarks found that Black children often preferred to play with white dolls over black dolls. Kenneth Clark (1963) states:

Racial attitudes appear early in the life of children and affect the ideas and behavior of children in the first grades of school. Such attitudes—which appear to be almost inevitable in children in our society—develop gradually. (p. 18)

Since the Clarks' findings in the 1940s, a variety of research has been conducted and strong efforts have been made to attempt to close the gap in the misunderstandings about cultures. Through outward appearances it would appear that some progress has been made; however, special consideration should be given to a study conducted just a few years back. In 2006, high school student and filmmaker Kiri Davis recreated the doll study, and documented it in the film, *A Girl like Me*. Despite the many changes in some parts of society, Davis found that

results similar to what the Clarks found in the late 1930s and early 1940s still applied.

Today, one can view Davis' experiment on *YouTube*. Her findings depict that the minority children in the new study continue to display perceptions about themselves that reflect inferiority and a lower sense of self-worth. This reinforces Vivian Paley's theory that exclusion and rejection begin early in life and that stronger efforts should be made through education to help combat the social misunderstandings that remain prevalent in our society today.

While considering the idea that a student's self-identity is developed at an early age (Clark, 1963; Paley, 1992; Philips, 1972), and recognizing that experiences in school and life play a vital role in social and academic success, it may be worthwhile to recognize that certain events can be contributing factors. Some research implies the devaluing of diversity could be an historical issue and should be considered within the context of racial discrimination. Ogbu (1987) suggests that this type of discrimination can be linked to black Americans and other minorities experiencing lower academic success, especially in the areas of reading, writing, and computing. Ogbu (1987) states:

The real issue in the acquisition of literacy among the minorities... is twofold, namely first, whether or not the children come from a segment of society where people have traditionally experienced unequal opportunity to use their literacy skills in a socially and economically meaningful and rewarding manner; and, second, whether or not the relationship between the

minorities and the dominant group members who control the education system has encouraged the minorities to perceive and define acquisition of literacy as an instrument of deculturation without true assimilation. (p. 254)

Ogbu explains his idea that there are different kinds of minorities in society, and these groups have different types of cultural and language differences. Within the notion of these different kinds of minorities, *castelike* or *subordinate* minorities are “made up of people were originally brought into the United States society, involuntarily through slavery, conquest, or colonization” (p. 255). He also states, regarding low academic performance of Black Americans and other minorities, that “It is the castelike minorities that usually experience most difficulties in acquiring literacy, and in general academic achievement” (p. 255). He further suggests that the problem can be connected to different types of cultural and language differences and it involves what he describes as a secondary cultural difference. He states:

Secondary cultural differences between blacks and whites arose after blacks were involuntarily brought into American society as slaves, relegated to menial status and denied the chances of true assimilation, even after they were emancipated from slavery. Under this circumstance, blacks like other castelike minorities developed new or “secondary” cultural ways of coping, perceiving, and feeling...secondary cultural differences found among castelike minorities tend to be most associated with persistent learning difficulties. (p. 257)

Other researchers have also explored the devaluing of diversity. For example, Valerie Kinloch (2010) conducted a multi-year study that focused on gentrification and Harlem youth. She was interested in researching the historical struggles and educational pursuits of Harlem youth. Kinloch explains that the main focus of her study was to explore “Harlem and its history and future through literacy research and socio-perspectives” (p. 4). She writes:

I draw on the wisdom, literacy, lives, and experiences of Harlem youth and adults who regularly question the community, civil rights, equal opportunity, and activism as they make sense of the New Harlem. (p. 4)

Kinloch began her study in 2003, at Harlem High School, using a participatory action research model. As a participant observer, she documented her observations in an ethnographic journal and participated in audio- and video-recorded sessions with youth in the community. Her study continued through 2006, during which time she formally interviewed 27 participants, including both students and teachers. In addition to the other interviews, her study involved special one-on-one interviews and the development of unique relationship with two key participants, with whom she spent most of her time. Through various data sources, Kinloch identified three recurring themes—community, struggle, and resistance—that characterized the experiences and actions of the participants in their efforts to gain ownership over their own lives. Her final analysis discusses lessons to be learned for educators, researchers, parents, policy makers, and community leaders. Kinloch (2010) states:

We—teachers, teacher educators, researchers, parents, policy makers, community leaders—in classrooms and communities from New York City’s Harlem, New Orleans, San Francisco and Chicago to Detroit...to the Sea Islands of South Carolina...must take seriously the lives, literacies, and struggles within communities that are undergoing gentrification and spatial reappropriation. Students at Harlem High School have taught me that youth involvement in the community can help teachers create curricula that invite students to participate actively in their on-going learning. (p. 34)

In light of her research, Kinloch encourages teachers to search for a variety of opportunities to get to know their students. She insists that it is okay even to get personal in order to gain valuable perspectives, which she describes as a way students can “demonstrate how youth can assume ownership over their identities as literacy learners, soul singers, and street survivors in the midst of a changing, rapidly gentrifying community” (p. 35).

John Dewey (1902/1990) noted that individuals need to grow and learn through their own lived experiences in order to become productive citizens. With that in mind, educators must make a commitment to seek a deeper understanding when dealing with the ongoing problem of devaluing diversity. This requires continued exploration of theories and research related to these issues. By participating in social and cultural experiences that challenge our existing understandings, unique opportunities may be provided that will aid in greater awareness of and respect for different cultures.

In order to understand different cultures, it is important to first understand oneself as a member of society as well as one's own particular culture (Banks, 2004). While minority groups must continue to learn about their own cultural backgrounds, it is important for members of the mainstream to understand themselves as well. One way for all citizens to better understand themselves is through social analysis and critical self-reflection. Unfortunately, these processes often are not taught in schools.

Peggy McIntosh (1989) looks at the process of critical self-reflection in her article, *White Privilege*. She says that many suffer from the consequences of what she identifies as hidden privilege and the domination of others through the act of unconscious power and privilege. McIntosh (1989) stated, "I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege" (p. 125). The impetus for McIntosh's study began with her interest in women's studies during which she was focusing on gender differences and privileges. She soon realized that if she was going to criticize others, she had to first go through the process of self-perception. McIntosh's perspective recognizes privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets, a "knapsack" of special provisions. She explained it this way:

I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets, which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White Privilege is like an invisible knapsack

of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks. (p. 125)

After listing a number of advantages she felt people like herself receive simply by being White, McIntosh realized it was her responsibility to deal with her new self-awareness through social action. This is a challenge worthy of consideration for all in education and society.

The literature is an important reminder that the devaluing of diversity has had a major impact on our society and that many problems still exist today. This has had negative effects not only for minority populations, but also for mainstream members of society. It is important to continue searching for a better understanding of these historical issues and to promote social equity and justice for all cultures. At the same time, the literature suggests that there are possible ways to address these problems through education. In light of these challenges facing our society, it makes sense to study the nature of this problem as well as potential educational solutions. One way to do this might be through a study of the Chickasaw Tribe in the State of Oklahoma.



Figure 4. Map of the Chickasaw Nation.

Research Questions

Based on these various issues and concerns, the purpose of this study was to better understand how the Chickasaw people have coped with the devaluing of diversity in America and to learn about the role of education within the process. I chose to gather the unique perspectives of the Chickasaw people because I am Chickasaw and have a direct and familial connection to our people. Thus, the study is based on the following research questions:

1. How have the Chickasaw people coped with the devaluing of diversity?
2. What is the role of education, broadly defined, either as part of the problem or part of the solution?

As a Native American, specifically a Chickasaw, it was a important for me to conduct this study, which would provide another means of building upon the

existing lineal relationships within my cultural group, as well as to gather crucial details about my heritage from other Chickasaw people. The way in which this information was gathered was extremely critical, and I made every effort to respect the Chickasaw Nation, the community, and the people themselves. Cultural sensitivity is of utmost importance. Therefore, every opportunity I took as a researcher, to interact, observe, or participate in cultural events was approached in the most respectful and courteous manner possible with careful consideration to Chickasaw people and our traditions.

The interviews were conducted with various members of the Chickasaw tribe. Some of these individuals have prominent roles within the Chickasaw Nation, including Chickasaw tribal leaders, tribal representatives, Chickasaw citizens, Chickasaw elders, and Chickasaw cultural experts, to name just a few. Yet, I felt it was crucial to gather the perspectives of Chickasaws from a variety of different backgrounds and areas since the majority of the Chickasaw, like any group, live their lives without special recognition. At the end of this study I will consider the implications for all Chickasaw people, as well as well as for other groups and members of society, who may experience similar social, cultural, and educational challenges.

CHAPTER (TOKLO) TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To this point in the study, I have introduced a problem that exists as well as the broader purpose of the investigation. The problem involves the ongoing devaluing of diversity in America and the purpose was to better understand how one group of people, the Chickasaws, have coped with this devaluing of diversity. An important aspect of the study was to learn about the role of education, broadly defined, in the efforts of the Chickasaw people.

In the first chapter, I presented the focus of the research and specific interview questions used to gather the perspectives of the Chickasaws. In this chapter, I will describe the theoretical lenses that will be used to analyze the findings of the study. Although a variety of lenses could have been used to interpret the devaluing of diversity and to envision possibilities for the future, two perspectives seemed especially relevant to this study. The first is the work of Paulo Freire, especially his powerful concept of *cultural invasion*. The second is James Banks' work on multicultural education, especially his ideas on including ethnic content within the curriculum and on developing what he calls *cosmopolitan citizenship*.

As discussed in the previous chapter, we live in a world where diversity continues to be devalued. This is true of many peoples, including Native Americans. There is an urgent need for educators and society alike to seek ways to

better understand our diversity. The more we understand about the histories of oppressed peoples, the better we will be prepared to value each other and to avoid the mistakes of the past. However, really useful studies need to do more than simply *describe* a problem. They also need to *explain* the causes of the problem in order to suggest what can be done to create positive change. As important as it is to recognize that a social problem exists, it is equally important to understand the underlying issues that may have contributed to a problem as critical as the devaluing of diversity.

With this in mind, I wish to discuss the theoretical lenses I will use to interpret the findings of a study of cultural oppression and to explore where we might go from here. A theoretical lens can provide a unique perspective in order to understand a certain concept based on a particular philosopher's belief system. In a world as socially complex as ours is today, it may be inevitable that there will be friction between cultures. Issues such as power, privilege, domination and control have surfaced time and again throughout history and remain prevalent even today. Nonetheless, as inevitable as cultural friction may be, allowing it to escalate into cultural conflict is a failure of modern society. It would be valuable to understand some of the underlying issues that perpetuate cultural conflict in order to gain a deeper understanding and heightened awareness of this socio-cultural phenomenon.

Lack of understanding of other cultures can result in a devaluing of diversity (Nieto, 1996; Philips, 1972; Zinn, 2005). This can occur in just about every society, including Native American communities. As mentioned earlier, a

variety of lenses could be used to interpret the existing problems and to explore potential solutions; however, two perspectives in particular seemed especially relevant to the data as the study unfolded. First I will describe some of the ideas of Paulo Freire, which I will later use to help interpret the problem. Then I will present some of the ideas of James Banks, which will later help me explore possible solutions.

As mentioned, in this chapter I will explore the theoretical lens that will be used to analyze the data and the findings of this study, and will focus on the work of Paulo Freire's concept of cultural invasion. First, I will provide a brief overview of Paulo Freire's (1970/2005) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Next, I will discuss Freire's concept of cultural invasion, which is central to the larger problem of social oppression. This section will include several aspects that contribute to the phenomenon, including invasion, cultural in-authenticity, and other contributing factors. Finally, I will discuss Freire's notion of problem-posing education, or what he describes as emancipatory education, as a possible solution to the problem of cultural invasion.

Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Paulo Freire's (1970/2005) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* discusses the problem of oppression in the world today. He argues that a powerful minority of people continue to oppress the majority in society. This is done by convincing the oppressed that they are inferior and even less than fully human. His solution for

people who are willing to help is to support the oppressed in their efforts to resist cultural assimilation, gain critical consciousness, develop greater confidence, and help transform the social structure so it is more just for all. He believes this can be done through education for freedom, which he calls emancipatory education. He writes:

Problem-posing education, as a humanist and liberating praxis, posits as fundamental that the people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation...The world—no longer something to be described with deceptive words—becomes the object of that transforming action by men and women which results in their humanization. (p. 86)

Freire's overall message deals with a major problem involving the concept of dehumanization. The problem involves a dominant worldview impacting two groups of people in society: the oppressor and the oppressed.⁵ Freire argues that domination is an act of control by one culture or group of people against another culture or group of people. In the United States, these groups often are referred to as the majority and the minority. However, ironically, domination is often carried out in a way that depicts the exact opposite. Even within the United States, it may actually be a small minority of the dominant society that holds much of the power and control over the majority of the oppressed, ultimately resulting in the *few* controlling the *masses*. Through the imposition of their own worldviews upon a

⁵ Freire has been criticized for perpetuating dualistic and dichotomous thinking when he uses concepts like oppressed or oppressors. It is most likely that people are complex human beings, and that it should not be a matter of either or, rather it can be both.

particular group, the oppressed have come to see themselves as “objects” under the control of ruling “subjects.”

This oppressive relationship has become so ingrained into society that it requires the changing of the minds of the oppressed so they can rethink their ways of thinking about how they exist in the world. One solution proposed by Freire (1970/2005) includes the notion of raising critical consciousness. Freire proposes encouraging the oppressed to become deeper thinkers who question the world. This ultimately gives them back their ability to have voice. Critical consciousness requires a particular kind of education. With this approach, education would need to change from what he calls a traditional “banking concept” to what he calls a “problem-posing approach.”

Cultural Invasion: A Mechanism of Oppression

Because of this particular way of thinking, the oppressed begin to transform into individuals or groups who no longer possess their own identity. In other words, they can become so conflicted in their own thoughts that they begin to lose their original “self” and start to think of themselves in a different way, ultimately resulting in an inauthentic presence. Freire (1970/2005) attributes this to the notion that “the oppressed suffer from a duality which has established itself in their innermost being,” therefore:

They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have

internalized. The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them...between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world. (p. 48)

Freire believes cultural invasion is a two-fold approach. It is both *physical* and *mental*. This assimilation can be a *physical* act such as the invading of a cultural group's environment, the taking of their land, and the ultimate devaluing of their culture (Debo, 1970; Freire, 1970/2005; Zinn, 2005). However, Freire (1970/2005) describes the process of cultural invasion as going beyond just the physical act. He says it is deeper than that—it is a type of domination that also involves a *mental* invasion of the way the oppressed thinks about things. The dominant group believes that their view is the right way and that the oppressed are better off if they know this right way in order to successfully exist in the world (Freire, 1970/2005; Quinn, 1992). Therefore, the oppressors believe they are doing the oppressed a favor by showing them there is a *better* way to live. This is done in such a continuous, often so subliminal way that the oppressed do not even realize it until they have already started to adjust and transform to their way of thinking and acting.

This continuous approach is what enables effective invasion or assimilation. People typically resist change that challenges their personal beliefs or interferes with their natural tendencies as human beings. When conflict or change occurs suddenly and without warning, we may instinctively go into survival mode.

However, when change happens slowly and continuously, the way it is done through cultural assimilation, the oppressed may be gradually transformed without consciousness or resistance.

Thus, the process of a mental transformation begins. Freire describes the oppressed as changing little by little and thereby they actually start to transform to be more like the oppressor, ultimately resulting in a great loss of personal self (Debo, 1970; Freire, 1970/2005). During the transformation of becoming like the oppressor, the oppressed begin to lose pieces of themselves such as their own voices, their language, their culture, and their self-identity. They begin to see the world the way the oppressor sees the world, so they start to imitate the oppressor's actions down to how they speak, dress, and interact with others in society. This is done in order to feel successful. When the oppressed have truly changed and conformed, the oppressor has gained ultimate control.

Freire proposed a theory of anti-dialogical action that includes an important characteristic described as *cultural invasion*. Cultural invasion is an act that involves imposing a dominant worldview and view of reality upon other worldviews and oppressing the people who possess them (1970/2005, p. 152). Cultural invasion ultimately involves the changing of one's own mind or conscious to match that of the oppressor's. The influence of oppression is successful when the oppressor's view actually lives inside an individual's head, ultimately reinforcing the idea that "they" (the oppressor) are "you" and "you" (the oppressed) are "them." Essentially, this becomes so ingrained within the conscious mind that it

acts as a subliminal voice inside one's head providing instruction on how to think, feel, and act. This cycle of changing and altering consciousness has occurred for centuries and has affected numerous groups of people in various societies around the world. Thus, cultural invasion can sometimes be a physical act, but primarily it is the mental process of the invasion of one's own consciousness.

Freire (1970/2005) describes such an invasion this way: "the invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group, in disrespect of the latter's potentialities; they impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression" (p. 152). With cultural invasion, the oppressor begins to view others as *objects* or *things*, instead of people.

Daniel Quinn (1992) presents an interesting historical perspective of how people think, act, and see themselves in relation to society and the world. Quinn describes a way to think about this relation to the world by presenting a picture of a dual society containing people he describes as *Takers* and *Leavers*. The "Takers" are people who believe they have all the answers, or knowledge, including the *one right way to live*. The "Leavers" are people who have been here from the very beginning of time and knew how to live according to the laws of nature.

Quinn (1992) explains that modern society is experiencing cultural amnesia because we have forgotten how to live and at the same time sustain our world. He relates this to the idea of having a *Taker* mentality. He depicts *Taker* society as the

people who accumulate knowledge about what works well for *things* instead of what works well for *people*. Quinn (1992) states:

There is a very special knowledge you must have if you are going to rule the world... (T)he Takers possess this knowledge of course—at least they imagine they do—and they’re very, very proud of it. This is the most fundamental knowledge of all, and it’s absolutely indispensable to those who would rule the world. (p. 155)

Subsequently, ruling the world in this way requires an act of manipulation and power and control over a person, groups of people, or society. Cultural invasion involves people being forced to forfeit their own voice, and self-expression, rendering them silent, and leaving them without a sense of self-worth. The major objective of cultural invasion involves domination that has had a devastating impact on oppressed groups of people. Freire (1970/2005) states that cultural invasion is “always an act of violence against the persons of the invaded culture... The invaders are the authors of, and actors in, the process; those they invade are the objects” (p. 152).

There are several factors that help to explain how the invasion works within a group. Examples of these different aspects of cultural invasion are pertinent to this study and are worthy of examining in greater detail. These aspects, although not always sequential in nature, are all by-products of the social phenomenon. Some factors include, but are not limited to, domination and control, cultural inauthenticity, and superiority versus inferiority. Freire explains that cultural

invasion can take many forms and affects both economic and cultural situations.

One aspect of cultural invasion is the concept of domination. Freire (1970/2005)

suggests:

All domination involves invasion—at times physical and overt, at times camouflaged, with the invader assuming the role of a helping friend... (I)nvasion is a form of economic and cultural domination. Invasion may be practiced by a metropolitan society upon a dependent society, or it may be implicit in the domination of one class over another within the same society. (p. 153)

In essence, domination may be viewed as a structured form of power that one group of people or culture holds over another group of people or culture. Although domination is very invasive, it is not always visible. Therefore, although it is not something one can see, smell, or touch, one can still identify its remnants.

Another aspect of cultural invasion involves cultural in-authenticity. Because of Freire's life experiences in Brazil (including loss of privilege, imprisonment, and exile), he was better able than many others to understand what people of less privilege have gone through and how they are treated. If Freire had not been knocked off the pedestal of privilege himself, he may not have been able to identify with these particular characteristics of cultural invasion.

Freire argues that if a group allows invasion to occur, they will feel devalued, and will no longer contribute their own ideas or knowledge in uncomfortable situations. They can begin to see themselves as less-than or not

worthy of their own contributions in society and will hold lower aspirations for themselves, damaging their self-confidence and self-images. Gradually their self-esteem is diminished, resulting in a slow and certain decline of reaching their potential with people and society. Freire (1970/2005) notes that cultural conquest (the last fundamental characteristic of cultural invasion):

Leads to the cultural in-authenticity of those who are invaded; they begin to respond to the values, the standards, and the goals of the invaders. In their passion to dominate, to mold others to their patterns and their ways of life, the invaders desire to know how those they have invaded apprehend reality—but only so they can dominate more effectively. (p. 153)

Another contributor of cultural invasion involves the concept of superiority versus integrity. A common value such as integrity is at risk and is clearly viewed as something that can be changed through the eye of the oppressor. The invaders desire domination and want the invaded to see *their* points-of-view and to begin to respond to *their* values. Ultimate success for the oppressor is when the oppressed begin to consider themselves as a subordinate of the oppressor. What the oppressor says and does directly impacts and influences the oppressed—so much so that the oppressed begin to look toward the oppressor with a view that they are the authority on all things. They see themselves as inferior and de-value their own opinions. The oppressed have been successfully transformed when the oppressor identifies that they have been successful in establishing a new mindset. This will

produce the level of superiority that the oppressor searches for, and this constitutes the inferiority of the oppressed. Freire (1970/2005) notes:

For cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those who are invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority. Since everything has its opposite, if those who are invaded consider themselves inferior, they must necessarily recognize the superiority of the invaders. The values of the latter thereby become the pattern for the former. The more invasion is accentuated and those invaded are alienated from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves, the more the latter want to be like the invaders: to walk like them, dress like them, talk like them. (p. 153)

Although these changes might reflect success for one group, the oppressed cannot achieve this type of success based on the affects of assimilation. Maslow's process of self-actualization (or the final stage and establishment of true identity) reinforces the concept that the oppressed would not be able to go beyond the self-actualization stage of development because of this level of invasion. And yet in the final analysis, it all comes down to the power of who makes the decisions, and who is in control. This power of decision ultimately lies within the invader because the invaded are diminished, no longer able to be their authentic selves, and therefore having lost their thought processing and decision-making abilities.

Fortunately, Freire (1970/2005) offers a possible educational solution that should be recognized by education and society. This solution would involve learning through lived experiences and the promotion of critical questioning and

awareness in a process he calls critical consciousness-raising. This solution involves deeper levels of critical thinking and promotes opportunities for richer dialogue and authentic communication between teachers and students. This solution involves what Freire calls *Problem-posing education* or *Emancipatory education*.

Emancipatory Education: An Educational Solution

The idea of devaluing diversity has now been introduced as a problem in society, with cultural invasion as a possible contributor. However, after identifying a serious societal problem, Paulo Freire offers an educational solution. Freire's solution is called "emancipatory education", and it is achieved through what he calls a "problem-posing" approach. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2005) offers a critique of traditional "banking" education, which he believes promotes social oppression. Freire rejects the "banking" or depositing of information to students' minds because he believes this domesticates students and makes them passive. Instead, he supports a more active education through engaging students in a more problem-posing approach. His goal is the raising of critical consciousness in order to promote a more liberated approach or education for freedom. In contrast to his proposed solution of problem-posing education, it is important to examine Freire's view on possible contributors to the problems of social oppression. One idea involves what Freire (1970/2005) describes as the "*banking*" concept of education as involving a dominating relationship:

This relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students)...The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to “fill” the students with the contents of his narration—contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. (p. 71)

Freire (1970/2005) attributes the problem of banking education to the act of depositing information in the minds of students instead of authentic communication between teachers and students. For centuries, teachers have been expected to contain the knowledge needed to transfer information and educate students. It is organized this way because education has been a compulsory program that was and remains subjected to strict mandatory requirements. Subsequently, given all the national and state mandates during the last four decades, it continues to be a challenge for teachers to keep up with such demands and expectations. United States’ educators today are still held more strictly than ever to mandatory guidelines developed by others, resulting in less and less time and opportunity for teachers to engage in true dialogue with their students. Freire (1970/2005) describes this system of teaching as a result of the banking approach. He offers this description:

Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse yet, it turns them into

“containers,” into “receptacles” to be “filled” by the teacher. The more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are. Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. (pp. 71 & 72)

Although it is important to understand the problem and ultimate consequences of the banking method structure within the educational system, Freire (1970/2005) argues that the problem does not lie within the institution alone but involves the actual *instruction* within education. Thus, instruction itself is in urgent need of changing. Yet, instruction is ultimately influenced by broader social structures (e.g., No Child Left Behind, 2001; The Common Core State Standards, 2011).

Freire may be suggesting that education (teachers, or the education system, or dominant powers in society) might relinquish some control and embrace the notion of questioning. By allowing the exchange of authentic dialogue between teachers and students, the students can enter into relationships where they will feel safe, offer their creative input and ideas, and feel valued for their contributions. It all goes back to communication and relates to Freire’s theories of humanization. Freire (1970/2005) explains:

(O)nly through communication can human life hold meaning. The teacher’s thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the student’s

thinking...Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about *reality*, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication. (p. 77)

According to Freire, if a student is allowed to contribute or *question things*, there is a sense of validation as a human being. Therefore, the student can begin to build their self worth and self-confidence. If students are not allowed to ask questions, pose ideas, or offer solutions, then education and the learning process is of little value to them. Based on these ideas, Freire's theory provides a possible solution. He believes the use of *problem-posing education* is a way in which education can be used as a means to combat the problem of social oppression.

Problem-posing education is Freire's alternative to the banking method approach. Freire's (1970/2005) rejection of old ways of teaching in favor of a problem-posing approach is based on a process in which he believes both the teacher and student will equally benefit. Freire deems this process necessary in order to allow people to become individuals with a conscious mind assisting them in the understanding of themselves as they live and relate to the world. In order to do this, Freire suggests that a rejection of the banking concept is required.

Freire (1970/2005) argues that liberating education depends on acts of cognition, rather than transfers of information.⁶ According to Freire, it is a reciprocal approach—teachers can teach and at the same time they learn from students and vice-versa, ultimately resolving the long-time contradiction between teacher and student. Problem-posing education, as Freire (1970/2005) explains,

⁶ Freire's educational approach has been called problem-posing education, emancipatory education, and liberating or libratory education. In this dissertation I will use these ideas interchangeably.

“breaks with the vertical patterns characteristic of banking education, can fulfill its function as the practice of freedom, only if it can overcome the above contradiction” (p. 80). However, only through utilizing the horizontal approach of teacher and student participating side by side and in a back and forth dialogical process of instruction is there a possibility for the education of freedom. Freire (1970/2005) reinforces the notion:

Education as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination—denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world. (p. 81)

In problem-posing education, when a student is given the opportunity to enter into true dialogue, an empowered student is born: one who feels confident to be creative again, to think for him or herself, to consider alternate meanings, and to think more deeply about things. Freire (1970/2005) believed that through the rejection of the banking concept of education, and by engaging in a more problem-posing solution, education can begin to transform students into people who can become more fully human. In order for this to happen, the oppressed must join with others to liberate themselves from the power hold of the oppressor. In order to do this Freire suggests another part of the solution—the act of raising critical consciousness.

The aim of problem-posing education is to promote critical consciousness, which can in turn lead to social structural change. Critical consciousness is a part of Freire's theory of dialogical action, and serves as a way for individuals to reconnect to reality, become aware of their social and political environments, and regain the self worth they lost through the dehumanization process. Freire (1970/2005) states:

In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality in process, in transformation. (p. 83)

Paulo Freire's perception of the reality of the oppressed was initially formed in his early years, one author writes:

This had a profound influence on his life as he came to know the gnawing pangs of hunger and fell behind in school because of the listlessness it produced; it also led him to make a vow, at age eleven, to dedicate his life to the struggle against hunger, so that other children would not have to know the agony he was then experiencing. His early sharing of the life of the poor also led him to the discovery of what he describes as the "culture of silence" of the dispossessed. (Shaull, in Freire, 1970/2005, p. 30)

Since the original publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970, we have seen positive changes in the collective consciousness or social structure of society. For example, multiple studies have been completed regarding issues of

oppression, dehumanization, and empowerment in education and society. This research has helped support and encourage continuous awareness and it has ultimately promoted social action. Yet, we are also still witnessing oppression in the United States and these conditions call for increased action. The question is, what will it take for others to develop the kind of critical consciousness Freire and others have been able to develop in their lives? I believe that Freire's own work provides important clues.

The purpose of using Freire's cultural invasion concept as a theoretical lens to look at the devaluing of diversity is to gain a deeper understanding of social oppression. It is also a way to glean ideas of how to incorporate a more liberating method of teaching that may help enhance the relationships between students and teachers and, through true dialogical education, to begin to change the broader attitudes, and structures of society.

In order to change our consciousness, educators and others need to identify areas in need of improvement in their social situations and individual lives. Furthermore, as a society, we should strive for a view that allows, appreciates and encourages multiple perspectives of the world. We should look for opportunities to value each other for the unique human beings we are, through the appreciation of our characteristics and cultures, ultimately developing authentic relationships and promoting the valuing of diversity.

It is important for members of society to recognize that oppression continues to exist and to focus on solutions implied by Freire's problem-posing

education and Bank's ideas on cosmopolitan citizenship. Social change is possible, but only if action is taken. Students and teachers can embrace social transformation through the building of dialogical relationships and a cosmopolitan perspective, yet they cannot be expected to do this on their own. They will need trust and support from administrators, politicians, and families and community members, and society in general. Some ways to begin, both formally and informally, may be to reject banking methods, embrace problem-posing methods, develop critical consciousness, integrate the curriculum with ethnic content, and strive for the development of cosmopolitan citizens. I believe these efforts can ultimately establish better forms of communication, and in turn develop a more just society that values cultural differences and promotes success for all.

James Banks' Theoretical Framework

Another scholar who has given much thought to issues of diversity and justice in education is James Banks. He too has identified vital social problems and addressed education as a means for coping with the devaluing of diversity. For decades, Banks has worked on the development of philosophical arguments and practical multicultural approaches that might be used to improve education and society. Banks offers important insights regarding the value of learning about others through the experience of viewing them from one's own personal or cultural perspective. Banks (1989) states:

When people view their culture from the point of view of another culture, they are able to understand their own culture more fully, to see how it is unique and distinct from the other cultures, and to understand better how it relates to and interacts with other cultures. (p. 189)

Banks' overall message suggests that in order for students to understand and value different cultures, educators must go beyond their current ways of thinking and incorporate creative experiences through the enhancement of a more culturally robust educational curriculum. Banks (1989) warns that using a mainstream-centric curriculum can promote "racism, ethnocentrism, and pose negative consequences for mainstream students, as well as religiously, racially, and ethnically diverse students" (p. 189). Because students are exposed to a substantial amount of learning experiences throughout their school years, from preschool to higher education, it is important for educators to utilize every opportunity to encourage a deeper understanding of others in society. Two of Banks' ideas will be especially useful at the end of this dissertation to discuss ways to cope with the devaluing of diversity.

Integrating the Curriculum with Ethnic Content

In order to help with this effort, Banks explores ways to help educators develop more than just a generic, superficial, or stereotypical understanding of others and their cultures. Banks recognized the society of the United States is rapidly growing in diversity, including a multitude of ethnic, racial, cultural, and

religious groups (1989). He says that textbooks and teaching materials do not incorporate the necessary multiethnic curriculum:

A curriculum that focuses on the experiences of mainstream Americans and largely ignores the experiences, cultures, and histories of other ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious groups has negative consequences for both mainstream American and cultural and ethnic minority students. A mainstream-centric curriculum is one major way in which racism and ethnocentrism are reinforced and perpetuated in the schools and in society at large. (p. 189)

As one way to help combat the devaluing of diversity among cultures, Banks (1989) recommends a four-step approach that can be used to integrate a more multiethnic curriculum. This approach progresses from a low level focus on facts and contributions through higher levels that consider cultural perspectives, transformation of the entire curriculum to integrate multicultural issues to the highest level, which advocates transformative social action. Banks (1989) suggests:

The school can help ethnic minority students mediate between their home and school cultures by implementing a curriculum that reflects the culture of their ethnic groups and communities—as well as the fact that students learn best and are more highly motivated when the school curriculum reflects their cultures, experiences, and perspectives. Subsequently, these approaches serve as an aid for teachers to use ethnic content that will assist

them and students to function more effectively in multiethnic classrooms and schools. (p. 192)

Through the incorporation of multiethnic curriculum as recommended by Banks, educators can enhance their overall teaching strategies, which provide unique experiences for students as well as opportunities for growth. Minority students can begin to feel a sense of connection and overall appreciation when their cultures are acknowledged, and mainstream students can begin to develop a deeper appreciation of other cultures.

Cosmopolitan Citizenship

Another valuable idea presented by Banks is the idea of the *cosmopolitan citizen*. This is a concept that involves self-perception and self-acceptance of one's own cultural identity while also recognizing one's connection to the larger society. This concept can be used to help educators and society in general gain a better understanding of others as well as their own cultures. Banks argues that the idea of cosmopolitan citizenship can provide alternate ways of developing a more robust curriculum that focuses on the development of a more authentic multiethnic education. He credits the development of this educational focus on the continuing rise of an increasingly diverse population within the United States as well as the world. Banks (2004) suggests:

[A]lthough the United States has been diverse since its founding, the ethnic texture of the nation has changed dramatically since the Immigration

Reform Act was enacted in 1965...and that students of color now make up 40% of the students in the nation's public schools" (p. 299).

What is a "cosmopolitan citizen"? Cosmopolitan means: international, multinational, broad-based, or global. Banks concurs with Nussbaum (2002) description of the cosmopolitan citizen as one "whose allegiance is to the worldwide community of human beings" (p. 4). Nussbaum pointed out, however, that "to be a citizen of the world does not need to give up local identifications, which can be a source of great richness in life" (p. 9) (Banks, 2004, p. 303). Based on this description, a cosmopolitan citizen could be a person who has learned to appreciate and identify fully with his or her own cultural identity; as such they understand that the conclusion does not mean that he or she cannot also identify fully with his community, state, nation, or world. It is not a choice of either or. The cosmopolitan citizen understands that addressing global issues requires taking personal action and assisting in building of a world that is accepting of cultural differences and affirming of all peoples.

Banks argues that citizenship today must go beyond simply the understanding of one's own culture. Ultimately, citizens in today's society must develop a global perspective. However, we cannot be expected to care about others in the world if we do not feel affirmed in our own families, cultures, communities, and nations. Therefore, according to Banks (2004), people must learn to appreciate themselves culturally first, and then they can learn to appreciate other cultures, both locally and globally. Banks (2004) states:

Self-acceptance is a prerequisite to the acceptance and valuing of others. Students from racial, cultural, and language minority groups that have historically experienced institutionalized discrimination, racism, or other forms of marginalization often have a difficult time accepting and valuing their own ethnic and cultural heritages. (p. 303)

One way to address the issue of understanding and valuing of diversity could lie in the role of Bank's description of a "cosmopolitan citizen". He says it goes beyond the understanding of one's own culture, but must focus on a global perspective and how one learns to appreciate themselves culturally first, in order to begin to appreciate other cultures both locally and globally. Banks (2004) states:

An important aim of citizenship education should be to help students develop global identifications. They also must develop a deeper understanding of the need to take action as citizens of the global community to help solve the world's difficult global problems. Cultural, national, and global experiences and identifications are interactive and interrelated in a dynamic way. (p. 303)

Banks (2004) refuses to choose between one source of identity and another, and he argues that unity and diversity are *both* important. Banks says "a delicate balance of diversity and unity should be an essential goal of democratic nation-states and of teaching and learning in democratic societies...and citizens in a diverse democratic society should be able to maintain attachments to their cultural communities as well as participate effectively in the shared national culture" (2004,

p. 300). He recognizes that for educators and schools to provide a curriculum that supports such opportunities would be challenging, but provides strategies that can assist with this effort. Banks (2004) suggests that by using his “Stages of Cultural Development Typology, teachers can help students attain higher stages of cultural development and develop clarified cultural, national, and global identifications” (p. 303).

Additional Solutions

Finally, some of the best analyses may be those that are developed by the people who have experienced the problems, and often the solution is the opposite of the problem. When we consider the many things that have occurred in the name of “progress,” as Zinn (2005) points out (such as population explosions, urbanization and industrialization, genocide, and environmental degradation), it might be good to remember the original ideas and values of the people who were eventually assimilated, Removed, or killed while they were trying to defend their ways of life.

Hyemeyohsts Storm provides good insight in his book, *Seven Arrows*. He believes different people view things differently based on their unique experiences and positions:

Every single one of our previous experiences in life will affect in some way the mental perspective from which we see the world around us...The perception of any object, either tangible or abstract, is ultimately made a

thousand times more complicated whenever it is viewed within the circle of *an entire People as a whole*. (1972, p. 59).

Storm (1972) uses the traditional Native American Medicine Wheel as way of presenting the problem and offering solutions by creating universal connections. He compares the Medicine Wheel to the universe as a whole, describing it as follows:

In many ways this Circle, the Medicine Wheel, can be best understood if you think of it as a mirror in which everything is reflected. “The Universe is the Mirror of the People,” the old Teachers tell us, “and each person is a Mirror to every other person.” (p. 60)

Since each of our perspectives are influenced by our life experiences, what we see when we look at an object, another person, or the world itself, is actually a reflection of ourselves—our experiences and identities. Storm states:

All things are contained within the Medicine Wheel, and all things are equal within it. The Medicine Wheel is the Total Universe....We must all follow our Vision Quest to discover ourselves to learn how we perceive ourselves, and to find our relationship with the world around us. (p. 60)

Storm is saying that within the Universe one object or form of life is not more important than another, and that to learn about our relationship with the world, we must discover who we are and how we perceive ourselves. However, this requires action. It takes a search. We cannot discover who we are or how we are related to others unless we have new encounters. As we have new encounters

we will grow in our understanding, and so will those we meet. According to Storm, we must share our talents and gifts with others we encounter during our journey of self-discovery. As we “give away” our gifts to others, we will not only better understand ourselves but will also build stronger connections within the community as well as the world.

CHAPTER (TOCHCHI'NA) THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There is a critical problem in society today involving the devaluing of diversity, including multicultural perspectives, which prevents sociocultural equity. This is true for many societies past and present, including Native American communities in the United States. Educators need a greater understanding and appreciation of diversity in order to promote social and cultural justice and equality among cultures. One way to gain such understanding would be through an explanation of the perspectives of Native Americans, including the Chickasaws, regarding how they have tried to cope with the devaluing of diversity, and the role of education, broadly defined, within this process. This examination could serve as an illustrative example of a widespread phenomenon with implications for others who are experiencing similar challenges.

In the first chapter, I introduced the broader problem. In the second chapter, I identified Paulo Freire's (1970/2005) idea of cultural invasion as a theoretical lens that could be used to interpret the data, and I presented some of James Banks' ideas on multicultural education as a way of thinking about possible educational solutions. In this third chapter, I will discuss the research methodology used to conduct this study of how the Chickasaw people have coped with the devaluing of diversity.

Research Methodology: A Critical Ethnographic Study

The general purpose of this study was to gain the participants' perspectives on how the Chickasaw people have historically and currently coped with the devaluing of diversity, and to understand the role of education, broadly defined, as a means of either perpetuating or addressing these issues. Since the goal was to understand and interpret the perspectives of a culture of people who have had to cope with social injustice, the study was critical and qualitative or ethnographic in nature.

A qualitative research approach is appropriate for understanding people's experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2005; Wilson, 1977). Qualitative research involves gathering of information that will assist in a better understanding of behaviors and perspectives of different people or groups in society. Qualitative research methods allow the researcher to go beyond just gathering of facts and data, or numerical data collection, probing deeper into human perspectives and understandings of certain problems or social phenomenon. Carspecken (1996) notes, "Qualitative social research investigates human phenomenon that do not lend themselves, by their very nature, to quantitative methods" (p. 3).

The study was also critical. It not only looked at people's perspectives, but it questioned social norms and practices based on ideas of justice and equality. I used critical qualitative methods and applied them to the examination of a culture (Carspecken, 1996). In order to gather the most authentic perspectives of the

Chickasaw people, I drew on the unique, organic, lived experiences of the Chickasaws. I tried to gather the perspectives of one culture and their challenges regarding diversity, social justice, and equity. I also tried to examine the role of education in contributing to the problems or to the solutions. In using this type of methodology, I became a critical investigator. In addition to describing what I found, I will also try to explain it. And instead of just explaining, I will also seek to evaluate the fairness or justice of what is going on. This practice is referred to as critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996; Quantz, 1988). Carspecken (1996) writes:

We are all concerned about social inequalities, and we direct our work toward positive social change. We also share a concern with social theory and some of the basic issues it has struggled with since the nineteenth century. These include the nature of social structure, power, culture, and human agency. We use our research, in fact, to refine social theory rather than merely to describe social life. Together, we have begun to develop social research. (p. 3)

A qualitative approach was also useful because it allowed me to investigate human behavior by actually being part of the group or society I studied. The participant observer is a researcher who becomes immersed in the culture being studied, who becomes an active participant. As Philips (1972) notes, “participant observation is best suited for studying face-to-face interaction” (p. 15). The observer participant, on the other hand, is someone who observes the individual,

group, or culture from a distance, usually recording the information by way of field notes.

In some cases I was a participant observer because I was included in the event that was taking place (e.g., the trip to the Mississippi homelands; the Chickasaw Annual Day festivities—including the dances; the Chickasaw Reburial ceremony). Other times, I was more of an observer participant, asking formal questions and recording notes as I listened (e.g., the formal interviews with the Governors, tribal historians, and others).

Traditionally, many Native Americans have reflected on and shared their life histories and significant events through oral translation. Therefore, it was important for this research to contain vital information regarding the oral history of the Chickasaws. An oral history is an approach in which the researcher gathers personal recollections of events, their causes, and their effects from individuals or groups of individuals. This information is collected through tape recordings and the written works of individuals either who have died or who are still living.

As crucial as it is to research social problems that deal with the devaluing of diversity, it is equally crucial to capture and record information in the most accurate way when researching marginalized cultures in society. Quantz (1988) notes, “in researching and writing ethnography, one must describe the dynamic and conflictual nature of marginalized cultures, record the dialogues that bind the individual into a private world and a social community, and reveal the many voices struggling for expression” (p. 104).

A qualitative research approach would serve this study best because it would be naturalistic (Wilson, 1977). Naturalistic studies mean that people are studied within their natural settings as opposed to being removed and studied in a sterile environment, like a laboratory. In an effort to gather the unique perspectives of the Chickasaw people, this study was conducted on sovereign land and among members of the tribal culture. In collecting data about a group or culture that has experienced oppression, it was my desire to see a deeper understanding of how the Chickasaws coped with this cultural phenomenon, and to do this it was necessary to go to their homes and communities.

Data Collection Procedures

There were a number of data gathering methods that were used to gather the information for this study. However, the primary methods were the same as for any qualitative study: Participant observation and interviewing.

Participant observation was used and included a variety of ways to gather data, including observations at cultural and community events, the use of field notes for capturing authentic dialogue, photographs, audio and visual recordings, attending special events hosted on the Chickasaw Tribal grounds, as well as visiting the tribal homelands in the state of Mississippi. The Chickasaw Nation hosts a multitude of cultural events that could be part of a study such as this. One cultural event included the Chickasaw Annual Day festival held each year in October in Tishomingo, Oklahoma. During this event, Chickasaws, other Native Americans, and neighboring communities come together to participate in special activities to honor the Chickasaw people and their culture. This event is just one of the many hosted by the Chickasaws.

It was also very beneficial to attend other community events hosted by the Chickasaw Nation, such as traditional dances at our the Chickasaw grounds – Kullihoma; a tribal gathering place in which the on-going traditional activities, such as cultural dancing, games, arts and crafts, traditional meals, cultural singing events, etc. are held. The Chickasaw Cultural Center was another venue where observations took place, allowing the interaction and viewing of unique cultural demonstrations that are routinely performed. Other opportunities included

attending the regularly scheduled monthly tribal legislative meeting. At legislative meetings, all 13 tribal legislators are in attendance to discuss ongoing tribal business endeavors, to review tribal policies and revisions, and to discuss other issues that are deemed necessary with regard to the Chickasaw Nation and its people. During this event, I observed and gathered crucial information regarding interactions and relationships between the community, the Chickasaw people, and the Chickasaw Nation employees.

Another significant source of information was gathered during a visit to the Chickasaw tribal homelands in Tupelo, Mississippi. This trip to the homelands consisted of a five-day visit to historical areas and a hosted tour of the original Chickasaw tribal homelands. This opportunity proved to be a valuable opportunity. Research was conducted en route, through the interviewing of Chickasaw elders, Chickasaw employees, and tribal members. By attending these cultural events, a wealth of information was collected as I immersed myself into the culture.

What occurred during these experiences is what anthropologists call “participant observation.” Philips (1983) states:

This term, participant observation, means several things to anthropologists. It can refer roughly to the experience of living with the group of people one is studying...or it can refer to the investigator’s occupying a position in the social structure as a way of learning about it, which is the classic sense in which the phrase is used; and is sometimes used to refer more generally to the direct un-tampering observation of human interaction. (p. 14)

Using participant observation methods of data collection served as an excellent way to obtain information, especially when used with other forms of data collecting techniques. Philips (1983) suggests:

We continue to use a diversity of field research methods, each of which is particularly well suited for getting certain type of information. What is relevant here is that of the traditional means for gathering data, participant observation is best suited for studying face-to-face interaction. (p. 15)

Another important part of this study involved the personal interviewing. Some of the interviews were informal visits with members of the tribe, including family, friends, and acquaintances. However, formal interviewing also took place with high-ranking officials such as the current Governor of the Chickasaw Nation and the former Governor Emeritus, as well as Chickasaw elders, legislators, language experts, artists, archeologists, historians, and other notable individuals.

In relation to culture, and in order to gain authentic perspectives and views from the Chickasaw people, I used semi-structured interviews conducted on the Chickasaw Nation headquarters and Tribal grounds, as well as the Chickasaw Cultural Center, and in Chickasaw's private homes. The participants were all members of the Chickasaw Tribe (with the exception of one historian), and they had various degrees of history and knowledge of the Chickasaw people.

Thus, I used a combination of methods to collect the information needed in a qualitative research study. Along with participant interviews, data were collected through the use of audio and video recordings, pictures of participants and relevant

research sites, as well as historical photographs and video footage from historical sites that I visited and personally examined.

Because I am Chickasaw, personal reflection and discussion with family members was also included in relevant situations throughout the study. In this sense, an element of auto ethnography has been included in the research. This aspect has helped me gain a more personal connection and authentic understanding of how the devaluing of diversity has affected Native Americans, especially the Chickasaw community. Due to this study, I have had the opportunity to visit several Chickasaw tribal events, especially endearing was a special invitation to attend and participate in a Chickasaw Reburial and Repatriation ceremony.

Finally, as previously mentioned, I have paid careful attention to the use of terminology. For example, I use the term Native American and Indian interchangeably as this is common for Indian people to do when speaking of themselves or their Tribal heritage. The term American Indian is also a widely used term for some Native American tribes throughout the United States.

Data Analysis Methods

One method of data analysis that could be used in participant observation qualitative design study is the use of thematic analysis. In an ethnographic study, the investigator collects descriptions of behavior through observations, interviewing, documents, and artifacts (Creswell, 2005). For the purpose of both observing and interviewing, Creswell (2005) recommends the use of an interview

protocol. An interview protocol is a list or sequence of questions that enables a person to take notes during the interview about the responses of the interviewee. However, it may not always be useful to have a specific, predetermined interview. This can limit spontaneity, and it can sometimes be obvious or awkward when trying to find out what people are really thinking and feeling. Therefore, I was prepared to use both formal and informal interview questions during the project.

For formal interviews such as those with the Chickasaw governors, legislators, historians, and elders, I used an interview guideline with specific questions. Contact was made early to provide adequate time for the interviewees to arrange their schedules. I followed up by email to confirm interview dates, times, and locations. Using a formal interview protocol, I asked each interviewee the same basic questions. Many interviews were videotaped, all were tape-recorded, and three were conducted over the phone. If the conversation led to the telling of a personal story or a back-and-forth discussion, I let it go in its natural direction. At other times I asked if the participants could elaborate if I felt they needed more time.

For informal interviews, or “purposeful conversations,” such as those with family and acquaintances, I used a more conversational approach without a formal guideline. However, in every case I did begin the conversation by asking the same question: “Who are the Chickasaw people?” Many personal stories and information about my family, culture, community, and heritage came out during these conversations. I recall two distinct informal interviews. One was on the bus

when an interviewee became very emotional and had to stop talking for a moment while reminiscing about her grandmother. The other was a personal conversation with my mother on the trip to Mississippi as she shared a private story about her grandmother Brown. The story was very touching and one never before shared. Experiences like this helped make the research both authentic and meaningful.

I captured many of the conversations through field notes and recordings in my journal and computer. My desire was to stay engaged, not so much by directly participating in the conversation, but by making eye contact, actively listening, and only writing when necessary. After each interview was over, I made notes to follow-up or summarize.

After the data were gathered, they needed to be coded. Coding means reducing the data into manageable notations. These notations were easier to organize and categorize into common characteristics and/or themes. I continually coded my data into manageable notations in order to identify common characteristics and patterns.

After coding the data, I was able to compare these codes to identify consistent patterns as they emerged throughout data collection. I began to identify themes of the participants' thoughts and actions. These patterns helped answer my basic research questions, which were how the Chickasaws coped with the devaluing of diversity and what the role of education was.

Participants and Setting

In this study the participants were members of the Chickasaw Tribe, with varying degrees of history and knowledge of the Chickasaw people. The participants included Chickasaw Nation Tribal members ranging from age 18 to 85. Informal interviews were held with various Chickasaw members, including my mother, who is a Tribal elder, a grandfather and his grandson on the trip to Mississippi, and two Chickasaw women also on the bus. Other informal interviews occurred in our homelands while standing on the grounds where our ancestors once lived. Another example included a conversation with two of the few remaining fluent Chickasaw speakers. After a lengthy discussion in the Chickasaw language, they explained what they had said in order to include me. A final example involved the conversations that occurred with Kirk Perry, his son Jason, and one of our tribal elders, Stanley Smith, while driving to Lebanon, Oklahoma, on our way to a Chickasaw Reburial ceremony.

In addition to many informal observations and interviews, I conducted formal interviews with 25 Chickasaw citizens from various locations within the Chickasaw tribal service area. A semi-structured format was used that included a short series of questions relating to the history and experiences of the participants and to the role of education, broadly defined, in helping the Chickasaw people cope with the devaluing of diversity. Questions relating to the future of the Chickasaw tribe were also included. The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of the following six questions:

1. Who are the Chickasaw people?
2. How do the Chickasaws know what they know?
3. What makes us (the Chickasaws) unique, and why?
4. How have we changed as a people, and what are your thoughts about that?
5. What does the future hold for us as a tribe?
6. What lessons can you, as a Chickasaw, share with others?

These formal interviews were conducted in a variety of settings. For example, Governor Overton James, the former Governor of the Chickasaw Nation, asked to be interviewed at his home in Ada. Current Governor Bill Anoatubby was interviewed in his office at the Chickasaw Nation Headquarters in Ada. Another interview involved traveling to Emet, Oklahoma to meet Glenda Galvan, our Chickasaw storyteller, at the Chickasaw White House. This interview took place outdoors on the wraparound porch. I videotaped a conversation between Glenda and my mother as they sat in wicker chairs and reminisced about the Chickasaw people, their respective families, and their many years working for the Chickasaw Nation. Several other interviews also took place in unique and historical locations determined by the participants (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Map designating where the interviews took place.

Again, the overall study was guided by two overarching research questions. Although these questions guided the study, they were not directly asked of the participants. Instead they were held in my mind as I let each situation determine how I wished to proceed. The two research questions were as follows:

1. How have the Chickasaw people coped with the devaluing of diversity?
2. What is the role of education, broadly defined, either as part of the problem or part of the solution?

Confidence and Trustworthiness

When conducting ethnographic research, it is important to try to accurately communicate the perspectives of the people one is studying. Although qualitative researchers do not normally use terms like validity and reliability, they still believe it is important to accurately represent their findings in order to ensure the greatest possible confidence, or trustworthiness, in the study. Ethnographers have discussed the difference between emic perspectives and etic perspectives. Smith (1987) describes an emic perspective as data expressed in the categories and meanings of the subjects or participants. On the other hand, an etic perspective is “data expressed in the researcher’s language or the categories of some theory” (p. 174).

In this study, I used both emic and etic perspectives. I tried to understand and present as much of the etic perspective as possible, obtaining data through interviews with Chickasaws conducted in their natural settings. Such settings included our tribal homelands, our traditional grounds, people’s homes, our cultural center and cultural events, historical landmarks, and several of our workplaces. I incorporated historical data obtained from tribal historians and representatives, various Chickasaw people, and my own research and personal insights regarding our history and culture.

I also presented emic data based on personal narratives, perspectives, and conclusions reflecting my personal views, including family stories, private memories, and self-reflections. I presented sections translated into the Chickasaw

language to express my understanding of the importance of language as part of my cultural identity and its critical impact to our survival as a people.

As a researcher studying her own culture, my perspectives are both etic and emic. To a certain extent I have tried to maintain somewhat of a distance—what Wilson (1977) calls “disciplined subjectivity,” I also analyzed my findings through scholarly lenses and categories presented in the literature. Yet, many of the ideas and feelings I express will be those of an insider. It would not be possible for me to separate myself from the community to which I belong.

In order to provide greater confidence that the perspectives are as accurate as possible, the qualitative researcher must carefully consider the ways in which data are collected, the nature of the settings, the selection of participants, and the possible impact of data collection upon the individuals and groups being studied. Smith (1987) states:

Qualitative research is based on the notion of context sensitivity. What sets qualitative research apart most clearly from other forms of research is the belief that the particular physical, historical, material, and social environment in which people find themselves has a great bearing on what they think and how they act. Acts must be interpreted by drawing on those larger contexts... (M)ost importantly, the researcher must personally become situated in the subject’s natural setting and study, firsthand and over a prolonged time, the objects of interest and the various contextual features that influence it. This introduces notions about “personhood” of

the qualitative researcher and what roles and relationships are formed between the researcher and subject. (p. 175)

I made a special effort to conduct each observation and interview in a way that would be the most comfortable and natural for the people involved. I allowed adequate time for planning the interviews and gave participants opportunities to choose a meeting place, date, and time that worked best for them. We met after work hours, on weekends, in their homes, and in whatever location was most convenient for them. I have known many of the participants for a long time; however, we have not known each other within the context of a study. It was my goal to establish good relationships so that each interview could be conducted in a safe and relaxed environment.

Finally, as a Native American, specifically a Chickasaw, it was important that this study serve as a means of building good relationships within my cultural group as well as a way of gather crucial details about my Chickasaw heritage. It has been extremely important that I make every effort to respect the Chickasaw Nation, the community, and the people themselves. Cultural sensitivity is of utmost importance. Therefore, I have tried to take every opportunity to observe, interact, and participate in ways that are courteous and respectful to the Tribe and its traditions.

Interviews were conducted with various members of the Chickasaw Tribe. Some of these individuals have prominent roles within the community, including Chickasaw leaders, tribal representatives, Chickasaw elders and cultural experts, to

name just a few. Yet, it was important to gather the perspectives of other Chickasaws as well, since the majority of the Tribe, like any community, lives its lives without special recognition. At the end of the study I would want to consider the implications for all Chickasaws, as well as well as for other societies who may experience similar social, cultural, and educational challenges.

CHAPTER (OSHTA) FOUR

FINDINGS

“We know who we are—we know that we are Chickasaw first.” *Harold Stick*

The Chickasaws are an ancient people. My ancestors were removed from our Mississippi homelands in 1837 and “relocated” in Oklahoma. Our tribal boundaries currently include 13 counties in the South Central areas of Oklahoma where some 31,000 thousand Chickasaws still reside today. Of these 31,000 people, 149 full-blood Chickasaws remain, with only 75 fluent Chickasaw speakers left to pass on our language. I chose to gather data in the vicinity of the Chickasaw Nation located in Ada, Oklahoma because the vast majority of Chickasaws live and work in close proximity to the Headquarters.

I collected data through personal interviews, during cultural events and ceremonies, and while traveling to Mississippi to visit the Chickasaw Tribal Homelands. Through this study, I have gathered the perspectives of many Chickasaw people, including notable officials, recent acquaintances, personal friends, and family members. These perspectives help explain how we have coped with the challenges we have faced, both past and present.

The purpose of this study was to seek a better understanding of how the Chickasaw people have coped with the devaluing diversity in America, and to learn about the role of education, broadly defined, either as part of the problem or part of the solution. The interview questions and participant observations were designed

to gather the perspectives of one group, the Chickasaws, but the study was also intended to consider implications for education in general and for society at large.

In this chapter I will discuss how the Chickasaw people have coped with the devaluing of diversity. The findings suggest that *remembering*, *connecting* and *persevering* have been essential in order for the Chickasaws to survive—and even to thrive—as a people and as a Nation. Language and education have also played vital roles. Therefore, I will also discuss the relationships between language and identity, and address formal and informal education in relation to existing problems and possible solutions.

Remembering

Chikashasha' alhiha' iyaakni' sipokni' hoohilhabilli' yanatook.
“The Chickasaw people danced all the time in the homelands.”

Over all the Chickasaw natural and social universe was a supreme being—Aba'binili—a composite force consisting of the Four Beloved Things Above, which were the Sun, Clouds, Clear Sky, and He that lives in the Clear Sky. This composite force made all men out of the dust of mother earth. Its earthly agents performed various creative and service functions useful to the Chickasaws. The crawfish brought up earth from the bottom of the “universal watery waste” and formed the earth. Other creatures produced light, darkness, mountains, and forests. That part of the composite force closest to the Chickasaws was the Sun, the great holy fire above. It was represented in each town by a sacred fire. Guardian priests watched over this fire and dispensed coals for household fires. This had the effect of bringing the composite force into each home. (Chickasaw Creation Story, described by Gibson, 1971, p. 9)

Toompalli' means “summer” in Chickasaw. In the summer of 2011, I traveled with my mother and several other Chickasaws and their families and friends to our original homelands in Tupelo, Mississippi. During this five-day

journey I interacted with other Chickasaws, conducted valuable interviews, and ultimately reconnected with my culture and heritage. During the trip we also visited several historical sites. I used these opportunities to visit with many Chickasaws on a personal one-on-one basis. Each individual seemed grateful to be traveling to the homelands and, like me, they were anxious to reconnect with their past. Although I did not fully realize it at the time, it is significant that I began the study with this trip back to Mississippi. It was not only a geographical trip, but also a trip back in time. Because it was a trip back in time, it helped us remember who we are.

In order to understand the unique perspectives of the Chickasaw people, I began with a single question: Who are the Chickasaw people? The discussions that resulted from this question were some of the most interesting and genuine conversations I experienced during the entire study. However, in an effort to gain deeper personal understanding, it was also important for me, as a Chickasaw, to use other approaches and to personally participate in as many activities and events as I could. An important part of my own remembering was this trip to Mississippi. In *The Chickasaws*, Gibson (1971) describes our historical homelands:

The early Chickasaw domain extended from the Tennessee Cumberland divide north to the Ohio River and west to the Mississippi River, astride western Kentucky and Tennessee and northern Alabama and Mississippi. Chickasaws used most of this vast province as hunting range. Their first settlements east of the Mississippi River, according to tribal legend, were

situated near the Tennessee River in Madison County, Alabama, at the original Chickasaw Old Fields. In later times the tribe relocated Chickasaw Old Fields in northeastern Mississippi near the headwaters of the Tombigbee River where their settlements remained concentrated until the federal government removed the tribe to Indian Territory during the 1830s.

(p. 6)

Gibson also describes earlier recorded observations of the Chickasaw people, referring to them as the “Spartans of the lower Mississippi valley.” He notes:

Early visitors described Chickasaw warriors as “tall, well-built people,”...their actions exhibiting a superior and independent air. The women and older men wore their hair long. The warrior hairstyle was to shave the sides of the head, leaving a roach or crest which the wearer soaked in bear grease....John Adair, long-time trader among the Chickasaws and their chief advocate, was struck by the warriors’ strength and endurance. He described them as exceedingly swift of foot: “In a long chase they will stretch away, through the rough woods, by the bare track, for two or three hundred miles in pursuit of a flying enemy”....Europeans described Chickasaw women as “beautiful and clean.” (p. 7)

To some, this might suggest a fairly romanticized portrayal of a nation of Indian people. However, Chickasaws believe such descriptions of early encounters have captured one of our most powerful characteristics—the ability and fortitude of

the Chickasaw tribe to remain proud and dignified even in the midst of incredible adversity. This pride and dignity in the face of adversity continued to define our culture for generations to come.

The Chickasaws, like other Native tribes, have been described in history books and scholarly articles based on personal accounts recoded in the journals of Europeans dating from the very first encounters. John Adair's account of the Chickasaw people provides much of the official written history available today. His account was based on his personal experiences among our people.

However, from the perspectives of the Chickasaws, written accounts provided by Europeans cannot tell the whole story of who we are or what we think. From our perspective, almost everything that is known and remembered about us has been passed down from generation to generation, almost exclusively through the telling and retelling of stories. Kirk Perry expressed his view:

I have been fortunate to be around a lot of groups of people, through gatherings or family reunions, or funerals. We will sit and talk with them, hear the stories. And when they get wound up, there are hundreds of wonderful stories—most of those will be things that you will never hear spoken again. That is why I say record them and document them in some way....Writing about your own culture is something that *you* can understand. So, if I say I am going to wait for a historian to write that for me, it cannot come out true to what the feeling of the person is or what the culture of the person is. The culture itself is so hard to explain. But if you

are a *member* of it or if *you* are a part of it *you can understand it* (emphasis mine).

Some of our stories depict historical accounts and knowledge from a Chickasaw’s perspective, shared for generations among our people. The Creation story referenced above is an example. Another example is the migration legend depicting our journey to the original homelands in Mississippi. In an interview held at the Chickasaw Cultural Center, Amanda Cobb-Greetham, a Tribal historian, told me that “our migration story is really one of the first things that I think helps identify us not just as people, but specifically *as the Chickasaw people*.”⁷ Cobb-Greetham describes the story as follows:

There were two brothers—Chiksa and Chahta. The two brothers were leading the people, and every night they would plant a pole in the ground—a *sacred pole*. Whatever way in the morning that it was leaning—that was the direction they would travel. The people were also guarded by *Ofi'tohbi'ishto*—the big White dog as they called it. And as they traveled, at one point they came to a big river and the pole was still leaning east, so they continued on across the river and the dog was not able to continue with them past that point. They continued on past the river, and we take that today to be the Mississippi River, based on our homelands. After they crossed the river and were east, they planted the pole again. One morning the pole was shaking like crazy and the brother Chahta said that it was straight and that was where they were meant to stay. But the brother Chiksa said, “No that is not where we are meant to stay because it is still leaning and we still have to continue to move forward”. There was such a rift that the people sided and some stayed with Chahta, and some stayed with Chiksa, and that was really the moment in our earlier story that tells us that we went from being *the people* to the *people who left*. That was the Chickasaw legend.

During this conversation Amanda modeled our oral tradition, sharing this famous story in her own words, one Chickasaw woman to another Chickasaw

⁷ Dr. Amanda Cobb-Greetham is a highly respected Chickasaw woman and Tribal historian.

woman. This retelling has helped me remember my past. In keeping with our tradition, it now becomes my responsibility to share with my children (and others), to help them remember our past, and to encourage them to continue to pass it on as well.

Although the importance of remembering was demonstrated many times during the trip to Mississippi, remembering was also emphasized throughout the study. In fact, because of the nature of my research questions, almost every interview and experience in Mississippi and Oklahoma supported the value of remembering as a way of coping with the devaluing of diversity.

As stated earlier, my main interview approach was to ask open-ended questions in search of commonalities. However, I did not want my interviews to consist only of formal questions and answers, as this would not have been consistent with our traditions and storytelling practices. Therefore, I tried to relax so we could have a normal conversation. On many occasions our conversations evolved and stories were included in several of the responses provided by the participants.

I received many different responses, and each perspective derived from the individuals' own cultural identities and the unique knowledge they held regarding their history and culture. Even those who were not officially considered Chickasaw historians or authors seemed to take pride in knowing different aspects of their culture and heritage, even if only related to their direct family histories. Many of the participants talked about our past, including the lands from which we had come.

Brian Campbell was selected as a potential interviewee because of his long history of researching and studying his Chickasaw heritage. The interview took place at the Chickasaw Cultural Center located in Sulphur, Oklahoma, and Brian came dressed in his traditional Chickasaw regalia. It was evident that Brian took great pride in his studies. I began the interview by posing the question: Who are the Chickasaw people? Brian responded:

The Chickasaw Nation has always existed since pre-recorded history. We are a people who came from, according to our legend—the land of the setting sun. We moved eastward according to our migration legend to the area of Mississippi and the eastern part of the United States, where we prospered as a people. During that time in Mississippi, we interacted with a lot of Nations—Spain, France, and England. We played an important part of the history of the formation of this country and worked with the folks during the American Revolution. Then the American expansion westward forced us to move to Oklahoma, where we also restarted and prospered again...As a people, we always held the unconquered spirit and continue that today.

This interview was important to me because Brian is someone I have known and worked with for years. Like me, he has traced his Chickasaw ancestral connections back to the original Dawes Rolls. Brian has spent years researching our people. He is a collector of arts and artifacts, he is intrigued with our connections to the earth, and he is an avid hunter.

Another knowledgeable Chickasaw, Jeannie Barbour, is a Tribal historian and artist. When asked, “Who are the Chickasaw people?” Jeannie replied as follows:

We are resilient, having survived as a Nation and culture despite repeated attempts by the federal government to assimilate our people into mainstream society and (to) abolish tribal sovereignty. We are family-based, with remnants of the old matrilineal structures still in place in the Chickasaw social order. We are progressive and inclusive when it comes to government—to government relationships and economic development. We honor the ancient belief that everyone is responsible for everyone else in the tribe, as evidenced by our history of community involvement and current dedication to social programming.

As a Chickasaw, I understood Brian’s and Jeannie’s desire to learn about their Tribe. However, I was also intrigued by those who are not Chickasaw by blood yet who are interested in our culture. I met one such individual in Norman, Oklahoma during the Chickasaw Hall of Fame Banquet in 2011. Brad Lieb is an archeologist who lives and works as our Tribal historian in Tupelo, Mississippi.⁸ I asked Brad “Who are the Chickasaw people?” He responded as follows:

There are many levels to that question. To me the Chickasaw people are both a living group of people and a historical group of people who existed as a tribe here in Mississippi and the New South for centuries prior to the pre-historical period. Being an archeologist, we try to trace tribal identities

⁸ Dr. Lieb is considered a respected authority on Chickasaw history.

back into the depths of time. It is notoriously difficult, frankly, to do that because the tribal territories shifted a little bit and there were migrations. Some of these migrations could be considered on the same scale as the tragic removal of 1830s. In pre-contact, pre-historical times—not to insinuate that native peoples did not have a history, but that the unwritten was relatively inaccessible, other than through oral tradition, which was not accessible to everybody.

Lieb continued his description of what he knew about the Tribe:

The Chickasaw people are uniquely famous for being especially militant during the early historic period. But to me the Chickasaw people who come close to mind first would be the historic period of Chickasaw people who resided around Tupelo, Mississippi in the Black Belt prairie. Many of the Chickasaw historical sites still exist today, such as their villages, their graves, etc. That is part of what I do. It is to locate those sites and try to preserve them and learn from them for the benefit of Chickasaw people today.

As I listened to Lieb's description, I had the impression that I was encountering a well-informed documentary in a professional journal. The only difference was instead of reading a detailed article or watching a rich documentary film, I was listening first-hand to the author and recording what I heard. When I asked why he chose to study the Chickasaws, Brad replied:

I grew up in a rural area of Mississippi on an abandoned farm, and I had no playmates, so I would just wander by myself in the woods. I found what I knew was an old road, but I did not know what it was at the time. I found out it was the original Natchez Trace road, also known as the Chickasaw highway, or the Chickasaw Trace, before it was the Natchez Trace. So I started learning...the stories of the Indians, the outlaws, and the settlers on the Natchez Trace. It was all very fascinating to me. I went to Mississippi State University and majored in anthropology and archeology. My first summer, I received a phone call from the City of Tupelo in Mississippi. There was a new construction project located on a hill in Tupelo, what is called Town Creek today, where a cancer research center and hospital was going to be built. If you look at older maps, it is called Chickasaw Old Town Creek. They had bulldozed up remains on the hilltop, so the Mississippi Department of Anthropology organized an agreement with the Chickasaw Nation and the hospital to hand-excavate the site to preserve and salvage everything we could. We realized these remains would need to be reburied with dignity at a monument as close to possible (to where) they were originally buried. I met Governor Annotubby through that Repatriation ceremony in 1997. It was then that I realized there were actual living people, and these were their ancestors. A lot of archeologists discount the living people and are just interested in the bones and the past. I learned early on that these were living people and these bones were their

ancestors. I realized this was something that was very important to them. There is really no more appropriate audience that you could work for than the actual people. Although I do not have any pretensions, I think of myself as an adopted Chickasaw.

One of the most intriguing descriptions of our culture was provided by Harold Stick, a full-blood Chickasaw, from Ada Oklahoma. Harold is a skilled artisan. His pieces are valuable to our Tribe because they represent our heritage. He takes great pride in creating beautiful work that reflects our culture, and he often refuses to sell his art for profit. Instead, he chooses to share his work as traditional gifts. However, Harold's art is not his only gift. His knowledge also contains valuable information:

Being Chickasaw makes us unique because of our oral history with our family, our church, and our faith. We have a "closeness" because we are all related. We can identify with family members because we grew up knowing our relatives, and it helped reinforce us. Being part of the Tribe, you know that you are Chickasaw. We don't have to say it—you just know it. We can learn through our life experiences, and we can learn from our past. Not so much who we are—we know who we are—we know that we are Chickasaw first.

I appreciated Harold's description of being "Chickasaw first" because my own close family and strong faith have always been an important part of my life. However, unfortunately I could not relate in the same ways to my Chickasaw

heritage. I grew up in rural Oklahoma, and I was raised for the most part in a non-Indian community. My school had a low population of Indian students, and I myself am considered mixed-blood. I am one-half Chickasaw and one-half White. While growing up, I was not familiar with the Chickasaw culture, nor could I speak the Chickasaw language.

Fortunately, my mother, Dean McManus, a Chickasaw elder, was one of the participants on the trip to Mississippi. During the trip we had a unique opportunity to discuss our past. As previously noted, our family had lost our tribal language when Great Grandmother Brown decided to exclude Chickasaw to help her children and grandchildren gain greater acceptance by assimilating into modern society.⁹

I wanted to know more about my mother, so I asked her to share some of her earliest memories to help me understand her situation at the time. She told me that it was an unsettling period during the 1940s and 1950s when she was growing up in Oklahoma. Many Indian families were poor and had limited opportunities for jobs and education. My mother said that the times were tough and that her family was poor, but she said she did not realize she was poor. She remembered walking a long distance to school, not having enough money to buy lunch, and the feeling of being hungry. She recalled long rides with her family to pick cotton for money, and she acknowledged quitting school at a very young age in order to get a job to help the family.

⁹ The interviews confirmed that my family was not alone in this.

Although my mother was willing to reflect on the hard times, she was also quick to mention the good times. She shared happy recollections of her younger life with her father, mother, and siblings. She remembered times when the whole family would gather in their small front room and huddle together to listen to the radio. They liked to listen to a particular comedian, and she loved the way her father would laugh.

My mother also shared a story about her grandmother, my great grandmother Brown, and recalled loving her dearly. She described how Great Grandmother Brown would buy salve mother to sell to make extra money, but that my great grandmother would always buy all the salve back from her and then they would go out and get ice cream together. These were stories my mother had never shared with me before.

Once, before beginning this research, I had decided to ask my mother similar questions about her younger life. She told me a touching story that brought tears to my eyes. Afterwards I was a bit frustrated and asked, “Why have you not shared this story with me before?” She was quiet for a moment and then replied, “Well, I guess because you have never asked me.” I was stunned. Why had I never asked my mother about her life? I realized in that moment that this is the way family stories and histories are lost.

With this lesson in mind, I took the opportunity on our ride to Mississippi to ask my mother the same question: “Who are the Chickasaw people?” My mother replied as follows:

We are people trying to keep our culture alive, because as a people, we are strong, and that has been shown in the past. We have been able to modernize to transition into the world we are living in today, but we are still keeping our culture alive. For the future, and together, we can do whatever we set our minds to do.

During most of my younger life, my mother worked for the Chickasaw Nation. When I was twelve, my youngest sister was born and left this world all in the span of 21 days. My parents were distraught. My mother's doctor convinced her to search for something outside the home that might occupy her time and help her adjust to such a loss. My mother had been a housewife from an early age, and her formal education ended in the eighth grade. Now, at the age of 35, having lost a child, she worked hard to earn her General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and immediately applied for a job with the Chickasaw Nation. I believe my mother's path was to devote the rest of her life not just to her own immediate family, but also to her larger Chickasaw family. She spent the next 24 years serving the Tribe in various capacities, and an additional ten years as a Chickasaw Legislator. She is still an active and honored member of the Chickasaw Tribe, and it seems clear that her grandmother, Great Grandmother Brown, contributed to my mother's path as well.

In conducting this study, I have often pondered why my great grandmother decided to exclude Chickasaw language and culture in the raising of her family, and each time I return to the same conclusion. I can only believe that she must

have wanted a better life for her family, and that this was the best way she knew to achieve those goals. Great Grandmother Brown must surely have longed for easier times, and this decision was her way to help her family survive in a changing world. Now I must ask myself the same questions. How can I help *my* family in our changing world today? I do not think I can help my children remember who *they* are unless I first learn about my *own* culture and language. However, although my answers may be different than the ones my great grandmother found, I do not think there is any difference at all in the love and concern that led each of us to do what we thought was best for our families.

Another person who remembers his Chickasaw heritage is Josh Hinson. Josh is the Cultural Director of Language for the Chickasaw Nation, and he is considered one of our fluent Chickasaw speakers. When asked who are the Chickasaw, Josh replied:

As Chickasaw people, we are really diverse, but we share commonalities. I think you could, in its most expansive sense, say a Chickasaw person is any person that descends from our ancestors and that includes people who are not citizens...In my opinion, a Chickasaw is someone who is of Chickasaw descent, a member of the community in its most expansive sense, whether you live in Ada, London, Tishomingo, California, wherever. In my mind, what do I feel is the core of the community? I am going to think about the old folks who speak their language, gather food, still hunt and that is a very small percentage in today's time. When I think of the people who have

sustained this community, I think of the ancestors that made their way here, and kept their Indian identity, kept their language, and their way of life.

Those people who still manage to do that, they are the heart of the community. Of course, I am not excluding the others, but with whom do all the others turn to when they need to learn? For me, I will go to the traditional speakers every time. There is a strong distinction in my mind between a Native speaker and the kinds of knowledge they impart on me—it is just *different knowledge* (emphasis mine).

Remembering has been an essential way in which the Chickasaw people have tried to cope with the devaluing of diversity experienced throughout our history. When a group of people is removed from its homelands and forced to learn a new language, it is difficult to remember who you are. This is why the Chickasaw people will always remember. This is why we refuse to forget.

Connecting

Hoowihaat alakma Chikashsha alhihaat hooihilhani'took.
“After Removal the Chickasaw people could still dance.”

Remembering is one way the Chickasaw people have coped with the devaluing of diversity. Another way we have coped with this problem is through connecting. Of course, remembering and connecting are very closely related. Remembering is a way of connecting with the past.

Some of our most important connections are those that exist between members of a family or tribe. During the trip to Mississippi I sat beside Lynie

Richardson, a skilled artisan who makes dresses, among other things. When asked “Who are the Chickasaw people?” Lynie replied as follows: “We are Chickasaw now. That is how it is. We are unique because we just love different, and our family ties bind us together”. I was intrigued by Lynie’s response, particularly her statement that we “love different.” I am still pondering what she meant, but perhaps it is not necessary or even possible to interpret every statement. Lynie certainly knew what it meant to her.

One day on the bus, Lynie taught another woman, Doretta Sellers, the skill of beading a traditional Chickasaw necklace. It was amazing to watch these two friends, working in unison on a moving bus, as Lynie, the teacher (*holissopisachi*) explained to Doretta, the student (*hollisapisa*) how to count the *ksops*, when to thread them, and how to tie the necklace. As the *hollisapisa* watched and mimicked her *holissopisachi*, a timeless cultural lesson unfolded before my eyes. Today this might be considered an example of “informal” education. It did not occur in a schoolroom, and there were no textbooks, chalkboards, or standardized tests. Yet, I believe this kind of teaching and learning has been, and continues to be, essential to the survival not only of our culture but of cultural diversity in general.

Nanna anoliamanoli means “tell me a story.” In addition to informal cultural teaching and learning, storytelling is another way Native Americans connect with one another, with their past, and with the earth. I have already shared stories involving our creation, migration, and removal. These stories represent

important links with each other as well as our past. Without these links, our people would not know nearly as much about our tribe when it was a “Tribe.”

Chickasaws, like other Native Americans, use storytelling methods to continue the flow of our history and culture, sharing our Tribal identity between generations. Thus, storytelling is another way we remain connected.

In addition to storytelling, we also remain connected through social and cultural activities. Every *hashtola*’ *’ammo*’*na*, in late September or early October, the Chickasaw Nation hosts an annual event at the historic capital of Tishomingo, Oklahoma. The Chickasaw Festival and Annual Meeting are open to the public and showcase numerous historical traditions. Many Indians and non-Indians attend from various areas, including other parts of the world.

In October of 2011, my twin teenage daughters and I attended the festival. Unlike previous years, on this occasion I prepared to attend using a “new” perspective—my *own*, as a Chickasaw citizen. My mission was to observe, participate, and record anything that might assist with the study, and I enlisted my daughters’ assistance. Using my personal video camera as well as our I-phones, my daughters and I recorded a variety of events, including several short interviews, stomp dances, art exhibits, craft-making demonstrations, local scenery and buildings, the parade, and people out on their porches and sitting in their yards simply enjoying the day (Figure 5).



Figure 5. A man enjoying the outdoors during the Chickasaw Festival in Tishomingo.

This year I had also decided, possibly to my daughters' embarrassment, that it was going to be my time to "dance." So when the dancers welcomed the crowd, I joined the "friendship dance" (Figure 6) while my daughters discreetly filmed away.

We later ran into Jeremy Wallace, a Chickasaw dancer, and his wife, Ashley, who had showcased their beautiful artwork. Jeremy was dressed in

traditional Chickasaw warrior attire, and Ashley was clad in a traditional Chickasaw dress. As Jeremy walked me through the process of preparing for a dance, it was evident how connected he was to his heritage. He said, “I have to be the person that needs to step out of the circle and tell the next generation.



Figure 6. Dancing at the Chickasaw Festival and Annual Meeting in Tishomingo, 2011.

This is what we have to do as a Chickasaw/Choctaw people. We have to share our stories to keep our culture alive.”

Although storytelling and cultural events are important ways of connecting, the most common approach might simply be the everyday conversations we have with our families and friends. During the trip to Mississippi, I noticed that Harold and his 16 year-old grandson, Michael, frequently separated themselves from the

rest of the group. Harold and his grandson were always the last to get off the bus when it stopped at a monument or historical site and the majority rushed to glimpse the scenery. They could be seen in the distance slowly walking side by side, the grandfather, or *Imafo 'si'*, talking and the *ipok* listening. Later Harold explained, “We pass along bits and pieces along the way. For grandparents, the opportunities come along when we are walking and talking with the kids.”

Months later, in Oklahoma, Governor Anoatubby expressed an almost identical view: “What I try to do is pass it along to my kids and my grandchildren. They are not always eager to listen, so you just give them little tidbits at a time.” During our interview, the Governor reflected on his own experience as a child, acknowledging the value of stories as a means of connecting with each other and remembering the past:

The stories were not just made up stories. There were some that were more rhetorical in nature than they were factual, but the actual history of our tribe and what was known about it was passed along from one generation to the next. Recorded history brought us the written word, perhaps captured some of our history of what we know, and had largely replaced a lot of that oral history that we had passed along. However, it still exists, particularly in families. I remember with my family, we would sit on the front porch at my grandmother and grandfather’s place. There would be a lot of talk and telling stories, stories about things that happened. I know as a child I was just totally intrigued by that, and I remember those stories. It is my job now

to pass that along to my children and grandchildren. The family history connects one family to another and what was happening at the time, so we know what we know because it has been passed to us in one form or another.¹⁰

Yet another way in which we connect with each other as well as our past is through formal rituals and ceremonies. For example, Chickasaws show extreme respect in remembering our ancestors. This is important enough that a Department was established within the Chickasaw Nation to ensure that any deceased Chickasaw be buried with the utmost dignity. In some cases, our ancestors are reburied during a Tribal Reburial, or Repatriation Ceremony. During the study I attended a Chickasaw Tribal Reburial with Kirk Perry, the Administrator of the Division of Policies and Standards for the Chickasaw Nation.

Dressed in traditional Chickasaw attire, we set out early one morning in a small convoy headed for Lebanon, Oklahoma. During the two-hour trip, Kirk and I had an excellent opportunity to talk about Chickasaw history. I was happy to be able to visit with a well-known Tribal historian, and I eagerly listened as he discussed various aspects of our history and culture, ranging from pre-European times to the Chickasaw Removal to the present day. As we proceeded toward our destination, I excitedly asked numerous questions.

¹⁰ I was both excited and nervous when I received confirmation of my interview with Governor Anoatubby. The Governor has been our “Minko” since 1987. He is highly respected within our Nation and beyond, and he has been a successful leader and friend to the Chickasaw people. This was an opportunity few experience. I felt a deep sense of responsibility to all Chickasaws to conduct the most authentic interview possible.

In the midst of the conversation, I was abruptly halted by Kirk's response. In retrospect, I realized what I had done. While quizzing Kirk about the Chickasaw people, I repeatedly asked him about "*them*." Finally he corrected me: "You mean '*we!*'" Kirk had noticed that I was continually referring to the Chickasaw people as them rather than we. He expected me, as Chickasaw too (*Chickasha sayá*'), to associate myself as such. From then on I made a point of including myself, using the word "we" instead of "they" when referring to ancient or present-day Chickasaw culture.

We arrived at the site a few minutes before dawn. All vehicles, including the one carrying the bones of our Chickasaw ancestors, made their access through the pastureland to a secluded area in the back corner of the property alongside an old cemetery. As we made our way to the burial location, I noticed a large mound of fresh dirt behind a group of trees. Beside it was a large, rectangular grave with dirt steps leading down into the grave.

As we gathered in a circle, Kirk explained the importance of the ceremony. One of the elders, Stanley Smith, led us in a Chickasaw prayer, and we sang a hymn in Chickasaw. Three men entered the grave, gently passing the beautifully constructed boxes of cedar wood into position. The women and the remaining men took turns dropping small handfuls of dirt into the graves in respect and remembrance. I felt peaceful and calm—a feeling of completion. The sense of connection I experienced that day as we cared for our ancestors will forever stay with me.

Thus, in addition to remembering, connecting has also been a vital way for the Chickasaw people to cope with the devaluing of diversity. These connections involve many activities, such as informal teaching and learning, storytelling, attending social gatherings and cultural events, and simply spending time and visiting together among family and friends. However, even remembering and connecting would not have been enough to preserve the Tribe. In addition to these things, we have also had to persevere.

Persevering

Alikchi' ishtalhihi' illika Chikashsha alhihaat hooaaissachitook hihaka
“When the last doctor died, the Chickasaw quit dancing for a while.”

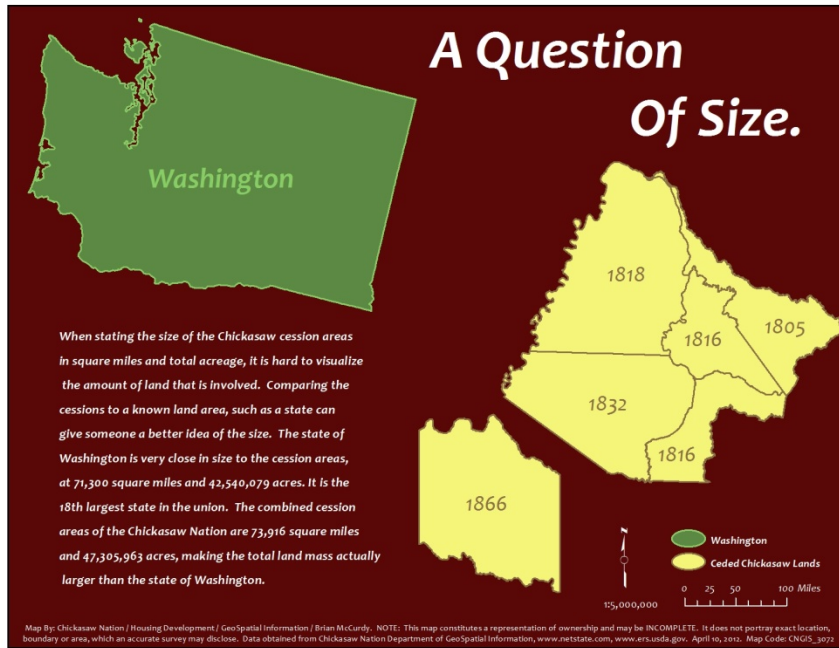
The Chickasaw people, like other Native American tribes, have had to fight in order to persevere. Ever since European contact, Indian Peoples have struggled to survive. We have had to develop the ability to persevere through numerous hardships. Although many held out against European expansion, eventually all were forced to adapt, move, or die. In 1832, the Chickasaw Tribe endured a great tragedy. The Tribe fought hard to delay Removal, but in the end they were forced to move as well. When the time ultimately came, our people reluctantly began the journey now called the Chickasaw Removal. In the book *Chickasaw Removal*, Paige, Bumpers, and Littlefield (2010), provide this description:

In May of 1830, a bitterly divided Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, which gave the president authority to negotiate the removal of tribes, who would exchange the lands they occupied for lands west of the Mississippi.

The Indian Removal Act had been the culmination of a decade of drastic change for Chickasaw society and was a portent of even more changes to come. In the wake of the act, the Chickasaw people faced the most demoralizing prospect yet—giving up their ancient homeland and moving to a new alien place. (p. 51)

In the early 1800s, through a numerous series of tribal land cessions and signed treaties, the Chickasaw people were removed from several states they already inhabited. The Chickasaws eventually ceded thousands of acres of their Tribal homelands to the United States Government. Today, Chickasaw reside within an area of thirteen counties in the South Central section of Oklahoma. This is approximately one tenth of the amount of land once occupied by the Tribe, which would have originally been about the size of the State of Washington (see Figure 7).¹¹

¹¹ Information provided by Brian McCurdy, GIS Technician for the Department of GeoSpatial Information with the Chickasaw Nation, Division of Housing and Tribal Development, Ada, Oklahoma, 2012.



Figures 7. Visual representation of the approximate size of Chickasaw lands ceded to the U.S. Government. (Courtesy Brian McCurdy, GIS Technician, Chickasaw Nation).

While in Mississippi, we visited an ancient site called *Tchichatala*, or *Chissa'Talla*, which is located near present day Cedarscape Village. Brad Lieb later described this site:

Tchichatala or Cedarscape (Update-2012: now called Chickasaw Preserve, or Chissa'Talla) is an 18th century Chickasaw village site that contains a bluff that runs 12 or 14 miles northwest and southeast up and down...the valley of Coonewah Creek. There were Chickasaws sites all along this valley, and Cedarscape was just one of them. Instead of living in a square town, round town, or a town around a plaza, the Chickasaws lived as linear neighbors that hugged the highest ground next to the valleys and the prairies. They chose these areas because they more than likely provided the

best soil for corn, beans, and squash. It was also the highest ground, which was important for looking out, because there were so many enemies during the European contact and historic period....We believe that Cedarscape was a site or a Chickasaw reserve during part of 1700s-1730s....This Chickasaw town telescoped in and contracted out for mutual defense in the 1720s and 1730s when they were under so much pressure from French, Choctaw and other French allied Indians. After that, they moved back out of this area. So Cedarscape was abandoned in 1735....They moved into the great prairie, on King's Creek, and Old Town Creek, which is even closer to Tupelo.¹²

Kirk Perry, Tribal historian and Administrator for the Division of Policies and Standards, described his experience when he made his initial visit to the homelands and stood at *Tchichatala*: “No description of the place can do it justice. You have to experience it for yourself.”

Kirk was right. For years, I had heard about the indescribable experience of visiting our homelands, and I was anxious to find out for myself. The day we arrived, it was pouring down rain. At one point, I stood at the top of a ridge, overlooking the wide-open expanse of open prairie. It was pouring rain, fog covered the valley, and the temperature was cold. But as soon as I stepped out to look over the ridge, a feeling of peace and warmth came over me, and I understood Kirk's comment—no description can do it justice.

¹² In 1994, Governor Bill Anoatubby, in a strong move to protect and preserve the Chickasaw heritage, succeeded in purchasing this important site for the Chickasaw Nation.

Reflecting on these experiences, I am beginning to develop a new appreciation for why my ancestors found it so difficult to leave their homelands. It helps me better understand why so many generations of Native Peoples, including the Chickasaws, have persevered even in the most difficult situations. Unfortunately, leaving our homelands was not the last time the Chickasaw People would have to fight in order to persevere.

As early as the 1930s and particularly between the 1940s and 1970s, the Chickasaws struggled to stay unified as a tribe. By this time we were spread throughout the thirteen counties in Oklahoma, and beyond. Some remember this as being a time of great unrest. However, others point out that we still had a common place where they could gather a group. Therefore, some refer to this time as a “dormant period” in the Tribe’s history. Although the Tribe may have been dormant and somewhat disconnected during this time, this was the impetus that led to the reconstruction period of the more formal government that we know today.

During this study I was honored to interview Governor Emeritus Overton James, the first appointed Governor of the Chickasaw Nation.¹³ Appointed by President John F. Kennedy, Governor James served from 1963 to 1987, and he is still a revered leader within the Nation today. Governor James was instrumental in the formation of the government of the Chickasaw Nation. He attributes much of his success to his mother, his service in the military, and his formal educational experience. When asked to describe the Chickasaws, Governor James answered

¹³ Governor James was the first person formally interviewed for this study.

that they “are a noble people” who have long “been noted for their bravery and courage.” He credits a portion of the success of the Chickasaw Nation to the long-term leadership within the Tribe, beginning with Governor Douglas Johnston in the late 1800s, continuing with his own service between 1963 and 1987, and continuing today with Governor Anoatubby.

Another distinct honor was to interview our current Governor, Bill Anoatubby, who was elected to office in 1987. Governor Anoatubby describes the Chickasaw people as adaptive, value-oriented, steadfast and proud, yet guarded and protective. He has carefully considered why the Chickasaw people must continue to persevere:

The Chickasaw people were known to be very protective of the tribe. They were warlike, very fierce in protecting our own, our way of life, and the territory we occupied. Our people have always looked back at the way “it used to be”, but it is like it is today because this is the way *we* want it to be....As a people we have been strong. We use the word “adaptive” because we have held on to our values in times of crisis. We came together when there were efforts to totally annihilate or take away what we hold dear to us. That is who we are—our values, our families, our connections that we have, and largely our right to decide what direction we want to go. Our steadfast nature, that is what has caused us to continue as a people, so that is really who we are. We have not given up. We hold on to being Chickasaw.

We hold on to our sovereignty. We hold on to being a Tribe and being the Chickasaw Nation.

It might be tempting to think that the struggles of Native Americans are a thing of the past, and that there is no longer a need for vigilance. However, the devaluing of diversity persists even today, and various tribes continue to struggle with education, health care, water and land rights, fishing rights, sovereignty, and many other factors. These facts are known to our people as well as our leaders.

Like Governor Anoatubby and numerous others, Jeannie Barbour draws strong connections between the past and the present:

Chickasaws...have always been known as fierce warriors. In early times, we were a society built on war. This was necessary because we were small in numbers compared to the vastly larger populations of neighboring tribes in our homelands. We have always fought for what we know is right and best for our people. Today we are warriors in the protection of sovereignty. Through tribal sovereignty we are able to provide the things most needed by Chickasaws to live a life of quality and abundance. We are ever-vigilant in recognizing and dealing with threats presented to our sovereignty on both a state and federal level.

Many Chickasaws attribute our survival and success to our strong leadership over the years, beginning with early leaders before and after European contact, during the Chickasaw Removal, extending through the period of self-determination, and continuing into the present day. This is certainly true.

However, it is also important to recognize the strength of the people, some of whom have been introduced in this study. A common thread has been the desire and ability of the Chickasaw people and our leaders to persevere in our efforts to protect our sovereignty, our community, and the long-term sustainability of our Nation.

The Role of Language

Himmita' alhihaat anokfillika hoottibaahiamakila micha hooyammitok
“The young people thought that they should start dancing again, so they did.”

Chikashsha nompá' isha nompolitaá? Chikashsha nompá' anompolili chokma ki'yo. This means “Do you speak Chickasaw? I do not speak Chickasaw very well.” If one were to randomly ask members of our Nation whether they speak Chickasaw, the most common answer would be “No, I do not speak Chickasaw at all”. In recent years, we have become increasingly concerned that our language is being lost. It is currently estimated that only 75 Chickasaws remain who can speak the language. However, even this estimate may be optimistic. A Chickasaw elder informed me that she believes there are only about 35 remaining Chickasaws who speak the language fluently.

Jay Keel, administrator of Youth and Family Services for the Chickasaw Nation, explains that we “were a people who were searching to regain our identity—not a people who had ever given up, but a people who had taken some...devastating blows”. A major reason for our loss of identity is that we were losing our language. One most devastating blows that can affect cultural identity is

the loss of language, because the language of a people is central to a people's identity (Anzaldua, (1999); Philips (1972); Takaki, (1989). According to the Chickasaw Nation Language Department:

The Chickasaw language was the primary language of the Chickasaw people for hundreds of years. Our language loss happened over time. Boarding schools, which prohibited Indian languages, were a significant part of this loss. Learning English was encouraged by some of our people because English was a necessary skill in negotiating with non-Indians. Chickasaw language was often discouraged, even in our own tribally run schools. The current state of Chikashsha numpa' (the Chickasaw language) is similar to that of most tribes in the United States. Less than twenty languages spoken by tribes in the U.S. are projected to survive another hundred years. A recent study indicated the Chickasaw Nation could lose its last fluent speaker in 20 to 30 years if nothing is done to revitalize the language.

During my formal interviews, I asked, "How do the Chickasaws know what they know?" Glenda Galvan, a gifted Chickasaw storyteller, responded as follows:

We know what we know through our *own* language....That's what (makes) us different from any other tribe. Just because we have darker skin, darker hair, (or a) cheek-line, that does not make you Chickasaw. None of that does. The language is the thing that (makes) us distinctly...Chickasaw. It is an important piece of our culture.

Based on a growing awareness of the problem, a number of Chickasaw people are independently striving to learn the language. The Chickasaw Nation has taken important steps to preserve and increase the spoken language. Currently, the Nation provides community language classes, sponsors language camps and clubs, and supports a Chickasaw Master-Apprentice Program. It also provides a Chickasaw language I-phone App so that anyone who is interested can learn essential words and phrases.

It was exciting to realize that two of my interviewees were among the few remaining Chickasaw language speakers. In fact, the voices of Jo Ann Ellis and Stanley Smith are those that are heard on the Chickasaw I-phone App. It was fascinating to watch these Chickasaw elders converse with ease and sophistication in their ancient tongue, and I found myself yearning to be able to do so as well.

The Role of Education

Chickasaw history tells us there was a time when the people stopped dancing. The culture was struggling to stay alive. Our traditions were disappearing, and the new Chickasaw family needed to choose between staying culturally connected and trying to assimilate into modern society. Education was an important factor. The decisions that were made would eventually require a critical analysis of the quality of education being provided to American Indians and even of what it meant to be “educated” in the first place.

After Removal, the Chickasaws found themselves striving to survive in a European society. They had to adapt in order to sustain their new environment. In order to adapt, they turned to education. The Chickasaws opened their own boarding school called the Lebanon Orphan's School. (See figure 8).

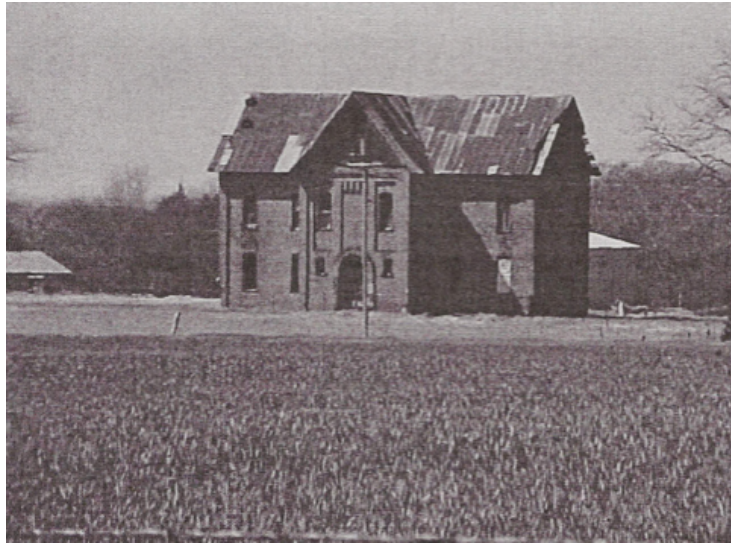


Figure 8. Lebanon Orphans School (originally Burney Institute). 1890s.

Although mission boarding schools played a major role in the formal education of Chickasaw children, the Tribe realized that in order to keep its culture alive, it would be necessary to start their own schools. The Chickasaws opened several boarding schools of their own to help assimilate their children into modern society while at the same time trying to maintain their cultural heritage. In spite of the learning that undoubtedly occurred, these schools must also have contributed to the loss of language and culture, and therefore also to the devaluing of diversity.¹⁴

¹⁴ The quality of experience in these schools no doubt varied depending on the curriculum and instruction as well as the goals of the families (e.g., whether they supported or resisted cultural assimilation).

While some of our children were being sent to boarding schools, others struggled with their families due to poor economic conditions. Finally, during the early 1960s, a few members of the Tribe began to reunite (often in “Indian churches”) in an effort to reestablish its traditional values. Eventually, there were renewed signs of Tribal activity, including dancing. Jeremy Wallace, a young man who was raised by parents of that generation, shared his experience as a Native dancer:

As a child, my mother and my father taught me many different ways of the Native American, and about being a Chickasaw and a Choctaw. I have been dancing since I was a young child. Before I could even walk my cousin Wendell would carry me into the dance arena. As time went on, I was able to learn how to dance just by being carried into the arena. It has always stuck with me, my entire life. As I listened to the songs and watched the dances, that was the only way I knew—was to sing and dance. When I became the age of walking, I was able to enter in to the arena by myself. I was always in the arena, and it has helped teach me the Chickasaw and Choctaw ways.

Jeremy continued to explain:

This is the story of what happens to me every day that I dance. When I get ready to dance, and when I step my foot in to the dance circle, I am always praying. As I go around, I give my honor to the four directions. When I get ready to dance, I pray my own prayer—only my ancestors know what I

pray. Then everything thing goes through a hazy-smoky type feeling. When I look up, I can see a cloud of smoke. I don't see anyone while I dance, and when I step to the east direction—I holler out to the lady dancers. I call them out in Chickasaw—in the *Chikashsha* language. I call them, and I am ready to sing. I close my eyes and I can almost feel the spirits of the people that want to dance but cannot dance. For example if there is a person in a wheelchair in the crowd, I can feel their presence, and then I feel myself put them on my shoulders. I feel a chill or a sensation come over me, but I do not see anything except a path of footprints making that circle with me. I feel like my ancestors. They follow me as I sing my song. I can feel them behind me following me, and it gets me in the mode to sing the best song that I can sing. I hand them up to the chant as I sing this song. I pray that my song will be heard, and I pray that my song will touch someone and give them strength to go on. When I finish the song, the footprints go away and the smoke goes away, and then I hold up my *Looksi* turtle rattle to the sky, and everything goes back to normal. This is the gift that I have been given by the Creator. All of the songs I sing are that way, and it has been this way for a long time. This is what the Chickasaw culture is all about. This is my style to pay respect and honor to the Creator, to Mother Earth, and to my ancestors for giving me this gift. I feel blessed to be able to do this.



Figure 9. Jeremy Wallace. Chickasaw Dancer. 2011.

In order to survive, the Chickasaw people have sought to remember, to connect, and to persevere. I see these as educational activities. Remembering involves learning and knowing. Connecting involves teaching and learning. And persevering cannot be done in isolation, without a community. We have educated our children, ourselves, and others in traditional ways, communicating orally, and teaching and learning by example. We have, for centuries, passed down our stories

from generation to generation through the art of storytelling, dancing, and various other educational activities.

In modern society, learning is often associated with schools, but schools are not the only place where learning occurs, and much of the most important learning in life takes place at home and within one's community. Nor have schools always served Native Americans well. Although there have certainly been differences in quality, many boarding schools have contributed to the loss of culture and identity among Indian people. There are also concerns with contemporary schools, where a Eurocentric curriculum is still often the norm (Banks, 1989).

Although schools have the potential to contribute to our learning, the evidence in this study does not indicate that they have helped us cope with one of our most important challenges: the devaluing of diversity. Although some of the participants expressed appreciation for their schooling, there was very little data to support the idea that formal schools helped the Chickasaw people cope with this critical problem. Nor did the data suggest that schools contributed to the Chickasaw people knowing who we are. For this information, the Chickasaw people have had to rely on traditional educational practices at home and in the community.

According to Chickasaw storyteller Glenda Galvan, much of the most important learning that takes place occurs informally among family and friends and within the community:

I have served two Governors, and both of these Governors have been very lenient in allowing me to spend time with the elders....(I)f you have missed those people, you have missed that much history. There is informal learning, and for those of us who know, we are always willing to spend time with someone. Because it's not *our* knowledge—it was *given* to us by our elders—some of them are gone now. If you did not get stories from them, then you have to depend on those of us who sat there and listened to those people to be able to give you what we got from them. That is the way the next generation can keep going, the way it is supposed to be. That is the way it has always been done.

Glenda recognizes the value of “informal learning,” and she understands the importance of her role as one who must pass such knowledge on to the rest of the community. As Glenda said, this is the way it is “supposed” to be. This is the way “it has always been done.”

Like many other Native Americans, our learning has traditionally taken place during the passing down of information from one generation to the next. This is the way we have learned the arts of handcrafting a bow or a flute or the construction of a stickball stick. This is how we have developed intricate bead-working skills, the ability to weave baskets, and the skill of crafting of turtle-shakers. This is also how we learn who we are, and learning who we are is the most important education there is.

We learn who we are through the making of pottery, through painting and design, and through traditional story and dance. We remember our past through storytelling, language learning, and the singing of songs. We teach our children by spending time with them, walking and talking with them, passing along the “bits and pieces” of information that is available to grandparents, and enjoying each other’s company during our family times and social events. These are the life experiences that have shaped and defined us as Chickasaws, and this is the education that matters the most.

However, this does not mean there is no role for formal schools. Indian boarding schools are a thing of the past, and today many educators are calling for approaches that affirm diversity. In the next chapter, I will discuss the implications of this study for education, including both the informal personal and cultural education that happens outside schools and the formal education that takes place in schools.

Summary

Nittak ishtayyopi ona’chi Chikashsha alhihaat hootibaahihachinka.

“The Chickasaw people will dance, until the world ends.”

Hashtola’ means winter in Chickasaw. For Chickasaws, winter is the time of the year that brings a sense of rest. The atmosphere is peaceful and appears to be more relaxed during this time of the year. However, for the Chickasaw people, peace is not the result of complacency. Rather, it is the consequence of knowing that we have worked hard to do what we believe is necessary and right.

Like many others, the Chickasaw people have experienced hardships. We have suffered from the actions of individuals and governments who have failed to appreciate the value of diversity. From European contact and cultural assimilation to the Chickasaw Removal to the loss of our language and culture in social institutions, we have struggled to remember, to connect, and to persevere, in order to survive as a people and a Nation. We are aware of challenges that continue to this day, and we are determined never to give up. We know the importance of staying vigilant, but we also know we cannot live in constant hostility. Our sense of peace is not utopian or naïve. Rather, it is the result of continual efforts to remember and connect with our past and each other. Our peace comes from knowing we are *Chikashsha poya tingba'*.

CHAPTER (TALHIHA'PI) FIVE

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

Analysis of Findings

The findings indicate several distinct perspectives that help identify and define this ancient Native American tribe known as the Chickasaws. This study shows that the Chickasaws have found several effective ways to cope with the devaluing of diversity they experienced in the past and still experience today. Some of the main ways they have coped with these challenges are through remembering, connecting, and persevering. In addition to showing how the Chickasaws have coped with the devaluing of diversity, the study also brought to light the dramatic impact of the cultural devastation the Chickasaw people have suffered throughout history: loss of land, loss of cultural identity, and loss of language. These factors have brought the Chickasaws almost to the brink of cultural extinction as a people. Because the study was both ethnographical and personal in nature, it also helped me to understand the importance of valuing my own culture, as a Chickasaw, and to reflect on my own past experiences throughout the entire process.

What can these findings add to the awareness and understanding of the critical problem of the devaluing of diversity that exists in society? What lessons can be learned from the experiences of the Chickasaws? What does the future hold for the Chickasaw people and for others in society facing similar challenges?

Although a variety of lenses could have been used to interpret the devaluing of diversity, one theoretical perspective seemed especially relevant to the problems described by the Chickasaws. For this particular study, Paulo Freire's powerful concept of cultural invasion was used to analyze the findings. According to Freire (2005), there are reasons for the oppression that exists in the world. He believed a powerful minority still oppresses the majority in society, and his concept of cultural invasion helps explain how they do this. He argued that there is a process in which oppressors impose their dominant worldview on the oppressed, and part of this is through cultural invasion.

The process is what happened to Native American people, and it is still happening because we still live in a world where diversity continues to be devalued. According to historical accounts, the Chickasaws, like other Native Peoples, have faced cultural oppression. Therefore, like other Indians, the Chickasaws are another example of how a devalued minority group in America has attempted to cope with the challenges they have faced. Although this has been a study of one tribe, by adding our experiences to the experiences of others, it is hoped we might all benefit from thinking about ways of coping with the devaluing of diversity.

One way the Chickasaws have coped with the oppression they experienced was by *remembering*. They worked hard to remember their past and who they were. In order to remember, we as Chickasaw people, focused on traditional methods of passing down stories from one generation to the next. We worked to

pass the knowledge of our culture and heritage on to others. Chickasaws remember by reflecting on specific periods throughout our history that have had a dramatic impact on our lives. We remember tragic times such as our removal from the homelands, and we remember the dormant years in Oklahoma where we struggled as a people to rebuild ourselves culturally and as a tribe. We especially remember the hard work and dedication that many Chickasaw people put forth to rebuild our Nation. We remember the contributions of past and present Chickasaw leaders, and we value their fortitude to persevere and restore our Chickasaw Nation.

Freire's (1970/2005) overall message deals with the concept of dehumanization. He argues that domination is an act of control by one culture or group of people against another culture or group of people. He also says that a small dominant minority of society holds much of the power and control over the majority, ultimately resulting in the few controlling the masses. This control is not just physical. It can also be psychological. Through imposition of the dominant worldview on others, many oppressed people have come to see themselves as "objects" under the control of the ruling "subjects."

This is what happened to many Chickasaws. During the time of removal from the Mississippi homelands, the reality was that in order to physically survive, many had to adapt according to the oppressors' views. Removal was inevitable. Even though the Chickasaws were the last Indian tribe to leave Mississippi, there was no question about whether they would be allowed to stay.

Because the Removal process started in the early 1800s and the Chickasaws did not move until 1837, the Tribe had several years to begin to adjust to what was going to happen. Therefore, the process of assimilation started well before the actual physical Removal of the people. Before our forced exodus, the Chickasaw people were already beginning to realize what it might take to live in a non-Indian world. The Chickasaws negotiated for more time and money, worked at learning European business practices, and began replicating non-Indian lifestyles in any way they could. Freire might consider this a type of cultural invasion, whereby as Chickasaws we were so oppressed by the dominant culture that it required changing our ways not only of acting but even of thinking about how we existed in the world.

From Freire's perspective, it could be said that the Chickasaws began to transform into individuals and groups who no longer possessed their own identity. From this view, it could be argued that due to the tragic nature of the removal, the Chickasaws became so conflicted in their own thoughts that they began to lose their original selves and started to think of themselves in a different way, ultimately resulting in the development of an in-authentic presence. This form of cultural oppression also relates to Freire's concept of dual-identity where two identities coexist inside a person: the original cultural self, and the view of oneself that has been given by the oppressor.

Freire would describe the problem as a two-fold approach that was both a physically and mentally devastating form of cultural invasion. Cultural

assimilation may begin with physical actions such as the taking of the land, and end up as mental acts such as changing the way a group of people thinks about themselves—ultimately devaluing their original culture.

During the colonizing process, the oppressors believe their views are correct and that those they oppress would actually be better off knowing the dominant group's "one right way to live" in order to successfully exist in the world (Freire, 1970/2005; Quinn, 1992, p. 204). This could help explain why the colonizers named five of the Indian Tribes as being "civilized." This was a way of saying the actions of these five groups were closely relatable to the non-Indian society. This no doubt validated the five tribes in the eyes of the colonizers, but it may also have validated the colonizers in the eyes of those tribes who benefitted by this label.

Although this privileged status could have been extremely valuable to a tribe that was struggling for its very existence, it must also have created great tensions with other tribes who did not receive these advantages. One reason for resentment might have been that accepting the "civilized" status implied that other tribes who did not receive this status were not "civilized." But another reason might have been that accepting this label could have helped validate the colonizers as people who were worthy of judging the merits of the Indians. This would have benefitted the colonizer at the expense of the colonized, including eventually even the "civilized" tribes who were ultimately *removed* as well.

One thing this study shows is that it is important to *remember*. Remembering has helped the Chickasaw cope with the devaluing of our diversity.

In coping with oppression, it has been important for us to reflect on the challenges and learn from our cultural ancestors. We have tried to remember and respect the traditional ways of our culture, to reconnect with our heritage in order to understand it, and to search for ways to pass this knowledge on to future generations and society. We Chickasaws are proud that we are a strong, persevering people who stand up for ourselves and deal with the issues that involve our people, our community, and our Nation. Many of us see ourselves as visionaries and as progressives who are constantly seeking opportunities to grow as a Nation, ultimately securing tribal sovereignty for long-term sustainability.

However, as Freire points out, it is also important to be critical, including self-critical. In remembering, it is important to be as thorough as possible. This means acknowledging the struggles as well as well as the successes. The historical struggles of the Chickasaw people, like the struggles of others, have not only been with the oppressors but also among ourselves, and even with other oppressed peoples. All of this is important to acknowledge so we can move forward together in our efforts to truly value diversity.

Another way the Chickasaws have coped with oppression is through *connecting*. As discussed in chapter four, the Chickasaws, like other American Indians, fought hard to maintain their unity as a tribe as well as their connections to their tribal lands. The Chickasaws, along with the other “civilized” tribes, were dispossessed, displaced, and removed from our ancestral homelands, only to occupy small plots of foreign land selected by those who were responsible for our

displacement. The tragedies we faced together as a tribe no doubt helped reinforce our family and community connections and our strong ties to one another as well as to the lands we lived on. These family and community bonds and sense of unity and connectedness have been prevalent throughout history, and they continue today within the modern Chickasaw family as well as other Native American communities. The concept of strong family bonds and community connections was mentioned in literally every interview I conducted with the Chickasaw people.

A vivid example included the connections between Harold Stick and his grandson on the Mississippi trip, with the grandfather sharing his stories, or lessons, and the grandson listening and learning about his own history and culture. A strong sense of pride and connectedness was also reflected in Lynie's comment that "we just love different" when reflecting on Chickasaw families in general, and it was present at the Annual Day Festival, as groups of Native Americans and their families participated in carefully planned and orchestrated activities such as large group fellowship through singing, dancing, playing Chickasaw games, sharing a traditional meal, visiting the museum, viewing art exhibits, and watching the parade.

The ability to stay connected was severely tested as the Chickasaw people were fragmented during the time of assimilation. After Removal, our culture and heritage was on the brink of extinction due to the fact that many Chickasaws, like other American Indians, were assimilating into modern society. It was during this time in particular that we began to lose many of our rich tribal traditions.

Again, Freire's views provide a valuable lens for examining Chickasaw characteristics of connection and the problems of social fragmentation. According to Freire, one aspect of cultural invasion involves what he calls cultural in-authenticity, meaning that if a group allows invasion to occur, they will feel devalued, begin to see themselves as less worthy or authentic than others, and will no longer contribute their own ideas and knowledge in society (Freire, 1970/2005). This could help explain why some Chickasaws have been seen, and sometimes even see themselves, as a silent group—a group that no longer had their own voice.

Like so many other Native Americans, we became strangers in a foreign land, forced to adapt to a new society, but we remained connected as a people. Many of us believed, as had my great grandmother Brown, that assimilation was our only hope in order to survive in this new world. Although it is possible in retrospect to see the damage that was done, many Chickasaws were probably unaware of what this assimilation would do to our self-identity and our cultural heritage. It would be years later before these revelations would be made. However, within the context of the time, many Native Americans were faced with the most basic question of all: how to maintain our very survival.

Freire (1970/2005) explains that cultural in-authenticity involves feelings of inadequacy, disengagement of self, and loss of self-identity. This certainly occurred among the Chickasaw people, however our people persevered. We were trying to find our new place in the world, and it would take decades of struggle and

perseverance simply to survive. All the while, we were losing our culture piece by piece, and by the time we realized it, it was almost too late.

Freire recognizes the total loss of cultural identity as the end of the cultural conquest. For cultural invasion to succeed, the oppressed must be utterly transformed. The oppressed people will begin to see themselves as inferior and will no longer be able to recognize their own cultures. Eventually the oppressed will see *themselves* as the invaders, identifying with those who initiated the conquest, walking like them, dressing like them, and talking like them (Freire, 1970/2005). Like many other Indian tribes, the Chickasaws travelled a long way down this path toward the loss of cultural identity.

However, during the early 1930s, and especially in 1960s many Chickasaws began to realize it was time to reunite. Although we were still physically surviving, our tribal beliefs and values had been seriously challenged, and it was realized that that we needed to gather our people, to reclaim our voices, and to become our own Tribe once again.

Freire's (1970/2005) concept of cultural invasion focuses attention on how minority groups have historically been viewed as inferior members of society and have therefore been caught up in a negative reality. Like others, the Chickasaw people have internalized the views of the oppressor and have participated in anti-dialogical activity. However, like others, we have also begun to "eject" the oppressor consciousness from our minds and to reclaim and reconnect with our *own* cultural and historical identities.

Finally, a third way the Chickasaw people have coped with the devaluing of diversity is through *perseverance*. Like many other Native peoples, the Chickasaws have faced ongoing cultural devastation, both historically and continuing still today. This cultural devastation has had a dynamic impact on the Chickasaw people. An incredible loss of tribal lands, culture, and language has driven the Chickasaw heritage to the brink of extinction. Yet, ever since European contact, Native Americans have proven to be a persevering people. Like others, the Chickasaws have overcome major obstacles. In spite of numerous challenges, by all accounts, we have managed to remain a viable tribal group. Although there were many lean years, with a population of over 53,000 registered Chickasaws, we have continued to grow in number. Recognition of our ability to persevere was evident in many of my interviews, and the actual word “persevere” was used numerous times by the participants when describing the Chickasaw people.

An essential aspect of our identity is our language. As Chickasaws, we understand that if we are going to persevere as a tribe, we must not lose the most important aspect of ourselves—our language. Among many others, the current governor of the Chickasaw Nation has been adamant that our language be preserved. He has recently instituted an initiative that encourages both Chickasaws and non-Chickasaws to learn the Chickasaw language. His efforts have been well received, and more of us are now learning to speak our original language.

These efforts to preserve the Chickasaw language have affected my own activities as well. A Master Apprentice Program is available to eligible

Chickasaws, and one of my future goals is to be accepted into this program. I would like to be able to help pass our language on to the next generation—something my great grandmother Brown felt she had to forfeit in lieu of survival. I have survived, thanks to people like my great grandmother, but there is still much to be done in order to keep our language and culture alive for future generations. This drive to persevere, to never give up and to keep passing our identity on is what keeps us moving forward.

According to Freire (1970/2005), our loss of language could be attributed to the anti-dialogical aspect of cultural invasion. He explains that cultural invasion involves people being forced to forfeit their own voices and forms of self-expression, rendering them silent and with little sense of self-worth. A major objective of cultural invasion, according to Freire, is loss of identity, and this has had a devastating impact on various groups of oppressed people. Similarly, the loss of language among Native Americans such as the Chickasaws has had a devastating impact. With only 75 people remaining who can speak our original language out of a population of approximately, 53,000 there can be little question about the role of dialogue in maintaining or losing ones culture. In my view, the loss of our Chickasaw language is the most distinct and critical problem we currently face as a tribe. As Glenda Galvan stated, “our OWN language” is what keeps us distinctly Chickasaw.

Freire’s views of anti-dialogical theory can help us understand more about the devaluing of diversity. Like other Native American tribes, the Chickasaw

people have encountered the most tragic of times. Fortunately, strong leadership, perseverance, and recognition of the role of language in maintaining our cultural identity have helped the Chickasaw people survive and even succeed in modern times. We will continue to persevere by drawing on our history and culture to progress into the future with strong and stable leaders capable of governing the people.

Freire (1970/2005) might argue that as a result of cultural invasion, there have been times when our people did not have a voice and that we have, in fact, lived our lives in accordance with the dominant society's opinions and directions. He might say that because of this powerful invasion, we almost lost our whole existence as a tribe. We almost lost our culture and our language. Freire (1970/2005) views cultural invasion as an "act of oppression that can change people's own minds or conscious to match the views of their oppressors." Freire suggests that oppression is successful when the oppressors' views actually live inside the individuals' heads, essentially becoming so ingrained within the conscious mind that it acts as a subliminal voice providing instruction on how to think, feel, and act.

The voice of the oppressor has been ringing in our ears and living in our minds for years. It began with European contact, continued during the Removal, and lasted throughout the dormant years. For generations we struggled to find our existence in the world and at times we remained silent and somewhat invisible as a

Nation. However, we are no longer dormant, we are no longer silent, and we will no longer be invisible to ourselves, or others.

Implications for Education

This study provides evidence that the devaluing of diversity has been a problem for centuries, impacting many marginalized peoples and cultural groups, including the Chickasaw Tribe. Although these problems have had a long history and continue to exist, both the findings and the literature also suggest possible educational solutions that may be used to help overcome the devaluing of diversity in our world today. In this section I will draw on the ideas of Paulo Freire, James Banks, and several other postcolonial theorists to explore potential educational responses to the continuing devaluing of diversity in today's society.

Promoting Critical Consciousness through Problem-Posing Education

As discussed in chapter two, Freire (1970/2005) suggests that liberating education depends on acts of cognition rather than the transfers of information that are used in the banking education method. Others agree with Freire. For example, Quinn (1992) says that changed minds are more effective than new programs or laws (though he would acknowledge the importance of each of these factors). The cognition Freire refers to calls for dialogical action between teachers and students. This is true dialogical action in which each participant is not afraid to speak his or her own words. This requires a kind of teaching practice and relationship that often

goes outside the norm of regular classroom instruction where teachers are expected to control large groups of students and help them pass standardized tests.

As an alternative to banking education, Freire offers a method he calls problem-posing education which is intended to help raise critical consciousness among students. Freire explains his approach as breaking away from the vertical patterns characteristic of banking education. In breaking away from top-down teaching patterns and hierarchies, he believes his problem-posing approach can fulfill its function as the practice of freedom (Freire, 1970/2005). Only through utilizing the horizontal approach of teacher and student participating side by side and in a back and forth dialogical process, is there a possibility for the education of freedom.

Freire promotes the raising of critical consciousness. He believes problem-posing education has the potential to help students begin to question the truth of things they are told in order to gain for themselves a deeper understanding of the ideas that are presented to them in educational and social situations. True dialogue for critical consciousness is one way in which students, teachers, and school administrators could begin to communicate through more equal and democratic ways.

If the goal is to help students question and develop critical consciousness, they can begin to ask more questions. This questioning could help them learn at a deeper level not only about others' cultures but also about their own cultures and histories. Learning the truth about everyone's cultures but histories could

ultimately help promote a valuing of diversity at a deeper level throughout our society. Through participation in an authentic dialogue between teachers and students, as well between students and students, better and more honest relationships could be established. In turn, this could develop a stronger sense of communication.

Increasing instruction with a more culturally rich, multiethnic curriculum, paired with the act of rejecting the banking methods described by Freire, could help establish an environment in which critical consciousness-raising is possible. This could assist teachers in the development of more empowered and confident students who will embrace their own cultures and develop their own self-identities. It could lead to the development of students who exhibit appreciation for all cultures, who make an effort to take action in cases of social injustice, and who contribute their efforts to becoming part of the solution for the betterment of society as well as the world.

Formal schools and classrooms are one place where problem-posing education can be done. However, these are not the only places where education occurs. Most of the meaningful teaching and learning described by the Chickasaw people, did not for the most part, take place in schools. Rather, it happened in families and communities, on the bus ride to Mississippi, in discussions between family members and friends, during events like the Reburial ceremony, and at community gatherings and dances held on our tribal grounds in Kullihoma.

Important lessons for me have occurred in personal conversations with my family and friends and acquaintances. My learning occurred when my mother reminded me that I had not asked about her past. It occurred when I finally *looked* at the picture of Great Grandmother Brown hanging in my mother's home. My cultural learning has also taken place retrospectively, as I have reflected on experiences I did not fully understand at the time. I remember riding in a car with my grandmother, only a few weeks before she passed away, when she shared her desire that I would "take care of my mother for her." As I learn what it means to be Chickasaw, I am developing a deeper understanding of what my grandmother meant when she asked me to *care* for my mother. I have also learned important lessons during honest interactions in which I have been forced to confront my own ignorance or resistance, as occurred when Kirk asked me why I said "them" rather than "we."

Peggy McIntosh (1989) said her schooling never taught her, as a white person, to see herself as an oppressor. Nor do schools often help the oppressed see how they have lost—and continue to lose—their lands, their voices, and their identities, much less how they might begin to reverse this process.

Therefore, although we should try to use problem-posing education in schools, this is not the only place where children should learn to be critical or where they can learn about their history, identity, and language. Dialogical problem-posing education should also happen in homes and communities as a way

to help marginalized children (and adults) learn what has happened to their cultures so they can develop their own cultural identities and speak with their own voices.

Integrating the Curriculum and Cosmopolitan Citizenship

Like Freire, James Banks has also searched for educational solutions to the problems of oppression and the devaluing of diversity. While Freire wants to promote critical consciousness through more equal relationships between teachers and students, Banks has developed was of incorporating a more multiethnic curriculum. He has developed various ways to include multicultural content in any curriculum. Two of these methods include his four approaches to *Integrating the Curriculum with Ethnic Content*, and the six stages of his *Cultural Development Typology*. Another valuable contribution has been his notion of the *Cosmopolitan Citizen*.

As discussed in chapter two, Banks (1989) advocates a multiethnic curriculum that includes rich cultural content, allowing students to gain a more authentic and non-stereotypical understanding of others and other cultures. Banks states, “a curriculum that focuses on the experiences of mainstream Americans and largely ignores the experiences, cultures, and histories of other ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious groups has negative consequences for both mainstream American and cultural and ethnic minority students.” (p. 189)

Banks believes there is a lack of incorporated culturally related material within the official school curriculum, and he posits a solution for accomplishing

this task. Basically, he recommends a four-step approach that can be used to integrate a more multiethnic curriculum. This approach progresses from a low level focus on facts and contributions through higher levels that consider cultural perspectives, transform the entire curriculum to integrate multicultural issues, and advocates transformative social action designed to change the ways society thinks about cultural diversity.

In Levels One (The Contributions Approach) and Two (The Additive Approach), Banks (2004) says “the ethnic content is added to the mainstream core curriculum without changing its basic assumptions, nature, and structure” (p. 29). However, in Level Three (The Transformation Approach), the “fundamental goals, structure, and perspectives of the curriculum are changed (which) enables students to view concepts, issues, themes, and problems from several ethnic perspectives and points of view” (p. 29).

Banks says it is during the final two levels that the most impact is made in relation to the curriculum, and this is where students participate at a higher level of consciousness. By Level Three, the Transformational Approach, the curriculum has gone from discussion of discreet contributions to a level where students can begin to view many different cultural perspectives and points of view. Finally, Level Four, the Social Action Approach, includes all the elements of the Transformation Approach but goes beyond this to encourage students to begin making their own decisions, asking their own questions, and take action to address their own social and cultural concerns.

Through the incorporation of multiethnic approaches as recommended by Banks, educators may be able to enhance their overall curriculum, providing unique experiences for students and opportunities for growth. Minority students might begin to feel a sense of connection and greater feelings of appreciation when their cultures are acknowledged, and mainstream students can begin to develop the skills of critical reflection and a deeper appreciation of other cultures.

Because we live in rapidly changing and growing society, many of our schools appear to be bursting at the seams. A growing population often means an increase in class sizes, and educators must be equipped to manage this growth. At the same time, teachers are under great pressure to perform and produce learning outcomes on increasingly specific kinds of performance. The impact of population growth along with added state mandates for public schools can create significant challenges for all involved. It takes creative ability, motivation, and strength to ensure that learning is not compromised under such circumstances.

One way to help ensure meaningful multicultural education even in difficult times is for teachers to become more conscious that students are continually going through different stages of cultural development. Banks (2004) advises teachers to “be aware of and sensitive to the stages of cultural development that all of their students—including mainstream students, students of color, and other marginalized groups of students—may be experiencing and facilitate their identity development” (p. 303). In order to do this, he recommends using various stages of cultural development. In this way, Banks (2004) believes “teachers can help students attain

higher stages of cultural development and develop clarified cultural, national, and global identifications” (p. 303). Banks states:

I believe that students need to reach stage three of this typology, “Cultural Identity Clarification,” before we can expect them to embrace other cultural groups or attain thoughtful and clarified national or global identifications. The typology is an ideal-type concept. Consequently, it does not describe the actual identity development of any particular individual. Rather, it is a framework for thinking about and facilitating the identity development of students who approximate one of the stages. (2004, p. 303)

Much like Banks’ four levels of integrating ethnic content into the curriculum, he later offers a six-step progression for achieving success as a cosmopolitan citizen. During Stage One, Cultural Psychology Captivity, individuals internalize the negative stereotypes and beliefs about their cultural groups that are institutionalized within the larger society. This internalization leads to self-rejection and low self-esteem. In Stage Two, Cultural Encapsulation, individuals hold the belief that their ethnic group is superior to others. In Stage Three, Cultural Identity Clarification, cultural pride is genuine rather than contrived. In Stage Four, Biculturalism, participants have a healthy sense of cultural identity and can participate in their own cultural community as well as another cultural community. By Stage Five, Multiculturalism and Reflective Nationalism, participants have developed clarified, reflective, and positive

personal, cultural, and national identifications as well as positive attitudes toward other racial, cultural, and ethnic groups.

Finally, the “Cosmopolitan Citizen” emerges when one has progressed through each of the previous stages and has entered Stage Six, Globalism and Global Competency. At this final stage, individuals have developed reflective and clarified national and global identifications (Banks, 2004). They now have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within their own cultural communities, with other cultures within their nation-states, in the civic culture of their nation, and within the global community. Individuals at Stage Six exemplify cosmopolitanism and have a commitment to all human beings in the world community (Banks, 2004; Nussbaum, 2002, p. 304).

Here again, it is important to integrate ethnic content and to develop cosmopolitan citizens in classrooms and schools. Yet, just as with Freire’s ideas, formal schools are not the only places where good education can take place. Again, most of the meaningful teaching and learning in this study which helped the Chickasaw people cope with the devaluing of diversity did not happen in schools. Instead, it happened in families and communities, on bus rides and in cars, in discussions among family and friends, and during cultural events within the community. Although the curriculum needs to be integrated in schools and schools need to teach about cosmopolitan citizenship, these things can also be done within our families and communities. In many ways, this is already occurring.

Postcolonial Education

Many educators are trying to teach in ways that can help move our society beyond colonial ways of thinking and acting. As stated earlier, postcolonial theorists have tried to envision what it would take to achieve a more just and equitable world (Spivak, 1988). Postcolonial theorists do not avoid looking at the ugly truths of colonial exploitation that continue to exist even in our current society. However, they do not stop by critiquing the situation. Instead, they ask what will be needed in order to tackle these problems and change our structures so we will no longer support colonialism of any kind. Postcolonial educators know that it is important to work both locally and globally, to reach beyond selfishness and greed, and to go above and beyond one's self as a person in order to connect with and support all of humanity.

Freire (1970/2005) made the crucial point that the oppressed must not simply trade places with their oppressors, otherwise the system will stay the same but with new people at the top and the bottom. Banks seems to be advocating both local and global consciousness and action when he says that we must identify not just with one culture or community but also with many cultures and communities. As Chickasaws, we have tried to retain our culture, we have tried to assimilate, and we have reclaimed our culture. We are connected with other Native American tribes in essential ways. We are also part of Oklahoma, the United States, and the global community. However, we are also uniquely Chickasaw, with our own identity and culture and language that we must never lose. According to Banks, it

is not necessary to choose one or the other, as long as we know who we are. And the only way to continue knowing who we are is to continue teaching and learning not only in schools but also within our cultural communities.

Many people throughout history provide positive examples of pre-colonial relationships that could be useful to help modern society move beyond colonial thinking. Various peoples have valued the simple things in life, showing appreciation and gratitude for natural ways of living, sharing kind acts of giving, and living within their means. As we continue to look for ideas of what “could be,” we must draw on examples of how others have existed in the world. This does not just include examples of Chickasaws and other Native Americans but includes individuals and groups throughout the world.

Conclusion

*Mako 'no Kalihommaako lootibaahiha micha abokoshi'
intannap Mashkooki', Shimmanooli', Yochi', Chalaaki' ilootibaahiha*
“Now we dance at Kalihomma’ and across the river
with the Creeks, Seminoles, Yuchis and Cherokees”.

This study was an exploration of the efforts of one group, the Chickasaw Indians, to cope with the devaluation of diversity they have faced throughout history and continue to face in society today. The findings demonstrate that the Chickasaws are much more than a persevering people. Historically, we have faced numerous tragedies and hardships that could certainly justify resentment and distrust of others. Like other Native Americans, the Chickasaws have faced the devaluing of diversity on a grand scale, and they have fought tirelessly to prove

their self-worth and their value to themselves and others. This has existed for centuries and continues today. As stated earlier, Native Americans are possibly the most misunderstood groups of people in society. Why is this? Why is it so difficult to understand these particular cultural groups?

This study of the Chickasaw people cannot provide all the answers; however, it can possibly give some insights. Before, during, and after the Removal, the Chickasaws relied heavily on their family units to keep them united as a tribe. This was vital in order to survive in a society that wanted to assimilate them into a “civilized” world. Like so many other Indians, the Chickasaw have displayed great perseverance. Even after being uprooted and removed from their Mississippi Homelands, the Chickasaws gathered their willpower and started over. Many Chickasaws were forced to become “civilized.” Through careful observation of others, we learned to survive. We proved we were an adaptable people. We became agriculturalists, traders, and entrepreneurs. We became educated both formally and informally, and for the most part we were able to blend into modern society. During this blending, we kept a tight hold on our cultural values. Even in the face of cultural invasion, we recognized that we had to remain united, to remember where we came from, and to hold on to all things that were dear to us.

It was our desire to come back together as Chickasaws. After years of somewhat being separated as a tribe, (some describe it as being a time in our history in which our connection with each other was limited) many Chickasaws began to congregate in churches in order to hold group meetings and engage in

fellowship. Although many had assimilated into the dominant culture, we yearned for the restoration of our traditional culture, and we recognized that the younger generation would soon be lost. With the help of many important male and female Chickasaw leaders, including Governor James, we began to regroup as a tribe, to relearn our Chickasaw language, to dance once again, and to recognize the importance of knowing our culture. In essence, we wanted to bring back the traditional Chickasaw lifestyle for all to share.

In light of all this, one thing remains the same. We will always fight for what is best for our Tribe. Misunderstanding, mistrust, and resentment of Native Americans have been demonstrated repeatedly, and many of these attitudes still exist today. Recently, I attended a meeting at the Chickasaw Community Center in Ada, Oklahoma to listen to our Governor speak on the important subject of water rights. According to Governor Anoatubby, this has been an ongoing issue for years. The problem centers on the water rights of Sardis Lake, and it involves the State of Oklahoma and the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations.

Governor Anoatubby explained that for years we have been fighting to secure legal rights to the water located on our tribal lands. The Governor recalls requesting numerous meetings with the State of Oklahoma to negotiate a partnership. Each time he has either been denied the opportunity to have a conversation, or he has been turned away completely. The Chickasaws and Choctaws have attempted many times to secure a place at the table in order to negotiate this important issue because we are all too familiar with what it has meant

to have something taken away that is as valuable to us. However, our efforts have been to no avail, and once again we are in a struggle for what is rightfully ours. To many of us, it feels as if we are continuously forced to prove our sovereign rights as a tribal nation. This is difficult to accept in light of the successes we have experienced in our Tribal Nation, our businesses and communities, and within the State of Oklahoma.

We know that we must take care of ourselves. We know that we cannot rely on the government or other groups to sustain our livelihood or the wellbeing of our people. We know who we are, and we know what we need to do. We have proven now more than ever in our history that we can overcome tragedies, and we know that we persevered against all odds. Most importantly, we have proven our ability to survive and our desire to thrive in this world as Chickasaw people.

However, we also know that we do not exist alone. The Chickasaws are a closely connected group with strong ties to family, beliefs and traditions. However, we are also connected in a larger sense to the people and earth beyond our Tribal boundaries. We are historically related to the Choctaw people, and we share many connections with other Native American and non-native peoples as well. We are also connected to the earth upon which all of us depend for our existence. Therefore, even though it is essential to know who we are in order to survive as a Tribe, as members of a global cosmopolitan community, it is also essential to remain connected to others and to support the survival of all Indian Tribes and peoples, as well as the principle of diversity itself.

Sue Fish is a Chickasaw Basket weaver. When asked about her history, she said she did not know of anyone in her immediate family that was considered a basket weaver. However, she did know that “back when we lived in the homelands, a family could not live without baskets.” Knowing this fact and sensing its importance, Sue began to search: “I had to do a lot of research about what John Swanton and others found out when they came to live with the Chickasaws and the other Native Americans.” When learning about her culture, Sue said:

I do not wait on someone to do the research or write a book. As a Chickasaw/ Choctaw, it is just interesting to me. I research for myself because I am a basket maker. So when I research Southeastern tribes, or when I touch a basket, I can feel the connection. I try to share with my children, nieces, nephews, and others that we are Chickasaws, Choctaw, Creeks—and to be proud. What I personally have discovered about our people is that we have similar characteristics from long ago that are still carried on today...There is so much more that we can learn about our people, even though we have advanced in so many ways. It is okay to keep going, and to advance, but let’s never forget where we came from.

I believe Sue Fish is acknowledging the reality and importance of interdependence. She does not wait for others to write a book in order for her to learn about her past. Yet, she is willing to draw on the knowledge of others as she conducts her own research. She recognizes the value of moving forward, but not

without knowledge of her past. She understands the qualities of the Chickasaw people but also recognizes the qualities and commonalities with other Indian peoples, such as the Chickasaws, Choctaw, and Creeks. Native Americans like Sue Fish seem to recognize that we must never stop dancing at Kalihomma' but also that we must "dance across the river and across the river with the Creeks, Seminoles, Yuchis and Cherokees" and with others as well.

I am Chickasaw first, but I am not Chickasaw only. My mother is full-blood Chickasaw. My father was Irish. My husband is European American. My children are Chickasaw, Irish, and European American. However, even if I were full-blood Chickasaw, as is my mother, I would still be an Oklahoman, an American, and a citizen of the world. So I am Chickasaw first, but I am not Chickasaw only, and I believe this is James Banks' (2004) essential point. We do not have to pick one allegiance or another. We do not have to continue following the either-or thinking that continues to divide peoples and nations. I think it is possible to be fully "Chickasaw" and at the same time "fully" Oklahoman, American and a cosmopolitan citizen, too. As Parker Palmer (1998) states that identity is not a scrap of turf to be defended but a capacity to be enlarged. To enlarge who we are does not necessarily have to mean losing who we have been.

The Chickasaw Tribe has made great progress and we must continue to grow not just in numbers but also in our strength and convictions. Part of this requires sharing what we "know" with our children in ways that will encourage them to remember, to connect, and to continue to persevere. However, another part

involves full inclusion of every member within the community. As with any diverse and free society, there will be disagreement and dissent, and we must continue to develop the best possible ways of benefitting from our diverse views and experiences. This relates to the basic principle of diversity—the idea that all views are needed to help make a community stronger, not in order to create unity but also to provide checks and balances and to create the complexity that is needed survive future challenges.

There are important implications for all of us, including myself. I believe it is my primary responsibility as a parent and as a member of the Chickasaw society to pass down my growing knowledge regarding my culture. And this transfer (or construction) of knowledge should not stop with my children, but go beyond to others. But there is more. As a cosmopolitan citizen, beyond reconnecting to my Chickasaw culture, I must also take stronger action to become more knowledgeable about other Native Americans—and about other people in general—who are *all* essential to our global society. I do not have to choose one culture or another, one allegiance or another. Instead, I believe it is necessary to appreciate *all* cultures, beginning with my *own*, in order support the diversity in our world. In fact, this seems like the only position I *could* take if I want and expect others to value my Chickasaw culture.

As I have begun to reflect on my own life experiences, I am starting to believe my new understandings can make an impact on future generations, particularly my own family. This study, without a doubt, will be much more than

mere reflections on my experiences and interviews. This experience for me reflects a deeper meaning and seems to be a missing link that connects to the life experiences I have been gathering all along. Ultimately, this research also involved me, personally, remembering and respecting the past, connecting with my extended Chickasaw family, learning our language, and persevering to pass on as much knowledge as I can. Like Harold, these experiences are gradually helping me understand what it means to be “Chickasaw first.”

I do not believe the devaluing of diversity on an individual level can be separated from the devaluing of diversity on a societal level. I cannot devalue my own diversity and expect to value diversity among others. Nor can we devalue our national or global diversity and fully understand and value the diversity in our own families or communities. It seems like we either understand the value of diversity or we do not understand it, and if we really understand it, we cannot only value it in our own particular situations. If the majority of individuals do not understand or value other cultures, this can translate into a larger societal mindset that perpetuates social inequities and injustices. Although my starting point was to better understand my own culture, that was not the only purpose of this study. Rather, in this research I have endeavored to restore value not just to the Chickasaw culture, but to support and promote the valuing of all cultures.

I have often wondered how a society in the twenty-first century containing all the rich cultures that live together in America could still fear and misunderstand diversity. Why do we fear diversity? In my opinion, and simply put, we fear what

we do not know. We fear others because we do not understand them. Because we do not understand them, they only hypothetically exist in our world. We cannot place a value on someone who does not *exist*. And they cannot exist for us until we get to know who they are. This is where education comes in, including both formal teaching in schools and informal education at home and in life.

The education I received during the Mississippi trip proved to be a turning point for me in my awareness of my cultural roots. I finally “got it.” I realized that in order to appreciate who we are, we have to know where we came from. Even if one has this knowledge in an abstract form, a physical connection needs to be made with the place associated with one's history. However, “getting it” did not mean that my journey had ended. Rather, this was just the beginning of a quest that will continue for the rest of my life.

For me, the starting place was a trip to the original place of my ancestors. Having made a physical connection, I began to understand. This connection stirred emotions that were buried deep. I began to reach beyond family connections to make a larger cultural connection. I do not believe I could have made this true emotional connection without taking the trip and experiencing the homelands for myself. As the journey proceeded, I recognized my foundation. This experience was where my self-identity began.

Although this study led to significant personal discovery, it was not conducted alone. Many have gone before me, and many others will follow. I have learned from many who have made great sacrifices, like my Mother and my great

grandmother Brown, and I have learned from many others in this study who have generously shared their wisdom through their words and actions. I hope that this wisdom will also now be passed on to others.

As Chickasaws, we have never really lost sight of who we are. Although we have had to fight hard to make our place in the world, the foundations have persevered. We realize that we do not exist alone. We know that we are joined with many other Native and non-native peoples who continue to strive for what is just in this world, and we will always value our brothers and sisters in the community of life. However, we also know that we are Chickasaw first. With great pride and tribute to our culture and our heritage, we will continue to persevere as a Nation. Although we may not be Chickasaw *only*, we will always be *Chickasaw first*.



Karen Goodnight—Chickasaw. 2012.

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