

PONCA EDUCATION PROJECT

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Education of Native Americans is generally acknowledged to have begun in 1617 with the establishment of Moors Charity school founded as a training school for Indian youth in Lebanon, Connecticut (Szasz, 1988). This school proved a failure because of the cultural differences involved with students trying to return to their own people and finding their education was totally useless in the own culture. Furthermore, sharp differences between the Native American and white Americans resulted in warfare. In 1723, William and Mary College opened a special school for Indian students and in 1775, Congress appropriated \$500 to educate Indians at Dartmouth College.

The first treaty with Native Americans was made in 1778. This was an attempt to draw in the Delaware to the side of the colonists in their war with England. The colonists in their desperation, tried to keep as many Indian nations as possible from joining with the English. They held out the olive branch and treated with the Indian governments offering them recognition and a place in the American government as

independent nations. The concept of treaty making is important in that it did two important things which still affect Native American education to this day. First, it recognized Native Americans as independent nations, and second, it set the stage for appropriations by Congress to address the needs of Native American education.

The idea of trying to educate Native Americans was firmly established by the United States government by 1824. An Indian Service had been created in the War Department and a Civilization Fund was established by Congress which allowed the Indian agencies to contract with various Christian denominations to “civilize” and Christianize the Native American population. Shortly before this, in 1802 Congress began to make annual appropriations to “promote civilization among the savages.” During this same time, the Cherokee and Choctaw, later to become known as two of the Five Civilized Tribes, established their own schools which proved to be far more successful among their own people than anything the American public schools could accomplish (Debo, 1968; Mankiller, 1993).

Beginning in 1870, the federal government became more heavily involved in the education process for Native Americans. Congress made an appropriation to operate federal industrial schools for Indians, and in 1879, Carlisle Indian School opened in Carlisle, Pennsylvania (Pratt, 1994). Around the beginning of the 20th Century, several Ponca students were sent to Carlisle Indian School. Congress further provided, at this time, that abandoned military posts could be turned into Indian schools.

By 1881, there were 106 federal and missionary Indian schools. By 1892, twelve of the boarding schools would actively suppress the Native languages and

religion. In 1906, Congress abolished the educational system of the Cherokee. This was a severe blow for the Cherokee, since their system proved much more successful for them than did the federal or public system which replaced it (Debo, 1968; Mankiller, 1993). In 1920, Indian students in public schools outnumbered the number of Indian students in boarding schools for the first time. In 1928, the Meriam Report came out which severely criticized methods of Indian education (Meriam, 1928). While this was a very thorough and comprehensive study, it did not have a lasting effect on Indian education in general.

In 1934, Congress passed the Johnson-O'Malley Act. Up to this time, states had been unwilling to provide services to Indian children which they normally provided to non-Indian children because the lands on which the Indians lived were considered federal lands and not taxable by the state. Since schools are funded by state tax dollars, Native American students were not welcome in the public school system. However, with the passing of this Act, the states began to get federal tax dollars to provide a remedy for the tax-exempt status of the Indian lands. Subsequently, the states began to provide various services to the Indian student. In 1950, Congress passed the Impact Aid and Public School Construction Amendments which provided more money to the local school systems for Indians living on tax-exempt lands. In 1952, Congress made further attempts to break up the Nations of Native Americans by providing for a "Relocation Program." Under this program, a Native family could move away from their communities into any city that was away from the reservation and into the "mainstream" of American economic life. Nevertheless, like public education, the Relocation Program was also a failure because no one bothered to find out what was

needed and required by the Indians who were involved. In 1960, President Eisenhower required the Secretary of the Interior to speed up efforts to provide education for all Indian children (Prucha, 1990).

The beginning of what is known as the era of Indian control of education began in 1964. Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act which provided for Head Start, Upward Bound, Job Corps and other economic efforts within Indian Country. The laws provided for greater involvement by Native Americans. In 1965 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed which provided for a number of educational programs for Indians. In 1967 the Bureau of Indian Affairs established the National Education Advisory Committee. The year 1970 brought several new developments in Indian education including the first Indian controlled high school in Ramah, New Mexico; the formation of the National Indian Education Association in Minneapolis, Minnesota; the first national meeting of Indian scholars sponsored by the American Indian Historical Society in Princeton, New Jersey; and the changing of Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas to Haskell Indian Junior College (Prucha, 1990).

Since the westward movement of the Americans across the north American continent and the resulting military subjugation of the indigenous peoples who stood in their way, the concept of a eurocentric education in a formal setting has been forced on these indigenous subjugated peoples. Since the inception of formal education for the Native Americans in 1617, the Native American has not done well. There are many reasons for this problem which have been pointed out in research (Bolls, Tan & Austin, 1997; Deloria, 1997; Kairys, 1993; Lomawaima, 2000; Swisher & Prucha, 1996; Weatherford, 1994). This includes the idea of inferiority versus superiority, the

American public education system seeing itself as teaching an inferior to live in the new ways of the superior (Bosmajian, 1983; Fleet, 1997; Pearce, 1988). The Native American has not accepted the idea that he is inferior to the white man and as a consequence has resisted being forced into the white American's educational system (Jahoda, 1975; Rogin, 1975; Smith & Kvasnicks, 1976). In fact, in 1990, 36% of all Indian students dropped out of school before graduating (Bolls, Tan & Austin, 1997). Other reasons for Native Americans not doing well in school include differences in learning styles (Clarke, 1994; Haas, 1990); perceived irrelevancy of the curriculum and school itself (DeJong, 1993; Perry, 1996; Rippa, 1997); blatant racism (Blauner, 1972; Bowden, 1985; Fine, 1991; Pearce, 1988). These problems are apparent for the Ponca people also.

The Ponca people arrived in north central Oklahoma at bayonet point under the U.S. cavalry in 1879, after having their lands confiscated by the U. S. government and enduring a two-year move from the Niobrara/Missouri river country. Their first taste of education was the forced removal of their children to be sent to Carlisle, Chilocco, Cantonment and Haskell Indian schools beginning in the 1880's. Up to the present, Ponca youth are required by law to be immersed in the white man's educational system which, since 1617 has proved unsuccessful. According to the educational system provided by the Ponca culture, the learner is allowed to learn what he or she considers necessary, important and therefore relevant. Dobson and Dobson's (1981) model for Education Dialogue, Design C, Nature of Learning, gives a good description of the Ponca concept of learning: "Truth is an individual matter. Learning occurs when the information encountered takes on personal meaning for the learner. Learning occurs by

transaction and interaction " (p.10). This learning process is not oriented to the future in the same sense that the current public education is. It is not eurocentric in nature but rather stresses the Ponca culture thereby reinforcing Ponca identity (Cohen, 1998; Deloria, 1988; Fleet, 1997; Freire, 1996; Loewen, 1995).

A great amount of literature exists on the problems Native Americans face in education. However, very little attention has been placed on what the Native Americans themselves have to say concerning this problem. This study will focus on a particular Native American group - that is, the Ponca people who reside in north central Oklahoma. The Ponca people arrived in their present location in 1879, after a two-year move from what is now Nebraska and South Dakota. The Ponca are considered a "plains Indian" people and share their language with the Osage, Quapaw, Kaw and Omaha. In 1900 they numbered less than a thousand people. In particular, the study will examine the perspectives of twenty Ponca male youth between the ages of twenty and twenty-eight and will portray the problems that they experienced which caused them to voluntarily withdraw from the public educational system. To the greatest extent possible, this study will present the educational problems as understood by the Ponca men interviewed while incorporating the world view and philosophy of the Ponca people.

The reason this study centers on only Ponca males is that it is the Ponca belief and practice that, as a Ponca male, it is considered appropriate that I should work only with Ponca males. It would be culturally inappropriate for a male researcher to work with females.

Statement of the Problem

With the ending to the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, many people are concerned with the direction that the American society will take. With the great strides in communication equipment, such as computers, electronic transmission of video and audio, the written word, fiber optics, the advancement of medical science in such fields as disease treatment, control and prevention, genetics, bio-chemistry and bioengineering, with the strong and expanding economy that America has experienced in the last several years, the American people are lulled into a state of benign complacency, believing that all is well and the American society will continue as we know it.

However, this view is not shared by all Americans, especially those of the non-white minority population. With America being a credentials oriented society which is heavily dependent on its technology, education is considered an extreme necessity. However, for the Native American, specifically the Ponca people, education has proven to be a severe problem. While the Native Americans constitute twelve percent of the student body in the local public educational system, they make up a disproportionately large percentage of the student dropouts.

One of the more critical inducements for this study is the fact that in the 1998 - 1999 school year Native American students made up 12% of the student body, but in the seventh grade they made up 66% of the drop-outs, in the eighth grade they were 33% of the drop-outs, in the ninth grade, 40%, in the 10th- grade, 35%, in the 11th-grade, 11% and in the 12th- grade, for the few who remain, 20% (Ponca City School

District Drop Out Report, 1998-99 SY). This is a phenomenal rate of failure by any measure, especially given the very small population involved.

This high rate of dropouts has caused a corresponding high rate of unemployment or under-employment within the Native American community. Because of this lack of education, credentials and marketable skills, the Ponca people in general have not participated in the astounding wealth and economic growth experienced by most other Americans. Therefore, this study will focus on the perceptions of a group of 20 Ponca Indian males regarding their decision to remove themselves from the public educational system.

Significance of the Study

America has been attempting to educate the Native American since 1617 (Szasz, 1988). However, because of the vast chasm of cultural differences and worldview, this effort at education has been less than a resounding success. The causes for this failure are many and significant. A number of scholars have written volumes on the subject (Berkhofer, 1965; Deloria, 1989; Deloria & Lytle, 1998; deMarrais & Le Compte, 1995). For the Ponca learner, these problems can be broadly generalized into several categories which will be addressed later in this study.

The bulk of literature on Indian education is written by non-Indians who lack the appreciation of the significance of cultural differences, political and historical overview. As such, non-Native American writers and even Native Americans themselves who are not immersed in their culture, lack this awareness and appreciation.

Much of education glorifies all that is eurocentric and totally unrelated to the Native American. This kind of thinking is exemplified by Bloom (1987), Howard (1994) and the writing of D'Souza as described in Cook-Lynn (1996). It is difficult for Native Americans to effectively counter these arguments because of their lack of education, problems in articulation, difference in worldview and a feeling that the entire matter is irrelevant to them.

This lack on the part of the Native American is seen as a weakness and part of the "Tonto" stereotype. Without an appreciation of who and what the Native American is, the educational system continues to force on the Native American student only those values, philosophies and world view that is thought to be essential for the white American.

Therefore, it is essential that the voice of the Native American be heard at least in the literature. The emphasis and significance of this study is that it will allow the voices of the Ponca male youth to be heard and will give credibility to their thoughts, opinions and recommendations.

Research Questions

Given the obvious disadvantages of dropping out of school, lacking a high school diploma and lacking any marketable skills, the Ponca Indian youth continue to drop out of the public educational system at a rate much greater than their percentage of the student population.

Therefore, the study will question 20 Ponca Indian males in an effort to ascertain the following:

1. Why do Ponca Indian males tend to do poorly in the public educational system?
2. What are their perspectives on the public educational system?
3. Why did they choose to withdraw from the system?
4. What would their recommendations be concerning the further education of Ponca Indian males?

The information taken from these perspectives will assist in better understanding problems in Indian education from the Indian perspective. In addition, this will add to the existing literature on the subject of Native American education.

Research Design

This study will concern itself with the reasons why Ponca Indian male youth withdraw from public education at such a high rate. This will also allow for the voices of the Indian youth themselves to be heard. For these reasons, a qualitative research method was chosen.

Creswell (1994) defined qualitative research as a process for understanding a social or human problem utilizing a detailed description of the functional relationships of detailed parts of the problem and incorporating into the study, the ideas, feelings, thoughts and perspectives of the participants. This is to be contrasted with the concept of a quantitative study which tests a theory composed of variables, measured with

numbers and analyzed with statistical procedures in order to determine the truth of a given theory.

Using the qualitative method, this study will attempt to illustrate the problems encountered in public education by Native American youth from the perspective of the youth themselves. Also, the qualitative method can best explain the “how” and “why” of the subject under study by acknowledging, inquiring into and examining the attitudes and perspectives of the Native American youth.

It was decided that 20 male youth would adequately represent the Ponca male population who drops out of school each year. The youth were picked from a list of Ponca youth that had dropped out before graduating. This list was compiled by the Ponca governing body, the Youth Services Director and the Social Services Director of the Ponca Tribal government. The participants were audio taped, the interviews were transcribed to determine the various strands, themes or topics that were emphasized or repeated from interview to interview. When it became necessary, follow-up interviews were conducted to clear up or explain any part of the interviews that were unclear or a given subject not explored deeply enough.

The research design was the case study method. This method was chosen because of its simplicity of design, relevance to survey type of research and appropriateness for answering “how” and “why” questions. The case study method is similar to an historical approach in the same sense that it deals with data from the past and is like a descriptive study because it uses large quantities of data to describe a peculiar situation (Jones, 1973).

Sax (1979) tells us that one of the first things in preparing to do a case study is to select those individuals who typify the major characteristics of the problem.

Therefore, this Case study will involve 20 Ponca men between the ages of 20 and 28 who dropped out of the public educational system. The study treated the individual as a separate entity and from a broad perspective and was conducted in an attempt to better explain and understand the problems of the individual (Johnson, 1997).

Case studies are described as being longitudinal, holistic, lifelike, grounded and exploratory (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The study did not test a hypothesis, but instead generated knowledge concerning the drop out rate so that further research can test various hypotheses concerning education among Native American youth in general.

Merriam (1998) explains that the case study is characterized by the following four aspects:

1. Particularistic - the study concerns itself with one particular event (i.e. the high drop out rate among Ponca youth).
2. Descriptive - the study itself and following report illustrates and describes in a detailed and rich fashion.
3. Heuristic - the construction and procedures of the study will convey to the reader a comprehensive understanding and grasp of the event under study
4. Inductive - generalizations, concepts and hypotheses are not verified.

The case study will generate knowledge that is useful to the educator. This knowledge is more concrete, more contextual more developed by reader interpretation and is based more on reference populations. In turn, qualitative research relies on the disciplines of psychology, sociology and anthropology. These study the condition and

promote understanding of the individual and problems with which the individual must contend.

In case study method, the researcher does not dissect the event under study in an attempt to understand its component parts. Rather, the researcher sees the problem as a whole and comes to understand the meaning of the knowledge which is generated (Merriam, 1998). For instance, if through research, one finds that the Native American is reluctant to become formally educated, the important thing to understand is not the reluctance but why does the Native American feel a reluctance toward education. The meaning of the knowledge generated by this research is what is important to the educator. The study does not see the world in a scientific manner, that is, something that can be measured and logically proven. Rather, the world is assumed to be a function of the individual, the world is a place which is defined by the individual, his/her personal beliefs, values, perceptions, culture and environment. The case study is primarily concerned with process and meaning with the researcher as the main component of the entire study.

The following is a general outline of how the study was conducted:

Problem Statement

This study worked with 20 Ponca Indian men aged 20 to 28 who have dropped out of the local public school system. The reason for choosing men of this age is that by this time they will have had time to reflect in a more mature manner on educational

decisions they made as older adolescents. The concept of this statement is broad and will be gradually narrowed as the study progresses.

Research Design

The case study method will be used to describe and explain the problems and difficulties Ponca youth encounter in the local public school system and why they choose to withdraw from it in such proportionately high numbers. The case study method will work best because it is qualitative and flexible in design.

Data Collection

The participants were asked eight questions which dealt with their attitudes and beliefs concerning formal education in the local school system, why they chose to withdraw from it and how they perceive, now, the decisions they made then, concerning their education. The participants were interviewed in an informal setting such as their homes, the home of the researcher or in a public setting. The questions, answers and comments were recorded on audiotape and field notes were made by the researcher.

Study Structure

From a more fundamental perspective, the problem of education, for Native Americans in general and the Ponca people in particular, may be characterized as the confrontation of opposing sets of values, differing world views and the mentality of the oppressed. DeJong (1993), Deloria (1988), Fuchs & Havighurst (1972), Jaimes (1992), Rippa (1997) and many others all point out that common aspects of education for Native Americans is that of oppression, hostility, invalidation, coercion, cultural genocide and racism. Yet, all agree that for the Native American to survive economically, it is of extreme necessity that the Native American become educated.

How can the Native American become educated if he/she must face the hurdles described above? In order to answer this question the researcher must first find out how the Native American, in this case the Ponca youth, respond to these hurdles.

The idea of education can be defined in several different ways. It can be looked at in terms of Head Start, kindergarten, grade school, elementary school, middle school, high school, vocational schools leading to a vocation and colleges and universities leading to a professional career.

However, this study will focus on the grade school, middle school and high school experiences and perspectives of 20 Ponca Indian males who have voluntarily withdrawn from the public educational system before graduation.

It has been said that the public educational system in America is the stitching which holds the fabric of American society together. For the Native American in

general, this stitching is very weak to non-existent. This fact has been pointed out by various scholars over a period of years.

The educational question which arose for the Ponca youth is how to reconcile Native American culture to eurocentric educational values and philosophies. For the Ponca people, on whom this study centers, this reconciliation would appear to be insurmountable.

Since this study deals with educational perspectives of the Ponca male youth, a lengthy presentation of Ponca historical facts will not be presented. However, to grasp the full meaning of educational efforts and implications, a short history of the Ponca people will be necessary. This historical presentation will help the reader to better grasp and understand the history, culture and current social position of the present Ponca people to the current educational situation of the public school system.

Perspectives of the Ponca youth will also add to and enrich the study since they must now contend with the fact of their culture, since their culture is radically different from the dominant culture, and the hostile and opposing views and philosophies of the public educational system.

Researcher Bias

In any research study, the researcher is, himself, the primary driving force of the study. Because of this status as the “engine” of the study, there is a danger of the personal biases of the researcher tainting, coloring or slanting the entire study.

Uncontrolled researcher bias, at one extreme, would result in little more than propagandistic rhetoric, on the other, shallow empty words and phrases. Thus, in any study, an attempt to present both the “emic” and the “etic” viewpoint is necessary.

Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995) define emic and etic as follows:

Emic - In the course of one’s research, this is attempting to understand the issues from the point of view of those being studied, and not from the researchers point of view.

Etic - Stated simply, this is the opposite of emic; that is, this is understanding an issue from the researcher perspective.

This study centers on 20 Ponca Indian male youth who decided to withdraw from the public school system. I feel that I am uniquely qualified to conduct such a study. My father, who was nationally known and recognized in the Indian world for his knowledge of songs, history, language and culture, and my mother, instilled in me, from a very early age, a profound feeling of pride in who I am and a respect for my history, culture and heritage. I am also the great-grandson of Bold Warrior, who was the last leader of the Blood Clan of the Ponca people. I am a member of both the Blood Clan and the Ponca people and am also the past Chairman of the Ponca Tribal Council/Business Committee, which is an elected position. I am also leader of the Ponca Ghost Medicine Society, a Ponca cultural organization which embodies spiritual, social and military functions for the Ponca people. I am also recognized as being knowledgeable in the Ponca language, history and culture. As such I am held in high esteem by the youth of the Ponca people and currently work with them as a teacher of the Ponca language and as a member of the Ponca United Indian Youth Council Advisory Committee.

I am of the opinion that the Ponca youth would be more inclined to speak honestly and openly with me concerning their school experiences because communicating with white researchers is usually tainted with the attitude of telling the non-Indian what it is believed they want to hear. This attitude on the part of the Indian is caused by both resentment and fear because of the past history of Indian/white relationships and their past experiences with education amid the educational establishment.

Except for the three years I was in the military and the four years spent doing undergraduate work, I have lived all my life among the Ponca people. I have often been asked to fill advisory or leadership positions because of my knowledge of the Ponca language and history and my educational background. Therefore, because of my distinctive qualifications, I feel that working on this study with the Ponca Indian youth will produce distinctive results.

Although I am an “insider”, I feel confident that I can control my own personal biases and prejudices in the conduct of the research and interpretation of the findings. I am aware of the danger of allowing personal feelings and philosophies to get involved and I am aware that these things can predispose findings in one direction or another. I feel that I can honestly interpret what the people in my study say, and that I will not eliminate information simply because it may be seen as unfavorable to the Ponca people or my research effort.

Given that there is no such thing as true objectivity, I feel that ethics, honesty and the desire for a scholarly study, will, for me, guide the interpretation and findings of my research. A great majority of the writings on Native American education is

accomplished by non-Native Americans. This has presented a questionable picture. Given that the white American and the Native American often have very different world views, values and cultures, it is likely that the non-Native American will come into the Native American world with very different philosophies and values which make it difficult to interpret the worldview of Native Americans. Because I am immersed in, and am an integral part of the Ponca culture, I can better explain and interpret problems experienced by the Ponca youth. The Ponca youth relate to me as one of them, one of their leaders, one of their role models and are, therefore, more willing to speak to me, frankly, openly and honestly. I feel that this is something that an outsider could not get from them.

Because I am a Ponca male studying Ponca male youth, it is a given that the participants may say what they think I want to hear. This is always a possibility in any study. However, by personal knowledge of the participants and understanding the social status of the Ponca people, by listening to and reviewing the interviews of the participants, it is my considered belief that what they have said is their true and exact feelings and beliefs and I have reported this as truthfully and faithfully as I can. To pick out and report only positive things or aspects which are very positive and to intentionally omit negative or unpleasant aspects would be untruthful, unethical and would render my study pointless and less than what I want it to be. Therefore, I have taken great pains to honestly, faithfully and truthfully abide by all points and facets of the participants' words.

One must also be aware that by its very nature qualitative research is subjective. Subjectivity is not seen as a negative but rather is seen as a positive because

it is defined as an essential element of understanding (Stake, 1995). One must also be aware of the biases that can be a part of this type of research. Because of the human element, the research can be distorted by the personal philosophy or beliefs of the researcher, and that the study is an interpretation of the researchers point of view. Therefore, sensitivity to one's own biases and subjectivity is necessary in doing qualitative research (Merriam, 1998).

Limitations of the Study

The extent of this study is limited to the Ponca people. Poncas were uprooted from their homeland in what is now Nebraska and South Dakota when the American government confiscated their lands for white settlement in May 1877 (Howard, 1965; Jackson, 1964; Wishart, 1994), and arrived in their present location in 1879.

The Ponca people are unique among the Indian nations who were forcibly moved to what is now Oklahoma because they have managed to retain much of their language and ceremonies which pre-date written European history in this hemisphere, and retain the memory of their government and religion as it was before the European form of government and religion was forced on them.

This study focuses on the memories, feelings and opinions of 20 Ponca males who withdrew from the public educational system before graduation. They are between the ages of 20 and 28. Because this study deals only with males and not females and because of differing perspectives and value systems of each Native American people,

the overall conclusions of this study may not be able to be generalized to all Native peoples.

Organization of the Study

This study has been organized into four chapters after the current one.

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature. This begins with a description of the colonization of North America and traces the history of Native American education and attempts by the American government to educate the native peoples. This includes the government's reasons for doing so and the laws which were passed that impacted education for the Indians. Included in the literature review is a history of the Ponca people describing their origins, history, and forced move to what is now Oklahoma and the effects this has had on them socially, economically and culturally. Since this research is not based exclusively on their history, this is an abbreviated version. The final section in the review of literature explains the various theories, which deal with educational achievement of minorities. There is no definitive current study which describes or illustrates the state of education for the Ponca people. Therefore, this section looks at education for minorities in general.

Chapter 3 is an explanation of the methodology used. It explains that the case study method of inquiry was chosen to research the problems of education for 20 Ponca males who had all dropped out of the public educational system, describes the participants of the study and the data collection and analysis methods. Issues of rigor

and credibility, member check, internal and external validity, reliability and ethics are all addressed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 includes the summary of the findings. The first part “Death of their Culture” reviews how the Ponca people came to be living in what is now Oklahoma. It describes the circumstances of their leaving their homelands, the move south to their present location, the discovery of oil on their lands and how it brought about and affected the local economy and the white people who were instrumental in the establishment of oil as the mainstay of the economy. “Ponca Indians in Kay County” gives a geographical and demographical description of the land in and around what is now the Ponca jurisdiction, and how the land of the Ponca was divided among the people as a result of federal laws into which they had no input. The effects of these laws have been far reaching and devastating to the culture and society of the Ponca people, and they are still attempting to live with the results of these laws today. This section also includes a description of the main community in which the Ponca live. “Description of the Participants” is self-explanatory. This section describes the age and social condition of the participants.

The section on the Discussion of Themes brings out in detail the ideas, perceptions and attitudes of the twenty participants concerning their experiences in school and what led them to decide to reject the public education system. The Summary is a short concise outline of the entirety of the chapter. It brings into focus the main topics of the participants, what was said, and what they thought and felt about their educational experience.

Chapter 5 deals with what the study means. It begins with a story about the Mongols and their communication with the Pope in Rome in the year 1246. What is significant about this story is the stark difference between the world views of the two peoples and the fact that in public education, even today, almost 800 years after this incident, the West still looks upon non-western peoples in the exact same manner as the Pope saw the Mongols so long ago. The Summary of Findings summarizes the literature review and shows how the literature cited in the study has a direct bearing on the study itself. Along with the Findings from the Interviews, the study shows how various federal laws, educational practices and ideas concerning education have profoundly affected the Ponca people, in particular the 20 Ponca males who were participants in this study.

The section on Recommendations deals first with the concept of public education from the perspective of the 20 Ponca participants, that public education is viewed by them in very negative terms, and how they arrived at the decision to withdraw from the system without graduating and their views and ideas on their lives currently.

The next section on the Segregated School summarizes the Ponca participants' perspectives on education in general, how future Ponca students should be educated and the fact that the participants see segregation as the only answer to achieving a quality education. An explanation of a proposed school for Ponca students is included.

Summary

This qualitative case study will examine difficulties experienced by Ponca Indian male youth in the public educational system. There exists a great amount of literature on education in general and a large amount on Native American education. However, there is no literature available conducted specifically on Ponca Indian male youth, written and presented from their perspective by a Ponca Indian researcher. While much is written and spoken on educational reform, there appears to be no positive reform on the horizon for the Ponca people.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Colonization of Native America

The American educational system has perpetuated the myth that the North American continent was a vast and empty wasteland where only a very few wild, savage, nomadic sub-humans lived and roamed. This is simply not true. There were many hundreds of nations of native peoples with scores of different languages and dialects, with their own governments, religions, laws, kinship systems, commerce and trade (Deloria, 1995; Lyons et. al., 1992; Stannard, 1992). This particular way of thinking and rationalizing the colonization of the North American continent and the subsequent expansion of America required that the white American look upon the native peoples as less than human. Since they were less than human, it was consequently allowed that they could be exterminated and dispossessed of their lands (Deloria, 1989; Lyons et. al., 1992; Pearce, 1988).

By 1790, the year of the first census the American population was found to be almost four million people (Roberts, 1993). The westward push of the Americans

caused wars with native peoples who resisted ferociously. However, one by one the native peoples were either defeated and subjugated or defeated and annihilated. For the Native Americans, what war left unfinished, disease and alcohol finished. On September 17, 1778, the first treaty between the United States and an Indian Nation was signed. Even when the tribes possessed some bargaining power, the treaty-making process put them at a disadvantage. Treaties were written in English (Indians did not read or speak English), and their terms were often explained inexactly to the Indian signatories. The very concepts of land ownership and governmental relations embodied in the treaties were often wholly foreign to the indigenous cultures. Moreover, the federal government frequently negotiated with individuals whom it had selected and who were not the traditional leaders of the concerned nations. All of these factors contributed to overreaching on the part of the federal government (Canby, 1988). This meant that the U.S. government simply assumed sovereignty over Native Americans, dependency of Native Americans, and incorporation of Native American lands into the United States. Until they were completely subjugated by war, Native Americans never agreed to these conditions.

The concept of dependency, a favorite topic in government agencies and Congress, originally came from the Delaware Treaty of September 17, 1778. During the darkest days of the Revolution, in order to keep the Indians from siding with the British and completely crushing the new little nation, the United States held out equality and statehood to the Delaware and any other Indian nations they could muster to support the United States (Deloria, 1988). After winning the Revolutionary War,

the United States then turned on the Native Americans in a genocidal war to forcibly obtain Native American lands for settlement by white immigrants from Europe.

As each nation was defeated, their lands were incorporated into the American domain and their children were forcefully taken from the Native families to various boarding schools to be remade into Christian Americans.

Because religion played such a profound role in the thinking of the time, the English and early Americans saw the planting of the seed of civilization and Christianity in America as an act preordained by the Christian god (Williams, 1990). According to Christian teaching, the son of their god, also called Christ, or the Messiah, had been killed but rose from the dead approximately two thousand years before, but after his message had been preached to the whole earth, he would return for those who had accepted him as the one true god. The early Americans also believed that the whole earth had heard the Christian message except the North American continent and because of this the Christian god of evil, also called Satan, had made America his last stronghold and the native inhabitants were the savage, evil children of Satan (Deloria, 1994; Drinnon, 1997; Slotkin, 1973). Therefore the native peoples of the Americas were seen as being in dire need of Christian civilization. By approximately 1800, white Americans had exterminated most of the native peoples living east of the Mississippi River (Drinnon, 1980; Slotkin, 1998; Stannard, 1992). With American Westward movement, native peoples were exterminated or subjugated. Those not exterminated were driven out, most notably the Cherokee, although the idea of a "Trail of Tears" can be applied to all Indian removals (Debo, 1968; Drinnon, 1980; Foreman, 1989; Slotkin,

1996; Stannard, 1992;). In 1865 Monroe called for the removal of all Indians to lands west of the Mississippi River (Bailyn & Davis, 1980).

In 1828, Andrew Jackson was elected U.S. President. Before becoming President he had waged genocidal war against Eastern Indians. He supervised the mutilation of the corpses of 800 Creek men, women and children. He stripped the bodies of their skin to tan and turn into horse harnesses. He advocated the extermination of Native Americans (Stannard, 1992).

By 1871, the United States had strengthened itself to the point that it no longer needed the assistance or cooperation of the native peoples. Therefore, Congress ended authority to make treaties with Indian tribes and nations. Except for the Sioux and Apache, all other native peoples had by this time been exterminated or confined on reservations.

History of Native American Education

In its beginnings, education of the white colonists was a rather hit and miss situation. The early colonists lacked the social and economic structure to implement education as was done in Europe. Szasz (1988) reports that in Europe as well as America religion played a significant role in education. Education was viewed primarily as a means of learning to read the Bible. Their intention was that “every ploughboy [could] be as well read in the Scriptures as the most learned clerk” (Szasz, 1988, p.28). Since the primary purpose of education was religious, the clerics of the various denominations were the first educators in the colonies.

By the early 1700's, academies and colleges were established and became a great factor in American education. During this period the press also began to have an impact on education as literacy become more widespread (Szasz, 1988). The printing press had been invented some two hundred years earlier in Germany by Johannes Gutenberg Gensfleisch, who, in 1458 published the Gutenberg Bible, which is said to be one of the greatest achievements in Western history because it introduced movable type (Manchester, 1992). The early Americans brought the printing press with them and used it extensively in their efforts to achieve literacy in this country.

Prior to the colonization of the United States Native Americans had a tried and proven method of educating their children, worked out over thousands of generations of their cultural life (Jaimes, 1992). Generally, the Native American method of education was undertaken by both the mother's and father's sides of the immediate family and as the child grew older, the entire people took part in the child's education, since all realized that the life of the People depended ultimately on the individual.

By 1744, Native Americans who lived close to the colonists began to view the American educational perspectives with suspicion. Puritans with their Calvinist beliefs and fanatical attitudes about religion were strongly anti-Native American. Other Christian denominations became determined to "save" Native American souls and assimilate Native Americans into white, Christian, American civilization using their educational system. Most early Americans saw the Native Americans as heathen, savage and demonic (Slotkin, 1973; Stannard, 1992; Szasz, 1988). Because of this evil inhuman status, Native Americans could not even claim ownership to the lands they lived on (Williams, 1990). The Native American must be either exterminated or

assimilated, but also his soul must be saved. This was the basic thinking of educators as the Americans began to institute their form of education on this continent (Fleet, 1997). However, education for Native Americans was not seen as a method of bringing the Native American into full citizenship, but rather was used as a method of teaching submissiveness (Niebuhr, 1995). The curriculum of Indian schools from the very beginning lacked the elements that could give the Native American the power to find his place in white society (Beane, 1995; Beyer & Liston, 1996; McLaren, 1997).

From its very inception, American education believed and therefore taught that the Native American was the heathen, the savage, the subhuman, the inferior (Debo, 1968; National Advisory Council on Indian Education, 1992; Takaki, 1993).

In 1775, the Continental Congress approved \$500 to educate Indians at Dartmouth College. In the 1760's, Moores Indian Charity School was founded by Eleazar Wheelock. It later became the nucleus of Dartmouth College. It was intended to educate both Indian boys and girls but eventually failed because of financial problems, cultural differences between colonists and Indians, and wars between colonists and Indians. According to Szasz (1988), "Indian schooling in colonial America was, with few exceptions, a failure" (p. 258).

In 1802, Congress approved appropriations for Indian education not to exceed \$15,000 to convert Indians from hunters to agriculturists. By this time, many churches had become prominent in Indian education. The allocation of these funds was to change the Native American from his own culture to the culture of the Christian American because they saw themselves to be superior to the Native Americans. This annual expenditure did not end until 1873 (Fuchs & Havighurst, 1972). According to

DeJong (1993), the entire missionary effort is now considered a failure because, for the most part, Native Americans have held to their own culture and religion.

In 1818, Congress authorized a civilization fund in the amount of \$10,000 to convert Indians from hunters to agriculturists. This was a further indication of how the Congress would “civilize” the Native American. It was believed that by causing him to become a farmer, the Native American could more easily be dispossessed of his lands. According to Otis (1973) and Nabokov (1999), this effort continues to this day with the policies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs who control Indian lands.

In 1870, Congress authorized appropriations of \$100,000 to operate federal industrial schools for Indians. During the 1876 centennial celebration, the Atlantic Monthly magazine published an article by William D. Howells, which exemplifies how white Americans regarded Native people:

The red man, as he appears in effigy and in photograph in this collection [at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition], is a hideous demon, whose malign traits can hardly inspire any emotion softer than abhorrence. In blaming our Indian agents for malfeasance in office, perhaps we do not sufficiently account for the demoralizing influence of merely beholding those false and pitiless savage faces. Moldy flour and corrupt beef must seem altogether too good for them (Stannard, 1992).

L. Frank Baum, then editor of South Dakota’s Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer and later author of The Wizard of Oz, called for the extermination of all Native Americans, and hundreds of Sioux were massacred at Wounded Knee by the Seventh U.S. Cavalry using the Hotchkiss cannon. Medals of Honor were awarded to the cavalrymen, two-thirds of whose victims were women and children (Stannard, 1992). In a current effort to rescind these Medals of Honor, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, John McCain, stated:

a retrospective judgement that the Government's policies and actions were dishonorable does not warrant rescinding the medals awarded to individual soldiers.... I support these efforts [to achieve consensus on a Wounded Knee memorial] in the belief that establishing a well-conceived memorial to the victims of Wounded Knee is much preferable to attempting to strip long-dead soldiers of a medal which they might not merit under today's standards (McCain, 1996).

In the 1890's, Federal tuition was offered to public schools to educate Indian children. In 1892, Congress authorized the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to make and enforce regulations on Indian student attendance including the authority to withhold food and services from families that resisted the "educational program" by refusing to send their children to school (Education of Indians).

By the late 1800's, contract schools, funded by treaty monies and usually controlled by religious groups, consumed more than one-fourth of the total federal Indian school budget. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in a report, admitted that their interest in educating the Native American was only in "assimilating and Americanizing them" (DeJong, 1993, p.73).

In fact, so devastating to the Native American cultures and societies, and so intentional were these acts, that Jaimes (1992) points out:

... the whole procedure conforms to one of the criteria - the forced transfer of children from a targeted racial, ethnic, national or religious group to be reared and absorbed by a physically dominating group - specified as a Crime Against Humanity under the United Nations 1948 Convention on Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. (p. 381)

In 1906, Congress abolished the Oklahoma Cherokee school system. The Cherokee emphasized the importance of schools and education in their Constitution which was written in 1839 (DeJong, 1993). Under their system, Cherokee boys were trained for college and the professions instead of industry and Cherokee girls studied

Latin and mathematics instead of learning to keep house (Debo, 1968). Under this educational system, the Cherokees were more literate than the white people. After the 1906 abolishment of their own schools, this high literacy rate was reversed.

In 1925, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Charles Burk, declared that the federal system of educating Indians was best. His views were not shared by an increasing number of critics of his policies. In 1923, Secretary of the Interior Work appointed the Committee of One Hundred, but nothing came of this, and no substantial recommendations or changes were made. In 1926, as the result of the urging of a group of eastern philanthropists calling themselves "Friends of the Indians", Secretary Work authorized the Institute for Government Research to conduct a study of Indian Affairs. This study was led by Lewis Meriam. In 1928, the Meriam Report, which influenced a change in Indian educational policies, was presented to Congress. The report emphasized reform of the federal Indian educational system. The dominant aspect of the system was identified as the boarding school, but the schools provided inadequate care and education for Indian children, citing poor diets, overcrowded dormitories, inadequate medical facilities, and military regimentation. Also noted were the low salaries for teachers, requiring students to attend schools hundreds of miles from their homes, harsh discipline and institutional nature of the schools did not allow the student to grow intellectually. The report emphasized a change in perspective. Among other things it urged the Bureau to educate children near their families instead of so far from home. The Report brought positive change. This was the first time Indian education took the Indian family into consideration. It brought education to the Indian, instead of requiring that the Indian come to the educational institution. However, the changes

were short lived. By 1945, the Indian Bureau had pretty much returned to conditions and attitudes which were evident before the study was done (DeJong, 1993).

For a vast majority of the twentieth century, education for the Native American did not change, basically, from what had been introduced in the beginning. The Native American could not control or have input into the education of their own children and standards for education were outside their control. Various reports, such as the Meriam Report, caused a change of policy away from the federal boarding school system. The result was that in 1934, Congress passed the Johnson-O'Malley (JOM) Act which authorized contracts for welfare and educational services, and which was used to entice public school districts to assume more responsibility for providing an elementary and secondary education for Indian children who resided on Indian reservation lands. This was primarily a movement of the Indian student away from the federal boarding school and into the public school system because it offered a financial incentive for the states to educate the native student. Specifically the law states "... any state or Territory, or political subdivision thereof, or with any State university, college, or with any appropriate State or private corporation, agency, or institution, for the education of Indians in such territory or state" (DeJong, 1993).

Also, it provided for two important ideas, first Indians could incorporate under state law and contract for educational services and secondly the Act reaffirmed the obligation of the state and federal governments to educate Indian students because of treaty obligations and the states responsibility to educate all citizens (DeJong, 1993). One of the basic drawbacks was the fact that this put Indian students into a hostile environment which had no cultural relevance to the student.

Since federal ownership of lands within a school district reduced the tax base which supports public schools, Congress passed Public Law 81-815 and 81-874, Impact Aid for Federally-Connected Children. Essentially the concept grew out of the “termination” mentality of the late 1940’s. Johnson-O’Malley authorized contracts between the federal government and states to provide educational services to Indians. Impact Aid authorized the appropriation of funds to reimburse schools for tax revenues lost for students living on non-taxable federal land. At first, the school systems had to choose between the Johnson-O’Malley funds and the Impact Aid funds for native children. However, in 1958, the Impact Aid law was amended to allow the public school systems to receive both forms of funding. This amendment provided federal subsidies to public school districts to educate children residing on federal lands including Indian reservations (National Advisory Council on Indian Education, 1992). By 1953, 51,000 Native American children were enrolled in public schools, of these 31,000 of them were enrolled in public schools which received Johnson-O’Malley funds (Szasz, 1974).

A problem which arose early with the Impact Aid funding was that the states opposed the law because control of federal educational funds could pass out of their control and into the control of the native communities. They had previously used the Johnson-O’Malley funds for the general operation of the schools and not exclusively for the children of families residing on federal lands which also included those on military posts (Szasz, 1974).

In 1965, the Economic Opportunity Act, was passed which provided for Indian children and adults to participate in Head Start, Upward Bound, Job Corps, Vista

and other Indian Community Action Programs. With the Act, Native Americans were given the opportunity to plan, develop and implement their own programs for themselves and their children without the restrictive constraints of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the states. For many years the sovereignty of the Indian governments had been talked about and expounded upon, but now the people were finally provided the means whereby they could set their own educational and economic goals and work toward them by training their own people for these tasks.

However, one of the major hurdles which needed to be cleared was the entrenched and entangled federal bureaucracy itself. In the same year the Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This law was meant for all disadvantaged students but specifically for native students (Prucha, 1990).

The concepts inherent to both laws and the will and enthusiasm of recipients and benefactors were outweighed by the lack of effective control, monitoring and administration of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Office of Education which caused this otherwise tremendously positive piece of legislation to fail to bring positive change to education for the Native American (National Advisory Council on Indian Education, 1992).

In 1969, Indian Education: A National Tragedy - A National Challenge, the Special Senate Subcommittee Report on Education, also called the Kennedy Report, was released. The basic thinking of the Interior Department at this time, in relation to the Native American, was the idea of the natural resources located within Indian country. Senator Walter F. Mondale, co-author of the Kennedy-Mondale bill on Indian education (S.2482), said “[Congress] continually places a higher priority on land and

resource policies than it does on the human need programs of Indians” (Szasz, 1974, p. 149). Szasz (1974) goes on to point out that the purpose of the subcommittee which published the report was to “examine, investigate and make a complete study of any and all matters pertaining to the education of Indian children”(p.149). Initially, Robert Kennedy was leader of the subcommittee, but in June of 1968, he was assassinated and leadership passed to Senator Morse, who was not re-elected in November of that same year. From him, leadership passed to Senator Edward Kennedy who was responsible for content and final publication in November of 1969. Its findings were very negative and critical of federal Indian education law and policy. However, these were not new or current ideas or findings; they can also be found in the Meriam Report which was also researched and published approximately forty years earlier. Simply stated, the Kennedy Report showed, as the Meriam Report had also shown, that the public and federal education systems were failing to educate native children and prepare them for assuming responsible roles in American society (U.S. Congress, 1969).

In 1972, Congress passed the Indian Education Act. This act was signed by President Nixon on June 23, 1972, and established a National Advisory Council on Indian Education. However, the actual Council itself was not appointed by the President until the following year. The intended purpose of the Council was to provide advice in Indian education, review and recommend applications for educational assistance under the Act, evaluate and be instrumental in publishing results of their evaluations of Indian education programs. The Council also provided technical assistance to Indian organizations in their educational efforts, especially in the areas of improvement of educational opportunities. They also reported to Congress on how

federal education programs for Indians might be improved, provided a list of nominees to the Secretary of Education for the position of Director of the Office of Indian Education and assisted in the development of administrative guidelines for grants made under the Act. Also the Committee must be consulted by the Secretary of Education before formulation and publication of federal regulations on Indian identity. This law was amended by Public Law 100-297, which reaffirmed the obligation of the federal government to educate Native Americans and also established a White House Conference on Indian Education (National Advisory Council on Indian Education, 1992).

History of the Ponca People

By 1800 white men were beginning to come into contact with a group of native people on the upper Missouri River called the Ponca. It is these people about whom this study is concerned. In order to create a clear understanding of the Ponca people and the social and economic problems they face and have faced since contact with the white American, one must have a good understanding of their history and culture.

It is believed that the Ponca first met the white man some time between 1750 - 1800, although this is an approximate date. There are, of course, differing theories as to how the Ponca came to live on the upper Missouri River, and because the Ponca language is not a written language, and because of the corrosive effect of the dominate society on the Ponca culture and because in contemporary times, it is fashionable and

profitable to be an Indian, there are any number of Ponca migration stories as there are people willing to talk about it.

Many volumes of texts have been written on Native Americans in general. However, there is nothing in the literature about the Ponca people written by a person who is Ponca as defined by the Ponca culture. Non-Native American anthropologists, historians, sociologists, and educators have written the majority of material on Native Americans. The idea that the Native American mind, psychology or world view can be explained from the Western perspective is problematic (Bowden, 1981; Deloria, 1994; Pearce, 1988). For instance, Ponca spiritual beliefs are completely alien to the Western mind. There are concepts of the spiritual and aspects of the Ponca cultural society which the white man would scoff at and call superstition, legend, myth or slight of hand. Various academic disciplines will address Ponca spiritual beliefs only in condescending terms such as “cults”, “heathen”, or “witchcraft”, although the Ponca culture has no concept of any of these ideas. This is especially disparaging since in modern times, terms such as “cults”, “heathen”, and “witchcraft” are very negative terms. There is no word in the Ponca language for “evil” or “demon” or “Satan”, also there are no expletives.

Ponca history, as told by the Ponca, is not referred to as “history” but rather as myth or legend. But when the American educational system teaches American students that Europeans “discovered” America or came to an essentially empty continent, the fact that there were already approximately 18-20 million people here seems irrelevant (Deloria, 1989; Drinnon, 1980; Fleet, 1997; Stannard, 1992).

The primary source of information presented here, is Sylvester Warrior, now deceased. He was a full blood Ponca and member of the Blood Clan of the Ponca People and was born in 1912 at White Eagle, Oklahoma. He did not learn the English language until he was seven or eight years old. His grandfather on his father's side is Bold Warrior, one of the last leaders of the Blood Clan. Bold Warrior began going to war at the age of twelve. Bold Warrior died an old man in the spring or summer of 1916 and is buried west of White Eagle, Oklahoma.

Sylvester Warrior's mother's father was Standing Buffalo, the last great war leader and statesman that the Ponca people produced. He died in 1901 at the age of 81. There are still songs which the Poncas sing celebrating Standing Buffalo's leadership abilities and war experiences. He was also a member of several delegations of Ponca leaders who went to Washington, D.C. prior to being forced on the current reservation.

Since the language of the Ponca is not a written language, there are no historical records on which to rely for documentary purposes. However, the oral history is summarized as follows. The Creator, not god, brought the people to this continent. The Creator appeared as a fire inside of a towering Cloud in the sky. The Cloud provided shade from the heat of the day. When the Cloud stopped moving in the evening, the People stopped and made camp. When the People were brought to this continent, they crossed on large rocks with the ocean crashing in huge breakers on both sides. Entrance to this continent was from the northeast, down the East Coast, across what is now the southern U.S., back up the Mississippi River to the Missouri, then to confluence of the Niobrara River. No one knows how long this took.

Upon reaching this site, the Creator again appeared and told the People this: "I give this part of the earth to you; it is a gift from Me and you are to stay here and live." At this time, the Creator divided the People into Clans, giving each Clan a name and duties to perform.

When the People gathered on a yearly basis to renew themselves, the order of standing in the Circle is as follows: the Medicine Clan is on the inside, as their function is to provide leadership and they are Keepers of spiritual objects. Next was the Wahshah beh Clan, sometimes called the Buffalo Clan. Then came the Osage Clan (the Osage People have a Ponca Clan), then the Nen kah pah shnon, the Ice Clan, and the He sah dah Clan, the Blood Clan is on the outside of the circle because their duty is to protect the People.

Originally there were eight Clans, but one Clan, the Na shtah Clan, has died out in historic times. In recent times some people have included the "Part White Man" Clan. But this group is not really a Clan of the People. It was called this within the past 50 - 60 years as a result of money and the influence of the white man. This group, members of whom are born, of white fathers, has no Clan pipe, no assigned duties to perform for the People, and no place in the Circle of the People. They are accepted as part of the people, but not a cultural part of the people.

The Ponca are a patrilineal society with one determining who they are and where they belong by who their father is. There were no last names in the sense that the white people have last names. Being organized under the Clan system, adult names were given concerning ritual or spiritual objects associated with that particular Clan. An adult might also take a name commemorating certain actions or accomplishments,

such as in war, the hunt or a personal trait or attribute. But generally one knew what Clan a person was by their name. In the case of children, children's names crossed Clan lines. Only in adult names was Clan membership obvious. Membership in a Clan was mandatory for membership with the Ponca People, Clan membership was only attained through the father. Whichever Clan the father is, that is the Clan his children are. Membership in the Clan then, conferred certain rights and required certain obligations.

Four other Native American peoples; the Osage, Quapaw, Kaw and Omaha share the language spoken by the Ponca (Howard, 1965). Anthropologists believe that at one time all five were one people, which is the reason that all five speak a kindred language (Howard, 1965). However, of the five, only the Ponca in Oklahoma and the Omaha in Nebraska have retained their language, the language of these two People being almost identical. But of the five Peoples, only the Ponca carried their ceremonial life into modern times. The most important ceremony was the Sun Dance which was held in late summer and was one of two methods of showing of one's relationship to the Creator as well as one's individual spiritual being.

Second in importance was the Pipe Dance which is a rite of passage for young girls. This is an initiation in which a young girl is placed in a social station of generosity and compassion for all people. From then on throughout her life her social calling is kindness, generosity, caring, compassion and all other things which are seen as good within the Ponca culture.

Third in importance is the Hey thu shkah societies. When the federal government confiscated the Ponca lands in what is now Nebraska and South Dakota

and forced the People into what is now Oklahoma, the People brought with them four of these societies. These societies were exclusively male. Their purpose is to expound and perpetuate all that was good in the Ponca worldview. In the dominant society, the Hey thu shka would be the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, agencies designed to protect women and children, federal and state social services, Hospice, Special Forces and Marine Corps all rolled into one.

The Ponca also composed songs for women who took an active part in warfare. Much of the history of the Ponca is recorded in song. For instance, the Ponca have a song that speaks of warfare and victory over the Spanish when they came into the Ponca lands seeking gold. Of course, there were many other observances and rituals which gave meaning and identity to the individual Ponca.

In addition to societies previously described, the Not Afraid of Death societies were exclusively military and dedicated to both offensive and defensive war. For women and girls, the Ponca culture provided for recognition in the tattooing ceremony, the White Horse Rider ceremony and the War organization (now called Scalp Dance.) This listing of ceremonies is not exhaustive; there were many others.

Even with the advent of modern times that brought on a mass destruction of their culture, the Poncas can still sing thirty different kinds of ceremonial songs, and are famous world wide for these songs. Organizations in Europe who try to emulate the Plains Indians cultural life style use Ponca songs. Japanese organizations in Japan that feel similarly use Ponca songs. Most Ponca songs are very old; the anthropologists believe that the horse arrived in the Northern plains around the year 1700. The Ponca People have songs that pre-date the arrival of the horse; these songs speak of a time

when the Poncas had no horses. In a remarkable instance of collective memory, the Ponca remember the first time the buffalo were seen, the first time spiritual gifts were used in the wrong way, and also remember seeing elephants. Upon seeing the white man for the first time, the Ponca thought the Creator had returned and so mistakenly called the white man, Our Creator. But after learning their mistake, now call him simply, white skin.

The Poncas found the German language perplexing, so Germans are called Confused Language People. The British were called Long Knives because of the swords they carried, but were heartily disliked by the Ponca because they were considered untrustworthy, lacking integrity, and liars. The French were called the Common White Man, which in the Ponca mind is a compliment. The French were found to be compassionate, trustworthy, and being much as the Ponca saw themselves. Therefore, Ponca women marrying Frenchmen was common and accepted. The French blood still lives among the Ponca today under the names Primeaux, DeLodge, LeClair and Roy, although these people no longer resemble their white forefathers.

Upon their first contact, the Ponca looked upon the white man as a fellow creature on the earth and harbored no grudge against him and was willing to share what they possessed with the white man. However, the feeling was not reciprocal and turned to hatred. One of the first gifts the white man brought the Ponca was small pox. The Ponca, as with most other Native Americans had no resistance to the diseases of the Americans. Before the coming of the white man, there were a great number of Ponca. The Ponca remember a time when everyone gathered for the annual Sun Dance, that the opening of the inner circle, the camp of the Medicine Clan, was so wide that given the

amount of time it took a man to walk across the opening, modern estimates are that it was a mile between the ends of the semi-circle. That was the smallest circle, there were seven others surrounding it. Modern estimates have put the population count around 25,000. But, with successive waves of epidemics and warfare caused by the Americans, by the year 1900, there was slightly more than 900 of the People remaining (Howard, 1965). It is assumed that the Ponca first met the white man some time between 1700 and 1800, so in less than two hundred years, the population of the Ponca dropped from an estimated 25,000 to less than 1,000.

The declining world of the Poncas was shattered even further when all Ponca lands were claimed by the federal government with a small area around the Niobrara River reserved for the Ponca People. In a stupendous bureaucratic blunder, the reserved land was given to the Sioux as part of a treaty settlement with them. Then the most crushing blow came on May 21, 1877. The U.S. Cavalry arrived to forcibly move the Ponca People to what is now north central Oklahoma. During the two years it took to arrive at their present location, the Ponca People experienced great suffering, both physically, emotionally and psychologically. They were driven south by the U.S. Cavalry like a herd of so many cattle. Lacking the time and materials to adequately prepare for such a move, a large number of the People died. Most deaths were among the children and old people. Having a strong sense of morality and ethics born of thousands of generations of one specific culture, the Poncas were forced to bear the hideous indignation of the rape and murder of their women and young girls by white cavalry men. After a two year move they settled in what is now their present location with a population of less

than 1,000, down from a high of an estimated 25,000 before the coming of the white man.

The Ponca reservation is located in north central Oklahoma and by the middle 1880's the Sante Fe Railroad had built a rail line through the Ponca reservation and on north into Kansas. The Ponca reservation was within a larger land area called "cattle country" (Collings & England, 1972). White people who lived in cattle country and engaged exclusively in raising cattle for sale to companies in Kansas City, Chicago and other large cities built a small tent city in the 1880's on the north side of the Ponca reservation. This tent city was located between the Arkansas and Chikaskia rivers in northern Indian Territory for the purpose of trade and shipping cattle. Although it was situated on the Sante Fe Railroad line, there was no train stop here until 1894 when the Sante Fe Railroad began to make regular stops (Daughters of the American Revolution, 1939).

Ponca men were murdered for little or no reason. The most famous of these murders being that of Big Snake, a Ponca Clan leader.

Big Snake and his followers went to visit friends and relatives among the Southern Cheyenne. Upon his return, he was summarily executed by the cavalry for having left the reservation without the consent or authorization of the Indian agent. But further devastation lay ahead.

The Ponca People had no concept of the private ownership of land. A man could no more own the land than he could own the wind or sky. The earth belongs to the Creator, not to individual people. In the Ponca World View, nature is not separate from the People; the People are a part of nature and are one with it. The earth is not a

commodity; it is a spiritual living being. The idea of the individual amassing wealth and material things is alien and reprehensible to the Ponca mind. If one is in need, all are in need; if one is wealthy, all are wealthy. One of the basic principles of the Ponca culture is compassionate giving, sharing, and generosity toward one's fellow human beings. To the Ponca, these are some of the characteristics of a human being; to be otherwise is to be inhuman. So when the federal government passed the Allotment Act of 1887, the Ponca were again amazed at the white man's inhumanity. How can one own the earth? Why should one put up fences to keep out his own relatives, his own flesh and blood? Of course this act had a hidden political agenda. First, it broke the power of the Ponca leadership and culture in that it forced a cash economy on the People, a concept that was totally alien to the culture. The white man realized that in order to get all of the land it would be necessary to destroy the culture even as the Spanish had done in Mexico by introducing a cash economy. The land was divided into 160 acres for men and 80 acres for women and children. Not realizing the meaning of individual land ownership or the written word, the further theft of Ponca lands was made easy. What all this accomplished was the destruction of the culture and the ultimate transfer of power over the Poncas from their cultural leaders to the white man (Deloria & Lytle, 1984; Fleet, 1997; Matthiessen, 1992; Otis, 1973).

From this point on, approximately 1890, the Ponca experienced an accelerated destruction of what remained of their culture. Fast on the heels of entrenched, politically motivated reservation system, came the four curses which further ravaged the people and destroyed the culture: disease, alcohol, American education, and poverty. With fewer than a thousand of the People left alive, small pox, whooping

cough, cholera, flu and tuberculosis killed mainly the young and the old. There are no statistics on how many died or how they died. The birth rate was high, but the death rate was even higher. It was not until between 1910 and 1930 that the population began to stabilize and births surpassed the death rate. This situation was especially harmful to the culture because the old people who had lived the culture in the homeland and had detailed knowledge about the history and culture, died without passing this knowledge on to the next generation. Young people who survived were kidnapped by the U.S. Government and sent to Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. These schools were located in Canton, Oklahoma; Concho, Oklahoma; Chilocco, Oklahoma; Lawrence, Kansas; and Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The Ponca students went mostly to Chilocco and Cantonment. However, the intent was still to “kill the Indian but save the man” (Pratt, 1994). As a result, the chance for youth and children to learn their culture was greatly diminished. Also, as the culture broke down, traditional values weakened and traditional leaders were undermined; abuse of alcohol became prevalent. Families were disrupted, children were neglected and resources, which should have been utilized to stabilize the family, were diverted to alcohol.

Poverty also played a large role in the breakdown of the culture. Most families attempting to preserve the extended family concept, grouped together by sharing living areas or clustering together in tents on tribal land. Many of the grandparents and great-grandparents of students now in school were born in tents and tepees. These parents and grandparents perceived education as bad, but one necessary in order to survive in the white man’s world. They themselves were literally kidnapped from their parents, and kept as prisoners in Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. They were not allowed to

come home, and in some cases had no way to come home, sometimes for years at a time. At the time of this writing, there are Ponca people alive who remember that if a child sickened and died at school, no attempt was made to contact the parents to inform them of the death of their son or daughter. The body was simply buried without the knowledge or consent of the parents. Another Ponca man, now deceased, recalled that as a small boy of six or seven years (around 1888), he was taken from his parents and sent to Chilocco Indian School north of Ponca City, Oklahoma. The boys were assigned to sleep two to a bed in their rooms. One cold, winter morning, he awoke to find his little friend lying dead beside him. This having occurred eighty to eighty-two years earlier in his life, he could not remember the name of the child. Another Ponca man recalled that when they were heard to speak their own language and not English, they were tied to a wagon wheel and whipped severely.

Theories of Achievement of Minorities in Schools

Contemporary researchers have conducted detailed studies to explain in specific verifiable terms why minorities do poorly in the United States. Prominent among these researchers is John U. Ogbu, who considered this problem by looking at students from six different countries. The countries were the United States, Japan, India, New Zealand, Israel and Britain. According to his research he found what he termed “caste-like” minorities. These were minorities whom he determined had been denied equal access to essential services of society, such as schools, employment, and other essential social services of each society (Ogbu, 1974). His research finds that the

difference in outcomes of the educational achievements of the minority groups as compared with dominant groups depends largely on how the dominant societies in each country responds to the minority groups, in terms of education, and correspondingly, how each minority group responds to the dominant societies and educational institution because of this treatment (Ogbu, 1974; Ogbu & Simmons, 1998).

In his later research, Ogbu became interested in why some minority groups did well in a given society while others did not. As an aspect of his research, he chose to look at the differences between minority groups and in so doing divided the minorities into immigrant and non-immigrant groups. He called this the Cultural-Ecological theory, and it was basically divided into two parts; one, how a dominant society's social systems such as police, education, employment and so forth affect the everyday and individual lives of the minorities, and, two, how social aspects of each community, such as educational level, economic status, affects each minority group. Also minorities are divided into autonomous, voluntary immigrant minorities and involuntary, non-immigrant minorities. Minority is defined as those who lack power, not necessarily numerically smaller. Jews and Mormons are seen as examples of those groups defined as autonomous minorities. Ogbu and Simons (1998) state that there are no non-white autonomous minorities in America.

Additionally, there is a distinction made between voluntary or immigrant minority and involuntary minorities. Voluntary minorities are those who come to the U.S. in hopes of raising their standard of living such as English people and those from Japan. These do not feel that the American society is forcing anything on them.

The involuntary minorities would be Native Americans and the descendants of Africans who were originally brought to America as slaves. Also, voluntary minorities may feel that their stay in America is only temporary so they would be similar to a tourist, or if they intend to stay they are willing to accept discrimination in order to realize the American dream. They feel that whatever hardships they must endure, it is better here than in the country of their origin (Ogbu & Simmons, 1998). Also, voluntary minorities believe in the system from the very beginning and feel that it is absolutely necessary to become educated to achieve their goals for coming to America. They, therefore, have no problems trusting the white-controlled system.

On the other hand, involuntary minorities are generally those who were forced into the system, such as Native Americans who were victims of American military aggression or Blacks who are descended from African slaves. This category tends to see racism and discrimination as something which is and always will be a part of everyday life. They feel that not everyone can become President or that one cannot pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. For these people, they were born at the bottom and that is where they will be for the remainder of their lives. They do not see hard work as a way out, indeed they do not even see the possibility of employment. Looking back on their history these people can see how racism has led to where they are on the social ladder and they are very distrustful of all white-controlled institutions, including education. In fact, Fordham (1996) and Fordham and Ogbu (1986) find that racism, discrimination and alienation have so overwhelmed this group that they may in fact oppose speaking standard English and may see success in school as “acting white”. Ogbu formulates his theory from the dominant social patterns in a group while

acknowledging that there are exceptions in each group who will in fact do very well within the dominant society.

Two other theories which help to conceptualize or explain why Native Americans do poorly in schools are the idea of cultural difference or discontinuity and cultural deprivation. The idea of cultural deprivation can be explained by Bloom (1987) who states that “For the Founders, minorities are in general, bad things, mostly identical to factions, selfish groups who have no concern as such for the common good” (p.31). It is in the American psyche and socio-political system that those who do not conform to the dominant norm are in a vague, nebulous unexplained sort of way, a threat, an obstacle or otherwise useless. These, then, in order to continue the march of American progress, must be re-educated, re-trained, re-made or somehow changed to resemble the dominant society.

In the case of education, Ogbu (1978) points out that cultural deprivation is defined as children coming from “home and neighborhood environments that do not provide them with adequately organized stimulation for normal development. Consequently they are retarded in linguistic, cognitive and social development, which is why they fail in school” (p.44).

According to deMarrais and LeCompte (1995), cultural difference/discontinuity can be defined as “school failure is a result of differences between the culturally deprived, white middle-class communication patterns of the school and those of the students’ home culture” (p. 239). Cultural difference/discontinuity considers more closely the great difference a student may have between the home environment and the school environment. This theory proposes that

it is this difference especially as forms of education and how culture and society interrelate to each other, that can predict why a given student has problems in education and/or if the student will drop out or finish their education.

Researchers have found that this theory can apply to Native Americans, Blacks and Appalachian students. It stresses that difficulties in educational attainment by these minorities can be attributed to inter-actional difficulties based on communication styles (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995). They believe that if the teacher can learn to better relate to the home culture of the learner, much of the problems of the learner can be solved. Competence in the communicative abilities are the key to learning according to this theory. One example cited was the Kamehameha Early Education Program in Hawaii. The idea was that in keeping with this theory the learning setting was arranged in such a way so that the reading skills of the learners was believed to have been enhanced by adapting the teaching to conform to the way in which native Hawaiians themselves tell stories. Though successful with Hawaiian students, when transferred to the Navajo reservation, the established cultural patterns did not fit the Native Americans. When culturally restructured to fit the Navajo, the program worked reasonably well. When used in the same manner with Alaskan native schools and African American schools, the same positive results occurred. In order for this theory to work in the classroom, the teacher must come to understand and relate to the culture of the learner and thereby be able to establish a more “culturally congruent classroom situation” (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995, p.241).

Critical theory points out a weakness in the cultural difference theory. This weakness is that the cultural difference theory can be defined so that it would appear

that the learner is deceived into believing one thing while really a hidden agenda is presenting something else entirely. It is pointed out, correctly, that a teacher who is expert in the use of this theory can take the culturally congruent curriculum and teach it in such a way that the learner is gradually led into accepting the cultural patterns of the dominant society. deMarrais and LeCompte (1995) point out that “this is a less painful or coercive way to colonize the minds of students (McLaren, 1989) and for that reason, may be even more effective than force” (p. 241). Also, they emphasize that this theory should not be viewed as being the only way to teach and learn. This theory does not address any other factors which may influence the learner or is not meant to explain any social or economic factor outside the school environment which may have a bearing on the student (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995).

Cohen (1998) tells us,

our schools ostensibly teach children the skills and knowledge and provide the framework for thinking that they need to function successfully as adults. “Critical thinking” is a common goal among educators. But schools also serve a variety of other functions that help shape how they operate. Schools teach children to share the common American culture; to think like good Americans and feel patriotic and uncritical about American values and American government. They also provide training in behavior styles that we take for granted as normal but which are in fact American cultural patterns. These include the idea of being ranked and graded, being competitive, and pursuing individual success, all of which would be anathema in many cultures. (p.107)

Freire (1997) and Fine (1991) go on to say that schools also tend to not only maintain the status quo but also maintain the power of those already in power. Fine (1991) argues that students are not taught to be critical and questioning and those who do, exit the system. She says that students are pushed out of the educational system by increasing pre-existing problems that are inherent to the system itself. She characterizes these as material and ideological fetishes. First is the universal access

fetish. In contemporary times with all citizens having access to a great degree of education there is a general assumption that justice prevails within the system.

Therefore we must analyze the educational system to determine why those in positions of wealth and power and those without these things will soon leave the system. Next she addresses the fetish of good intentions in which she asks how it is that well-educated, good intentioned human beings can come into the educational system as trained, degreed professionals and maintain, promote and carry out laws, policies and practices which produce so tremendous an outcome of inequality. She maintains that there needs to be an awareness of how the educational system is structured and maintained and how it eliminates participants, maintains its own power and the power of people who control the system.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The procedure of this case study research includes methods employed to ensure reliability, the research plan, data analysis process and data collection procedures and techniques. This chapter will describe specifically the rationale for this study on why Ponca Indian male youth seem to do so poorly in the public educational system.

Explanation for the Case Study Design

If problems in education for Native Americans are to be at least explained, if not solved, it must be from the perspective of the Native American, specifically the Native American youth themselves. The problem being addressed by this project is the high rate of drop out among the Ponca Indian male youth in the public educational system.

The research design chosen to accomplish this is the qualitative case study method. The case study is primarily concerned with field work, process and meaning with the researcher being the primary instrument of the study. The case study method is like an historical approach in the sense that it deals with data from the past and is like a descriptive study because it uses large quantities of data to describe a peculiar situation (Jones, 1973).

The philosophical foundation of case study is qualitative research. In turn, qualitative research relies on the disciplines of psychology, sociology and anthropology. These study the condition and promote understanding of the individual and problems with which the individual must contend.

The qualitative method was chosen in order to best satisfy the requirements of the study and to satisfy my own curiosity and desire to learn about the educational difficulties of the Native American peoples, of which I am one. deMarrais (1998) tells us that this method can best assist us in determining that which is “good” and that which is “real” and to reconcile the two.

In the case of this study, the “good” can be described as that knowledge which can be generated concerning the education of Native Americans in the dominant society. This would include the curriculum, environment, teachers, administrators, educational bureaucracy, philosophy of American education and the very society of America itself.

The “real” could be described as, in the view of Native American students, what does this knowledge, the facts, the statistics, the history, the description, all mean to them? What does it mean to their culture, their attitude toward education and finally

and inevitably, their attitude toward the dominant society and all that it stands for?

How does this information impact them socially, economically or otherwise?

Sax (1979) tells us that one of the first things in preparing to do a case study is to select those individuals who typify the major characteristics of the problem.

Therefore, this case study involves twenty Ponca males between the ages of 20 and 28 who have dropped out of the public school system. The study treated the individual as a separate entity and from a broad perspective and was conducted in an attempt to better explain and understand the problems of the individual (Johnson, 1997).

The study was not intended to test a hypotheses, but instead to generate knowledge concerning the drop out rate among Ponca Indian males so that further research can test various hypotheses concerning education among this same population and education among Native American youth in general. The case study research can also direct future studies in new directions and help to explain general problems.

Merriam (1998) tells us that the case study is characterized by the following four aspects:

1. Particularistic - The study concerns itself with one particular event, the high drop out rate among Ponca Indian male youth.
2. Descriptive - The report illustrates and describes the study in a detailed and rich fashion.
3. Heuristic - The construction and procedures of the study convey to the reader a comprehensive understanding and grasp of the event under study.
4. Inductive - Generalizations, concepts and hypotheses emerge from the data. Predetermined hypotheses are not verified.

Lincoln and Guba (1985), define case study as “a slice of life” and an “intensive or complete examination of a facet, an issue or perhaps the events of a geographic setting over time” (p.360). They go on to classify case study as follows:

1. Case studies may be written with different purposes in mind, including to chronicle (to record temporally and sequentially, as in a history), to render (as in a description or to provide vicarious experience), to teach (as instructional material for students such as the Harvard Law School case studies, especially when the materials are open-ended), and to test (to use the case as a trial for certain theories and hypotheses). A given case may serve multiple purposes.
2. Case studies may be written at different analytical levels, including a merely factual level, an interpretative level, and an evaluative (judgmental) level: each level presupposes the former.
3. Case studies will, depending on purpose and level, demand different actions from the inquirer/writer, ranging for example, from simple recording for a factual chronicle to the weighting of complex alternatives for the evaluative test.
4. Case studies will, depending on purpose and level, result in different products, from a simple register for a factual chronicle to elaborated judgments for the evaluative test (p. 361).

Cherryholmes (1988) tells us that experience always threatens what we "know" by causing us to question, re-analyze and re-examine what it is we think we know. In the same sense, this study will take the educational experiences of these Ponca youth and threaten the current knowledge and mind set of the public educational system.

The case study will generate knowledge which is useful to the educator. This knowledge is more concrete, more contextual, more developed by reader interpretation and is based more on reference populations.

In the case study method, the researcher does not dissect the event under study in an attempt to understand and interpret its component parts. Rather, the researcher sees the problem as a whole and comes to understand the study itself and the meaning of the knowledge which is generated. For instance, if through research, one finds that

the Native American is reluctant to become formally educated, the important thing to understand is not the reluctance, but the cause of this reluctance toward education. The meaning and definition of the knowledge generated by this research is what is important to the educator. The study does not see the world in a scientific manner. Rather, the world is assumed to be a function of the individual, the world is a place which is defined by the individual, his/her personal beliefs, values, perceptions, culture and environment.

Context of the Study

The Ponca people have lived in their present location since 1879. For them American education has meant living through a period of government schools, when their children were forcibly removed from them, into the twentieth century when they were offered the possibility of a public education without the problem of being forced from the home environment against their will (Fleet, 1997; Howard, 1965; Jaimes, 1992).

For the children, the American form of education has always meant force, coercion, separation from family, immersion in a hostile environment and irrelevance (DeJong, 1993; Rippa, 1997). Even with the passage of educational laws favorable to the Native American, there has been a marked rejection of education characterized by poor and failing grades, high absenteeism and ultimately, rejection of the entire educational system. For the Ponca student these problems are extreme considering their percentage of the student population.

From the opening of Moor's Charity School in 1617 to educate Indian youth, into the 1700's which saw the opening of William and Mary College and later the initiation of the treating making process which establishes the legal basis for federal policies on Indian education and on into the 1800's when Congress made various appropriations to educate and Christianize the Native American and on the other hand wage genocidal wars to take possession of their lands, through four centuries of educational effort, two things have remained constant in this effort: the effort to re-make the Indian into the image of the white man and the Indian rejection of these efforts (Fleet, 1997; Perry, 1996).

For the Ponca people, this meant, among other things, a forced education at one of several boarding schools. These were Haskell Institute at Lawrence, Kansas; Chilocco Indian school north of Newkirk, Oklahoma, and Cantonment Indian school in Canton, Oklahoma. This form of education completely changed the Ponca society as it had been known for thousands of generations. The Ponca had educated their children in terms of how to live with the earth and how to live with people. The earth is seen as a living being and as such, has a spirit as surely as the Ponca themselves. This being was acknowledged, spoken to and taken into consideration at certain ceremonies. Animals were seen as relatives, as in an extended family. If one killed an animal, it was only for food or self-defense, never for "sport", a concept unknown among the Ponca. When an animal was killed, an apology was given to the animal for having taken its life, but that its body was needed in order that the People would not die. Then a prayer was offered to the Creator commending the spirit of the animal to the Creator. Aspects of the natural world such as the sun, moon, stars, the weather, hills, valleys,

streams, were all seen as possessing spirits and spiritual power. The borders of the Ponca homeland were known and defended by the Ponca military societies. No one was forced to go to war; conscription was unknown among the Poncas. The Ponca teach that the Creator gave us our land in the same fashion that the Jews teach that their god gave them theirs.

The form of government was representative with leaders being elected from each of eight villages. Leadership was not a right, it was an elective process. In the case of war or catastrophe, the leadership position ended when the need for such a leader ended.

Religion was a highly personal matter: no one was required to believe, no one was required to participate in religious ceremonies. In fact there was no religion in the same sense that the white American thinks of religion. The Creator, not god, was seen as not loving or caring, but completely unknowable: therefore, the name of the Creator was never spoken, the Creator was never spoken of casually. The Creator was neither male nor female, and was not a father and had no children. It was not necessary to love the Creator since the Creator was not knowable. What was important was to have a deep sense of compassion for all living things. The first teaching of the Ponca is compassion. This is for all people, Ponca and non-Ponca, Indian and non-Indian and even extends to the living creatures of the earth, since all have spirits. The most important of all ceremonies was the Sun Dance.

Sun Dance was held in the early summer and was part of the ceremonial life of the people which bound them together as one. It was a reaffirming of one's devotion

to the people and one's devotion to the spiritual and was meant to benefit not the individual participant, but the people as a whole.

The Ponca arrived in their present location in 1879 (Howard, 1965). Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania was opened in the same year and a small number of Ponca students were sent. Immediately the practice was to suppress and oppose the further learning of Native American languages and culture by the children so that they might become "civilized". Also their native religion was forbidden so that they might also become "christianized". In 1887 Congress signed into law the Dawes Act (Otis, 1973), also known as the General Allotment Law, which provided for the breakup of the Ponca reservation into one hundred sixty acre, eighty acre, and forty acre plots of land to be given to individual Poncas for their own personal use. This, of course, only had the effect of further destroying the culture and separating the Ponca from their allotments. They had no concept of the private ownership of real estate and were preyed upon by the local white settlers and farmers.

In 1924 the Ponca were declared citizens of the United States. Further laws were enacted by Congress to enhance education, such as laws which forbade the sending of Indian children to schools outside the state in which they lived. But the same laws allowed children and their families to be deliberately starved if they did not cooperate with the Indian agents (Education of Indians).

Throughout this time, from the 1929 Meriam Report to the 1950, laws authorizing Impact Aid to the public schools for Ponca children, to the present, the basic purpose of education remains the same: that is to remake the Indian into the image of the white man. Even with the changing of the century, and almost four

hundred years since the whole educational effort began, the public educational system appears to continue in its effort to remake the Ponca youth into a different image.

For their part the youth are aware of their history and their forced removal to what is now north central Oklahoma. They are aware of the efforts of the public educational system to change them as it did to their parents and grandparents.

Participants

In order to obtain input from a broad base of the Ponca community, two meetings were held with a representative of the Ponca elected leadership, the Director of the Ponca Youth Services and the Ponca Social Services unit. The meetings were held with these officials and the purpose and intent of the study was explained. They understood and supported the purpose of the study and among themselves compiled a list of twenty Ponca youth who lived in the area and who had dropped out of school. This list of participants was compiled with the intent that the background of the participants would be as varied as possible. That is, consideration was given to those who lived in the White Eagle area, those who lived in more rural areas, those who participated in Ponca ceremonies, dances or other activities and those who did not. The youth selected were Ponca males between the ages of 20 and 28. Since leaving school some had gotten a GED, most were not employed and one was attending a community college. All participants had attended the same public school system.

Data Collection Method

This study was conducted utilizing the direct face-to-face interview method. Each participant was interviewed in his own home. The purpose of the interview was explained along with the fact that there were no right or wrong answers, and that all information was confidential and was to be used in the writing of my dissertation. I also had many informal discussions with parents and students who are currently attending the public school system but were interested in my project. Their perspectives and points of view were taken into consideration.

Interview data was collected from each individual participant in his own home. The discussion was open-ended except to the extent of asking the eight interview questions. The participants were allowed to express their thoughts and opinions without any attempt to hold them to any one subject. Permission was obtained to audio tape the interviews. The following eight questions were asked of each participant:

1. What is it like being a Ponca Indian student in the public school system?
2. Tell me what school was like for you?
3. Why did you decide not to finish school?
4. Do you think the public school system would have benefited you had you stayed?
5. What can you think of that would have cause you to want to stay in school and graduate?
6. Tell me about the teachers you had?

7. If you could take the knowledge you have now and go back to a year before you left school, would you have left school?

8. What would you say now to a student thinking of leaving school?

Each participant is a member of the Ponca people and ranged in age from 20 to 28. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 25 minutes. Although the interviews were not lengthy, their quality lay in the content of the answers given (Kavale, 1996).

Five follow-up interviews were conducted with participants who were working, attending a community college, working on a GED and looking for employment. From the time of the initial interview to the time of the follow-up interview, none of the opinions of the participants had changed.

Data Analysis

Bogden and Biklen (1992) define the process of data analysis as "... systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts... to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others" (p.153). Merriam (1998) adds "that the process is highly intuitive; a researcher cannot always explain where an inside (that may later become a finding) came from or how relationships among data were detected" (p.156). She goes on to point out that there are six different kinds of analysis that are commonly used in qualitative research. One of these six is ethnographic analysis. It is defined as a study which "... focuses on the culture and social regularities of everyday life" (p. 156). I believe that because of the uniqueness of the study, that is, the attempt to collect data which reflects the

perspectives of the Ponca male youth, an ethnographic analysis from a very broad and general viewpoint would work best. This approach also allows for the emic perspective which is essential to this study. This approach also works best because the study concerns itself with a particular world view, that of the Ponca youth themselves, who have experienced problems in the public school system allegedly because they are of a different culture and world view.

I began the analysis process by simply reading the transcriptions of the interviews. I did this several times to acquaint myself with, and to become familiar with each transcript. At this time I used no coding or classification scheme.

After I was satisfied that I was familiar with each interview, I began a classification method modeled after Bogden and Biklen (1992) families of codes. They describe eleven different kinds of codes with a definition of each. After studying them, I felt that five of them in particular would be useful in my study. The code heading and definition are provided here:

1. Setting/Concept Code - The most general information on the various settings, topics or subjects, are put here, this will allow the study to be projected into a larger context.

A. School Environment

B. Response to the School Environment

2. Situation Code - Units of data are placed here that tell how the subjects define the setting or particular topics. This includes their world view and how they see themselves in relation to the setting or topic.

A. Educational Atmosphere

- B. Purpose of Education
- C. Necessity of Education
- D. Curriculum
- E. Self-Image

3. Activity Code - This is defined as regularly occurring kinds of behavior that can be relatively informal and lead to other codes.

- A. Participation in Class
- B. Non-participation in Class
- C. Extra-curricular Activities
- D. Inability to participate in Extra-curricular Activities
- E. Fighting
- F. Segregation
- G. Self-segregation

4. Strategy Code - These are tactics, methods, ways, techniques, maneuvers, ploys and other conscious ways people accomplish various things. It is important not to impute motives to people's behavior or, if you do, to realize that you are.

- A. Response to the Environment
 - 1. Segregation
 - 2. Physically removing oneself from the environment
 - 3. Hostile compliance
 - 4. Relationship and Social Structure - These are regular patterns of behavior among people, not officially defined by

the organizational chart. These are friendships, cliques, romances, coalitions, enemies, mentors/students and so forth. More formally defined relations, what social scientists refer to as social roles, role sets, and positions, represent another part of this coding family. The total descriptions of relations in a setting refer to “social structure.”

- A. Ponca students with other Ponca students
- B. Ponca students with other minorities
- C. Ponca students with white students
- D. Ponca students with teachers

These codes were broad and general enough to accommodate an analysis of all the data to create an accurate picture of perceptions of the participants in the study. General themes were formulated based on the analysis. These will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Issues of Rigor and Credibility

All studies, whether qualitative or quantitative, must be conducted in such a way as to show the reader that the study is, in fact, trustworthy and that the data presented is true and was constructed in an ethical manner. This can be done by presenting an accounting of the nature of the study itself. This is accomplished by various means as described by Merriam (1998), Stake (1995), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Eisner and Peshkin (1990) to name only a few. The following sections will

describe how this study was validated using methods described and recommended by these authors.

Member Check

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) the member check “is not only to test for factual and interpretative accuracy but also to provide evidence of credibility, the trustworthiness criterion analogous to internal validity in conventional studies. The comprehensive member check is thus of critical importance to the inquirers, the respondents, and the consumers of the inquiry report” (p. 374). Merriam (1998) states that member checks are “taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible. A number of writers suggest doing this continuously throughout the study” (p. 204). Member checks were used at various points throughout the study with the participants concerning conclusions and assumptions that could be drawn from the statements that were made.

In doing the member check, I took what I considered valid conclusions to the participants statements and reviewed these conclusions with four of the elder Ponca males. After explaining the purpose and intent of the study and their review of my conclusions, I asked their opinions. Their consensus was that my conclusions were correct.

Internal Validity

Merriam (1998) tells us that this “deals with the question of how research findings match reality” (p. 201). Ratcliffe (1983) in Merriam (1998) continues, “data do not speak for themselves, there is always an interpreter or a translator (p. 149)” (p. 202). Lecompte and Preissle (1993) also in Merriam (1998) list four factors that lend support to the claim of high internal validity of ethnographic research:

1. The ethnographer’s common practice of living among participants and collecting data for long periods provides opportunities for continual data analysis and comparison to refine constructs; it ensures a match between researcher categories and participant realities.
2. Informant interviews, a major ethnographic data source are phrased in the empirical categories of participants; they are less abstract than many instruments used in other research designs.
3. Ethnographic analysis incorporates researcher reflection, introspection, and self-monitoring that Erickson (1973) calls disciplined subjectivity, and these expose all phases of the research to continual questioning and evaluation.
4. Participant observation... is conducted in natural setting reflecting the life experiences of participants more accurately than do more contrived or laboratory settings (p. 204).

The internal validity of this study is reflected in the ethnographic method as outlined above. I have lived among the Ponca people all my life and am personally acquainted with all of the participants and the vast majority of the data was obtained through informant interviews.

External Validity

This is also called transferability or generalizability. This is a concept that has caused some consternation for qualitative researchers. The problem is, not looking at

the study with the same perspective as a quantitative study. Merriam (1998) says that “one of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research” (p. 202).

Patton (as cited in Merriam, 1998) states that qualitative research “provide(s) perspective rather than truth, empirical assessment of local decision makers’ theories, and context-bound extrapolations rather than generalizations” (p. 209).

From these statements, one must realize that the qualitative study does not prove anything. It is meant to bring out in the readers mind, new ideas and perspectives on the subject under study, new ways of considering and conceiving of philosophies and world views pertaining to the study.

Reliability

Kerlinger (1973) in Lincoln and Guba (1985) states that reliability is “synonymous with dependability, stability, consistency, predictability and accuracy” and “reliability is not prized for its own sake but as a precondition or validity” (p. 292).

Merriam (1998) defines reliability as “the extent to which research findings can be replicated. Reliability in a research design is based on the assumption that there is a single reality and that studying it repeatedly will yield the same results” (p. 205).

This study was not conducted in an attempt to prove anything about Ponca Indian male youth. Neither was it conducted in an attempt to isolate and subject to empirical examination, any aspect of the social or educational life of the participants.

Rather, this study was conducted to bring out and present to the reader, the ideas, opinions, experiences and perspectives of the Ponca male youth in regard to their educational lives and to attempt to explain or show to the reader the educational lives of these youth as they saw it, experience it and lived it. This reflects a reliable presentation from the perspective of the participants.

Ethics

Merriam (1998) says that the ideas of ethics in research was raised after discovering the Nazi concentration camps, matters pertaining to the uses of nuclear energy and when the physical and psychological abuse of research subjects was discovered. These caused the various professions to develop their own codes of ethics which dealt with the conduct of research involving human beings.

Eisner and Peshkin (1990) define ethics as

the infinitely more complex challenge of doing good, a consideration that places researchers at odds with one another as they raise entirely different questions about the location of good in the conduct of research. And it is, as well, the identification of what constitutes proper behavior in the range of roles, settings, and circumstances where qualitative researchers are apt to find themselves (p. 243).

The collection of data was primarily accomplished through taped interviews, prior to the interviews each participant was informed as to the purpose of the interviews and the disposition of each taped interview after the study was completed.

A research proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board at Oklahoma State University and approved by them. The identity of the participants and

the community studied will remain anonymous. No one was referred to by name in this study.

Summary

In conducting a study such as this, the researcher must present the research honestly and truthfully. The conduct of the study must be reasonable, applying specific methods of research and the work must be complete and painstaking.

Utilizing methods prescribed by experts in the field, I have honestly and faithfully collected data and presented it in this study as required in the case study method.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Introduction

In the closing years of the nineteenth century, Colonel Miller established what became the world famous 101 Ranch, whose headquarters were located within the Ponca reservation. Shortly before any town was built near the 101 Ranch, a man who would later make it famous due to the discovery of oil, was born in, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Ernest Whitworth Marland was born in 1875 to a steel tycoon, who would try to force his son to become a career military officer. Ernest Whitworth Marland, known as E. W. Marland, was named for his mother's father, Ernest Whitworth, who was a famous educator in his native England. E.W's father, the elder Marland, served in the Crimean War and witnessed the much celebrated Charge of the Light Brigade. He is said to have been wounded in the same war and was nursed back to health by none other than Florence Nightingale (Harlow, 1928). After recovery and discharge from the military, he immigrated to the U.S., settled in Pittsburgh and became a wealthy businessman, having become involved in the steel business.

As a child, E. W. Marland was said to have been a “slender, shy child with a singularly commanding presence, a winsome smile and a quaint sense of humor” (Harlow, 1928, p. 251). His father wished him to become a career military officer and got him an appointment to West Point, but the younger Marland failed to gain entrance because of his health.

This disappointed only his father. E. W. then entered the University of Michigan and graduated with a degree in law. By the turn of the century he had built his law practice into a successful enterprise. Being an astute businessman, he understood the practicality and potential profitability of diversification. He therefore purchased land in West Virginia and went into the coal business.

One day while one of his drilling teams was drilling into a coal seam, the platform on which he was standing was suddenly shaken, tossed about, then hurled on its side. It turns out that the drilling bit had struck oil. E. W. Marland was the owner of the first gas/oil well in West Virginia. The year was 1906.

Fearing local competition, he quickly sank his entire fortune into a gas line to provide local merchants and business with natural gas. But before he could recoup his investments, an economic crash seized the eastern United States and his cash outlay to start up his gas line business was lost. This cost him his entire fortune. He was now without economic resources.

In 1908, he heard of the oil fields being developed in the new state of Oklahoma. At this time the majority of drilling was being done around Bartlesville. At about the same time, George Miller of 101 Ranch fame, drilled two or three test wells on his property and they proved to be moderately successful.

Through friends and acquaintances, E. W. had become involved with Mr. Miller on his 101 Ranch oil development effort. In 1908 Mr. Marland came to northern Oklahoma to study the local geology (Harlow, 1928). He drilled a total of eleven wells on the 101 Ranch property and on properties which the 101 Ranch had leased for drilling purposes. The ninth well was on the Ponca Cries for War allotment. It began to produce a great amount of oil and this caused north central Oklahoma to become one of the major oil centers in the United States (Glasscock, 1938).

However, during this time of great economic growth for the United States, the Ponca people were in a downward spiral. The passage of Oklahoma statehood had seen the passage of laws which outlawed the practice of their religion. The Dawes Act, also called the General Allotment Act of 1887, had provided for the absolute destruction of their culture, the breaking up of their lands, which were held in common, and forcing private ownership of land on the people. This in turn brought about a cash economy and the passage of power over the People from the People themselves to the hands of white men. Education was forced on the People and if parents did not comply with educational policy, agents of the federal government were authorized to starve the family until they gave up their children to be educated in the white man's way or otherwise cooperated with the government (Education of Indians). All of this broke the power of the cultural leaders and power now rested in the hands of the federal government and their representatives, generally the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The People no longer had a means to support themselves and their families and some were forced into becoming a circus sideshow for the 101 Ranch Wild West Show, in which

once proud men and women were exhibited as freaks and “savage” Indians for the enjoyment of the local white people.

To a great degree, the Poncas became dependent on the 101 Ranch for work and a place to sell the trinkets and Indian novelties they might come up with. The idea of a “pow-wow” in the Indian world, which is nationally known today, began with the Ponca people at the 101 Ranch in the 1920’s. At this time Poncas held a “going away” dance in late August for the children who were being taken away to boarding school by government agents. Cultural and religious dances had been outlawed by the U.S. government; however, this dance was encouraged by the owners of the 101 Ranch. As white spectators came to watch this dance, it gained notoriety and was named a pow wow. Prior to the demise of the Ponca culture, there was no such thing as a “pow-wow”.

Along with the poverty which gripped the People, with the cultural leadership broken, the People racked by disease, early death, poverty, oppression of their government and religion, alcohol came on the scene like a storm. Stories are told of men spending their meager resources on alcohol instead of caring for their families, mothers having to take their children to sleep out in corn fields so that the drunken males of the People would not find them and do them harm. In addition to this, illegitimate children, i.e. children not claimed by a father, occurred for the first time in Ponca history. The impact of this devastation of the culture continues to this day.

In an attempt to preserve some aspects of their culture, the Ponca welcomed the gift from Quannah Parker, a noted Comanche war leader, around 1910. Parker gave the Ponca a “Fireplace”, this is, the right, to conduct a spiritual ceremony utilizing the

peyote plant. This is called the Native American Church and in a number of states is outlawed because the peyote is a stimulant drug derived from mescal. However, this ceremony gave the Ponca people, when all looked hopeless, the will to survive and to continue to try to preserve their original culture.

For the state of Oklahoma itself, in 1996, there were 3,295,000 people. Kay County, where most of the Ponca live, had a population, in 1996 of 47,200 people. The local economic center supports a population of 26,180 people. For all of Oklahoma, in 1997, the per capita personal income was \$20,214 (Statistical Abstract of Oklahoma, 1998).

The Kay County Manufactures Directory of 1998, says that there are 64 businesses, locally, which support at least ten employees, with one, CONOCO, employing three to 5,000 people. Besides manufacturing, the local economy is agricultural, producing wheat, corn, cotton, soybeans, livestock feed and cattle. Many Ponca men find part-time employment with the local farmers.

The local school district where most of the Ponca youth attend, is composed of eight grade schools, two middle schools and one high school. There are two other schools, a Catholic school and a Lutheran school, but these two schools were not included in this study.

In the public school system there are 308 teachers. Some of the Teachers Aids are Native American, but none of the teaches themselves are identifiably Native American. There are 5,500 students, 12% of which are Native American. Statistical information does not break this down by tribe (MDR's School Directory of Oklahoma, 1998).

Ponca Indians in Kay County

Kay County is a 921 square mile, largely agricultural county with a 1996 census count of 47,200. Its northern border also borders the Kansas state line and is bounded on the east by the Arkansas River, on the south by Noble County and on the west by Grant County. The main population center, just to the north of the Ponca jurisdiction is a center of twenty six thousand one hundred eighty people.

The original Ponca jurisdiction is a twelve square mile block of land purchased from the Cherokee Indians in what was known as the Cherokee Outlet or Cherokee Strip. In 1903, Congress saw fit to disestablish the reservational boundaries of both the Ponca and Otoe Nations. These are the only two Indian nations to have their reservational boundaries disestablished by the federal government. None of the other nations in what is now Oklahoma have had their reservational boundaries disestablished and are yet federally established and recognized reservations. The northern border is what is now Oklahoma State Highway 60, on the east the boundary is the Arkansas River, the southern border is the Ponca, Otoe reservational boundary, on the west is the boundary with the Tonkawa Indians. The Ponca arrived on the present jurisdiction in 1879.

Formerly, the Ponca people had no concept of private ownership of land. The Ponca culture taught that the land belonged to the Creator and that the earth is a spirit as surely as the Ponca themselves are, one cannot own the land any more than one can own the wind or the sky. But with the passage of the Dawes Act of 1887, all this

changed. The Ponca reservation, which up to that time was held in common, was broken up into 160, 80 and 40 acre plots and given to individual Ponca people to farm and live on. This along with the imposition of a cash economy, destruction of the Ponca form of government, the destruction of the Ponca form of worship and the imposition of Christianity, the advent of disease, poverty and the inability to provide for themselves in the social and economic world they now found themselves, had brought the Ponca to the bottom of the American socioeconomic ladder.

Having education forced on them in a brutal manner, the Ponca withdrew from the educational scene and as a result were not able to compete in the local job market. For their part the Ponca people have not done well in their present economic environment. Most work at minimum pay jobs in the job market because they lack the skills to advance into higher paying jobs. Most are laborers, most experience difficulty finding permanent employment, most have no dependable form of transportation, and most have problems with the written word and simple arithmetic. Because they are not able to compete in the local economy for high paying jobs, a vast majority of those living in the reservational boundaries live in subsidized HUD homes. Those who live in the reservational boundaries, generally, do not work in the local economy; they work for the Ponca Indian government. The general feeling among the Ponca is that they will not be hired in the local economy, so why bother. The Ponca Indian government, existing on federal and state grants and contracts, is legally allowed to hire only the Ponca people, if they so desire. This is allowed by the federal "Indian Preference" law.

The Ponca are clustered in their main community of White Eagle. This community was originally known as the Ponca Sub-Agency. It was called this because

the main government agency for the five local nations was located in Pawnee, Oklahoma. In the earlier part of the twentieth century the name was changed to White Eagle. White Eagle was a member of the Blood Clan of the Ponca people and was one of the main leaders in the forced move from the original homeland to their present location. He died in 1914.

The community which is named for him is located five miles inside the north boundary of the jurisdiction along Oklahoma State Highway 177. It originally had the main building in which the Indian agent came from the main Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) office in Pawnee, Oklahoma to take care of leases, determining heirs, land sales or anything else which might arise among the Ponca which the BIA was charged with the responsibility of caring for. By the 1940's this office was closed and anyone having business to care fore had to make the eighty-mile round trip to Pawnee to the BIA offices there. This proved difficult for the Ponca as the majority of them did not have cars. The buildings and houses occupied by the BIA officials were turned over to the People and they were then used as housing for the People as many lived in tents or two and three families to a house.

From the early part of the twentieth century until the late fifties and early sixties, the government of the Ponca was pretty much an informal affair. The majority of the People had no idea of the meaning of sovereignty, they had no idea that the Ponca, despite having made five treaties with the United States government and been dispossessed of their lands in what is now Nebraska and South Dakota, had never given up their right to self-government. The People always knew that the white man had the power of life and death over them. They remembered very well the forced removal and

all the killing that occurred at that time and that no white man had ever been called to account for all the Ponca lives that were wasted and they remember the killing of the Ponca leader, Big Snake, who had gone to visit his relatives among the Cheyenne and on his return was assassinated by the United States cavalry. All they really knew and understood was that the white man had all the power and he had no qualms about killing the Ponca and if he did there was nothing the Ponca could do about it.

It was not until the rise of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's and the corresponding Red Power movement, that the Ponca began to realize that all was not lost. At this time also President Johnson began his war on poverty and large sums of money began to be appropriated for Indian governments. The White Eagle school was closed down in the middle 60's and the newly invigorated Ponca government chose this unused facility to be used as the governmental headquarters. It is still the governmental headquarters today. In the late 1960's a HUD office was set up in the community and all the old buildings were torn down to be replaced by subsidized housing.

At the time of this writing the total enrollment in the Ponca nation is 2,500 according to the enrollment office of the Ponca government. Of this number, 1,500 live in the White Eagle community or areas close to the Ponca jurisdiction. The education office of the Ponca government estimates that sixty to seventy percent of the People have not graduated from high school, but in the 1999-2000 school year, there are fifty-four Poncas in college and three in graduate school. The community is characterized by a large number of HUD homes, a pow-wow grounds on the north side, two large buildings with two smaller buildings which make up the Ponca Indian Methodist church, a large blue building which houses the Ponca Bingo, which subsidizes a large

part of the governmental expenses, a social services center, a jail which also houses the Ponca tribal police and on the south end of the community is a large building called the Cultural Center in which various ceremonies are held. There is a large Indian Health Services clinic in the community which is open five days a week, but after hours, emergency medical services are provided from outside the jurisdiction. The streets of the community are paved, a trash pick up service is provided but the community does not have its own post office or fire department.

The Ponca people realize that the only way to get better employment is through education. They realize that without the proper credentials they cannot get into higher paying jobs.

Description of Participants

Twenty Ponca Indian males who ranged in age from 20 to 28 were participants in this study. They had all chosen to withdraw from the local public school system for various reasons, with the exception of one participant who stated that he was not allowed to come back into the public school system even though he wanted to. He stated that if he had been allowed to return he would have finished school and graduated. Three-fourths of the participants lived in the White Eagle community, the remainder lived in areas immediately adjacent to the Ponca jurisdiction. Two of the participants, since being interviewed, have moved out of state for employment but have promised to return. Eight have gotten their GED's since leaving school, one has enrolled in a local community college, two are enrolled at the local vo-tech school. At

temporary jobs, two have part time jobs and the remainder are unemployed. The majority of the participants lived with their parents or a sibling, none have served in the military, seventeen of the twenty have spent some time in jail, one is self-employed. Nine of the participants were married, all had at least one child, none were married to non-Indians. One participant read poetry and English literature as a favorite pastime, one is composing a book of poetry for sale. Six of the participants take an active part in cultural activities, all say they attend such activities at one time or another. All who lived within the Ponca jurisdiction lived in subsidized housing.

Ponca students attend school in the local public school district where many of the Ponca students drop out. In an effort to understand the reasons why Ponca students drop out, this study focused on twenty Ponca Indian males who had dropped out and their perceptions of the reasons surrounding their dropping out.

Discussion of Themes

There were several major themes which surfaced consistently in interviewing the participants. It is difficult to say with certainty which would be most important; they all had a direct bearing on the ideas, attitudes and opinions of the participants. The order of presentation is not significant. They are as follows:

Reasons why Ponca males do poorly in public schools

Lack of caring teachers:

As the participants got into higher grades, the teachers showed little concern and didn't seem to the participants to really care if the student learned anything or not. Over and over participants related their impression that the teachers didn't care if they learned anything.

Really, the teacher could have shown more interest toward me and like that. More interest toward me and like cared more, helped me out more. And bringing my grades up. It was like in school, if I didn't, if I failed or if my grades were getting low then that was it. They didn't really care, your grades were low and that was it. Seems like they didn't try to help me to bring them up or anything like that... I'd say they didn't show much interest in what I had going on, like my grades. Like I said, if they're getting low, they didn't really care. Like they should be trying to help me bring them up just to help me out. But, I don't recall any of that. Like if I were failing, they didn't really care. Seems like if they'd showed more interest or anything I'd feel more better about school. (Interviewee # 6)

... they weren't helpful or encouraging. They didn't never try to do anything to help. (Interviewee #13)

The biggest concern seemed to be that the student not cause any trouble or disrupt any of the classes. As long as the student remained silent and passive, they didn't get into any trouble

... they didn't care if you weren't there so long as I just sat there and didn't bother anybody else they didn't care... [I] might as well not even be there. (Interviewee #5)

"Throughout grade school they were just like police.... They were completely like police." (Interviewee #1)

"I had a couple good teachers, but most of them it didn't seem like they gave a damn." (Interviewee # 5)

"I'd say they didn't show much interest in what I had going on, like my grades. Like I said, if I, if they're getting low they didn't really care." (Interviewee # 10)

Overt Discrimination

Often the teachers lack of interest was seen as racially motivated. The participants felt that some of the teachers were outright hostile to Indian students and that Indian students were treated differently than white students and other minorities.

I remember [teacher's name] I just didn't like him. There was a mess of 'em. I can't even remember. Especially that one science teacher.... He didn't like Indians. We all got to sit where we wanted, all us Indians kind of sat together. He picked on certain ones of 'em. He kinda knew who was slow and who wasn't. And them Indians who weren't too quick on their feet thinking, he used to pick on 'em as I recall. He didn't do that to any of this white brothern. And ... there was that one guy, he taught history, American history. He used to always talk about how great this country is, and all this and all that. And it was alright that them white people came and killed us and gave us diseases and ran us off our land and all that. I can't remember his name, but I remember he taught American history. And that other guy who taught U.S. government, he was the same way too. (Interviewee #15)

... they never really, they more or less, you know, helped out white kids and other people than us, you know lookin at us, kinda overlooked us. (Interviewee #2)

And then, sometimes they [teachers, white students] would single you out, especially when I was young and I was, I wore braids. They would single us out and make fun of our last names, make fun of the way we dressed. But as we got older, and I would say because we were physically their size, they didn't do that so much any more. (Interviewee # 8)

Any Indian kid that grows up, well at least from my school, my generation, any of 'em that tell you that they never experienced or saw [racism] is a liar, because it was everywhere. (Interviewee # 18)

... there are some prejudiced teachers. They did act different toward us and favored whites, but they treated all minorities that way. (Interviewee # 16)

I think the one's that didn't like me, they didn't like me because of who I was. 'Cause I was a Ponca Indian, you know. They didn't, well, for that matter they didn't like Blacks, Mexicans, seemed like they'd kind nit pick us. (Interviewee # 7)

Subtle Racism

The school environment was viewed as exhibiting aspects of subtle racism which not only added to frustration and hostility, but also encouraged the participants to leave the public educational system.

We were getting into fights all the time, and as long as you didn't beat up on white kids they didn't really seem to care. (Interviewee # 18)

And they always said that I had a negative attitude so they always didn't really accept what I had to say. (Interviewee # 15)

And anybody else that would have made straight F's, they would have gotten held back a grade, but they went ahead. I guess they just wanted us out of there. (Interviewee # 14)

You know, just being Indian, that does change the way they [students and teachers] think and the way they act towards you. And, uh, it just, I don't know, it just makes you feel different. You know you're different. And then, and it shows on their, in the way they act, their attitudes. I don't know, you just, you just know you're different when you're up there. (Interviewee # 19)

Uh, you know, like one day, uh, I had the friend of mine's nun chucks and... I went straight to the office, I went there and showed them to 'em, and told them, you know, I'm going to hold these for, uh, my friend. I said, could you guys hold 'em, or could I put 'em in my locker, and, you know, they acted all right, and then they said just hold on, and then they went and called the police on me and I got took away from school and, this was when I was in the eighth grade and they took me away and put me in a maximum security lockup facility and they didn't tell my mom or nothin. My mom and them didn't know where I was at for two days. (Interviewee # 20)

Racist Curriculum

The curriculum was seen by the participants as not reflecting their culture and life experiences. There was also a sense that a curriculum perceived as racist was a teacher's subtle way of teaching his/her own racist opinions:

S Ummm, school wasn't meant for, it wasn't meant for the minority. I know, I know for a fact and it sure wasn't made for no Indians. I remember

some of those teachers used to flat out have some racist things [laughter] to say from time to time. They didn't come out and just say it, they kinda snuck it in there, in the phrases and how they went about doing things and what not.

I Give me a for instance

S Ummm, my English literature teacher used to have to make us, we used to have to read stories about, what do you call them, not my English teacher, the literature one, we used to have to read stories about all sorts of stuff. And in there, in particular, there was one about, there were all kind of fictional stories, but still I remember we had to read one about Indians and we had to read one about Blacks. And each time we were, the minorities in each story were always made out to be the bad guys as I recall. And might know, here comes this, the one who was going to save everybody, the blond haired white guy would come and save everybody from the, the villain, so to speak, the minorities, from the savages. And the way they played them Indians where they were all dirty hair, dirty clothes, like that. And Blacks were the same way. Yeah, I remember that.

I Well, why did you decide not to finish school?

S 'Cause there was like no, uh, 'cause it's not based on, on my values and how I, how I see things. And that, the school is not set up for, for minorities whether they be Black or Indians or Hispanics or whomever. It's not, it's not made that way for them, for their, for their own kind, I guess. It's alright if, if you're a white guy, you're average red neck." (Interviewee #4)

They wouldn't teach our history. They wouldn't acknowledge us.
(Interviewee # 3)

I just particularly hated it because it was just nothing but, it was all just white people. White this, white that. (Interviewee # 11)

Them guys, they'd try to talk to us like we were white. (Interviewee # 9)

They used to make us say, sing that one song. Anyways it says something about being proud to be an American, something like that. And, you know as you grow up, you know, we know we ain't Americans. (Interviewee # 3)

... there wasn't too much of it in school [Native American history] around here. [We should learn] our own history and past. It would probably be more interesting to learn about that. (Interviewee #9)

Perspectives on Public Schools

Forces you to give up cultural identity

For a Native American group, such as the Ponca, cultural identity is very important and very strong. In the case of the participants in this study, it is an important way of identifying themselves, who they are and where they belong in the world.

If you, if you just simply saw differently then they didn't want you, then you were crazy, and they just didn't like you. So, I didn't like it. I didn't like it at all. (Interviewee #14)

... you had to be like, like, you would have to forget who you are in order to go further. Like I'd have to give up what makes me, me and all this. I'm not giving that up for nobody. (Interviewee #1)

It had it drawbacks in being that at the time I really hated how we were all lumped as Americans because I never felt like an American because Americans to me are whites, blacks, Hispanics and oriental and whatever have you. And that's not what we were. Americans were the ones under the star spangled banner and the star spangled banner flew over the soldiers that were killing our people all along to begin with. And they wouldn't teach our history. They wouldn't acknowledge us. They said things just from their own point of view that were offensive. And they probably didn't even mean. (Interviewee #17)

They never gave us any sort of idea as to that they would support us unless we totally compromised ourselves and our situation and just completely blend in. (Interviewee # 20)

The environment was, the teachers and all that made it to where you had to be like, like, you would have to forget who you are in order to go further. Like you have to, I'd have to give up what makes me me and all this. I'm not giving that up for nobody. (Interviewee # 6)

Usefulness of Diploma

For the vast majority of participants education meant only getting a good job one that did not mean a life of hard, physical labor. They saw a high school diploma as a means to getting a better job or joining the military. Most, though not all, said they would go back and get a diploma, but again, it was only so that they could get a better job.

If you wanted to work hard and bust your back and work all, you get to go to work before the sun comes up and you get to work well past it goes down, you don't, you don't even have to have a GED, or you could have a GED. But, if you want a job that pays real good and you want, and you want to work eight or ten hours a day, and probably make more money in that one day than you probably did three quarters of the week working one of them back breaking jobs, you need your high school diploma. 'Cause, if you don't have it, you'll be out there with a sharp shovel. (Interviewee #7)

I What would you say now to an Indian guy that's thinking of quitting school?

S I'd try to tell him to stay in school. It's better.

I What are the advantages that make it better?

S You get to know more people and make friends. Eventually you run into them later on down the line. They can always help you get a better job. (Interviewee #5)

We need to be educated... to compete with white people, we're not educated enough... there's not enough qualified.... Native Americans. (Interviewee #9)

However, being educated to compete with white people does not, in the minds of some participants translate into getting a job:

I Do you think the Ponca City school system would have benefited you had you stayed in and graduated?

S It may and it may not have, depending on where you live at. If you'd a lived around here, no. It wouldn't have mattered. But, if you was to, like where I live out in Phoenix, it'd matter out there if you graduated or not, 'cause there's a lot of places that won't even hire you even if you do have a GED. They want a high school diploma. If you don't have that, then better get on out the door...it probably wouldn't matter around here [Ponca City] anyways, 'cause these white people they don't think too high of us Indians in Kay County. (Interviewee #18)

I Do you think the school system would have benefited you had you stayed in school?

S Yeah, probably... probably getting into other schools. I'd probably still be going to school.

I So you think it's important to go to school?

S Yeah. If I didn't luck out and get this job I've got now, I'd probably be working twice as hard for twice as less... or helping [name] and those guys dig graves when people die. (Interviewee # 3)

Within a racist system some caring teachers

Not all of the experiences of the participants were negative. “ Actually, the teacher's, a lot of them I had when I got into high school and junior high, they were pretty decent teachers” replied one participant.

I learned how to do my Algebra pretty good from [teacher's name].... She was the only person, I noticed, that she wanted you to learn no matter who you were. She took whoever you might have been, your ethnic background, she didn't care about that. She wanted to teach you how to do math. (Interviewee #19)

She was fair. If you got her mad, she didn't care who you are, she was going to let you know. And she was fair, she and Ms.[teacher's name], they were both

fair people. But, other than that, I can't think of a single person. (Interviewee #16)

They were alright, but there's not a lot of 'em that are dedicated. You can tell if they're there just to get the check. They just do their job. And then there's maybe a handful that are, I think are real good teachers. (Interviewee #8)

Ninety percent of them were alright. I liked almost all my teachers, but there were a few that treated, not to me, but to everybody else, seemed like of color, seemed like they treated them different. I'm sure a lot of other people could tell you that too. (Interviewee #15)

There were two teachers that I can remember, well three teachers, that I can remember that... probably cared about what I was doing there with myself and... she told me that I was too articulate and too intelligent, and that I didn't belong in her class, so she marched me down to the principal's office and the counselor and got the counselor and told them to move me up [to a higher level class]. (Interviewee # 15)

Reasons for withdrawing from school

The participants gave a wide variety of reasons for leaving the educational system. These ranged from personal problems and racial problems to negative interactions with school administrators.

Pregnancy

Oh, well, mine was different, you know. I, I got her pregnant and we both, we both dropped out and I was working at this little Mexican restaurant and thought I'd try to, you know, support my little family, you know. (Interviewee # 5)

I How come you didn't finish school?

S Uh, 'cause of my oldest boy was born. So I just dropped out and started working because of my son. (Interviewee # 8)

Racism (subtle/overt)

They pushed me and [name] on first lunch, but they put all the other Indians on third lunch. And then all the upper class white people that we didn't even know and didn't even want to know that's who we got stuck with. So, fourth hour was lunch, so we'd skip fourth hour just hit all the lunch crews, just wait so we could visit everybody. And we did that for about two weeks before they finally caught us (laughter). And then, anybody else on the first offence, truancy, I think the policy was you get detention, which is an hour after school for every class that you skipped. Now see, this should have been first offences. But instead they just went ahead with the maximum penalty which was the fifth step and kicked us out.... Then whenever I did get kicked out, that principal said, well you could either drop out and then you can come back next semester or we'll kick you out and you can't come back 'til next year. So I said "All right then. I'll drop out." So then when next semester was coming up, me and Mom went back up there and they said, uh, "Can you name me one teacher, that you can think of, one of your teachers, that, that can tell me that they think you can finish high school?" And then I didn't know any of my teachers really, I mean, like that, whenever I was there, I was just, you know, sit in the back, mind my own business, don't talk to nobody... So the only thing I could think of was [name]. He said, "No, don't say [name] 'cause she told me to go ahead and kick you out." And she [name] is supposed to be there to help Indians stay in school. (Interviewee # 2)

If we didn't drop out then we got kicked out... Indians don't like white people and white people don't like Indians. (Interviewee # 9)

Well, me I finished the twelfth grade, but lacked three or four credits. They were solid credits... the thing was ... how they push for you to get, you know a diploma, a high school diploma. Well, I went up there and I talked to 'em and I had [name] with me and the thing was she, he more or less, pushed for me to get my GED at the time.... He's [principal] like more or less trying to talk me into getting my GED. And I said "I don't know. I'd like to get my diploma, 'cause I went to school for about fourteen years." And [name] kinda helped me out, you know, she was kinda given an argument. But he more or less pushed me. So, I kinda got offended, mad over that, so that's why I didn't come back, so let's screw it, you know, I'll just go try to find a job for now. You know, if he wants to be that way. So that's pretty much the main reason that I didn't go back. (Interviewee # 4)

Irrelevant Curriculum

It was completely irrelevant to me. I didn't, I found out that, uh, I could still go to college without a, uh, high school diploma. (Interviewee # 13)

There was like no, uh, 'cause it's not based on my values and how I see things. The school is not set up for, for minorities whether they be Black or Indians or Hispanics or whomever. It's not, it's not made that way for them, for their own kind I guess. It's alright if you're a white guy, your average red neck. (Interviewee # 11)

He [American History teacher] used to get on my nerves. He used to always talk about how great this country is and all this and all that, and he was alright that them white people came and killed us and gave us diseases and ran us off our own land and all that. (Interviewee # 10)

Recommendations

Stay in School to get a diploma

I think I would of stayed in and probably tried a little better, myself... tried to overlook everything, all the teachers and stuff like that.(Interviewee # 10)

In all honesty, I would tell [them] don't quit. Stay in there, 'cause it's easier to get into a university or the military. (Interviewee # 16)

I'd probably try to tell 'em to hang in there, but you know they ain't, they ain't going to listen to you. (Interviewee # 5)

I What would you say now to a student that's thinking about leaving school?

S Don't. (Interviewee # 9)

I What would you say now to a student that was thinking of leaving school?

S I'd have to encourage them. I'd have to encourage them to go back.
(Interviewee # 12)

I'd tell 'em not to drop out, you know try to, you know, tough it out if you could, you know. Get your education.... Encourage them to go ahead and finish and get your diploma and stuff like that. (Interviewee # 19)

Segregated School

The current public educational system was soundly faulted for not teaching anything from the Native American perspective, and all of the participants without exception said they felt that for the good of future Ponca students, a segregated school system would be best.

[We should have] a racially segregated school with racially segregated curriculum and teachers. I wouldn't have minded being so much around Hispanic or black students in that they pretty much come from the same sort of environment and atmospheres that we do, reservations and ghettos and barrios aren't all that different from each other and, uh, the fact that blacks and Mexicans have been just as much under the boot as we have. And I feel that, that, uh, the only real solution in the end is gonna have to be racial segregation in the schools. At least, Indians should be separate. And we should, if not be equal to them then we should be superior to them. (Interviewee #1)

Participants felt that this segregated system should teach Ponca history, culture, language, ceremonies, all things that give the Ponca their identity as well as useful information in dealing with the majority culture and be under tribal jurisdiction:

It should be under the Ponca government, on Ponca land. The three most important things that I think should be taught aside from reading, writing and arithmetic, should be Ponca history, from our point of view, the Ponca language and that should be taught instead of English in the early on. And the last thing is that there should be a class that teaches, or at least the curriculum that may span grades that teaches sovereignty, what sovereignty is and what sovereignty means. And the implication and the use of it in this day and age. And I guess a fourth thing that should come about is there should be at least, maybe not a class, but at least some sort of example set up that would teach Indian kids to get along better in the white world. And, what I mean by this is that Indians, Indians just their very manner tends to scare or offend white people and then

Indians should understand that just the very manner and indirect or unintentional what that white people talk and speak offends Indians, and that it just seems like right now there's just not too many people that span that bridge very well in being that whites want to stare you right dead in the eye and Indians don't necessarily look at people when they talk and that generates friction between the two that doesn't even have to be. (Interviewee #12)

Teach them their language, their culture. Stuff that the white man can't teach, doesn't know and doesn't have. (Interviewee #11)

[Teach them] their language, their own history, their own culture, and just let 'em know they ain't white. 'Cause them guys they tried to talk to us like we were white. (Interviewee #3)

Participants felt the school should also emphasize extra curricular activities. It was felt by some of the participants that being able to participate in these activities would give the Ponca student a better feeling about himself and his ability in school, generally. Also participation in extra curricular activities would be an added incentive to come to school and have a positive attitude about school itself.

S I'd want everybody to be involved in some kind of activity like sports or something. Because, if you're good at something and you enjoy it, I think it tends to make you want to stay, want to go and be eligible to go and do that stuff and go places....When I was at Riverside that's what I did. I did cross country, and track and we went everywhere. And I got involved in a group called TSA and it was, I enjoyed it 'cause we went to colleges and we just go and watch movies or something on technology. It made my time in school better. It made me want to keep my grades up so I could go places.

I So you think that probably sports is one of the more important things for Indian kids?

S No, 'cause I wouldn't say just that 'cause you can be involved in, like, they have those debate classes and stuff like that, that might be for someone else, someone else might enjoy sports, but just as long as they get, if they get active n something it will keep them wanting to keep their grades up.

(Interviewee #4)

Summary

School itself was not seen by the participants as a place of learning the “well rounded” education. School was a place of dissension, hatred, discord, being forced to be there, being forced to be among people they didn’t want to associate with, being forced into learning something which was either boring, uninteresting or held to be irrelevant.. They reported that the only way they could succeed in such a system was to be a white man, and the participants said they could not agree to such a condition.

The majority of topics, themes and subjects brought out by the interviews were negative and condemning of public education in general. Singled out for the most condemnation were high school teachers, administrators and the curriculum of the high school. I feel that it is significant that all the participants felt that segregation is the only answer. The system seems to have failed them so completely that they withdrew themselves from the public school system and saw a segregated system as the only viable solution for the education of Ponca students. The participants were very enthusiastic about the possibility of a separate school for Ponca children. They spoke about teachers, curriculum, location and when it could be established. They were very positive about and supportive of such a possibility.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS

In thinking about this study, the participants and what the study seems to mean for education and the Ponca people, I am reminded of an historical story related by Robert A. Williams, Jr., in his book, The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest (1990). He relates that in August 1246, Guyak, grandson of Genghis Khan of the Mongols, was to be formally given the seat of elected Great Khan of the Mongols. The Mongols at this time ruled the largest empire the world has ever seen, exceeding even that of the Romans at the height of their power. Also at this same time the new Pope in Rome, Innocent IV, elected to send one Friar John of Plano Carpini, a pupil of Francis of Assisi, to take two “gifts” to the new Khan. These two gifts were to be two letters from the Pope. The sending of this envoy by the Pope served two important purposes. First the Pope was rightly concerned over dissension within the Western Christian nations, Charlemagne’s Germanic successors refusal to accept Pope Gregory VII doctrine that the Pope was to rule over all Christendom, including kings and princes and the resulting wars, and secondly to ascertain the intention of the new Khan, specifically his military plans concerning Christian Europe.

The Pope's letters were quite blunt and distinctly non-diplomatic. Williams says that

the first of Innocent's letters sought to instruct the Mongol Khan in the rudiments of enlightened Christian doctrine. God, the Father of all men, with "unutterable loving-kindness", Innocent wrote to the Mongol, had sent from the lofty throne of heaven down to the lowly region of the world "His only begotten Son," Christ the Savior. Consubstantial with God Himself, this Son had been "conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost in the womb of a fore-chosen virgin" and had revealed himself in a form visible to all men (p.4).

The letter goes on to tell the Great Khan that this god-man had died for the sins of all mankind, rose from the dead on the third day and went into heaven to be with the Father-God. Before leaving for heaven this god-man had appointed a "vicar" to look after and care for the souls of all men. Innocent then informed the Great Khan that he, Innocent, occupied that position now and he, Innocent was greatly concerned over the souls of the Great Khan and his, the Mongol, people. The Pope's letter went on to inform the Great Khan that he, the Pope, was now obligated to lead the Great Khan and his people, the Mongols, from "error and into the way of truth" (p. 5).

The second letter simply scolded the Mongol leader because his armies had enjoyed great success against the European Christian armies they had faced. Innocent said that there was a natural and divine law that the Mongols were violating because they had enjoyed great military success against the Christians. The Great Khan was instructed to cease his persecution of Christians and to do penance to ward off the wrath of God. He ended his letter by warning the Great Khan that if he didn't stop his warring against the Christians, the Christian god would take revenge on him, the Great Khan, if not in this life, then in the next.

“Fortunately for Friar John, the Mongol’s notion of international law extended immunity to an ambassador of a foreign nation” (p. 5). The Great Khan is reported to have listen intently to the messages from the Pope and asked only that the Friar take a message back to the Pope.

In his letter the Great Khan said that the Pope should “come at once to serve and wait upon us. At that time, I shall recognize your submission” (p. 5). The Great Khan dismissed as absurd Innocent’s contention that he, the Pope, was God’s representative on earth. He told the Pope that the Mongol belief was that God’s wishes and commands were made known through the Great Khan, not the Pope. And, in addition to that, how could the Pope be certain that he was God’s agent on earth? The Great Khan argued that the Mongol’s successes at war were God’s will; if it were not so, it would not have happened.

What I find significant about this story is what Williams goes on to point out

As Pope Innocent’s letters to the Great Khan of the Mongols signify, the “West” has sought to impose its vision of truth on non-Western peoples since the Middle Ages. In seeking the conquest of the earth, the Western colonizing nations of Europe and the derivative settler-colonized states produced by their colonial expansion have been sustained by a central idea: the West’s religion, civilization, and knowledge are superior to religions, civilizations, and knowledge of non-Western peoples. This superiority, in turn, is the redemptive source of the West’s presumed mandate to impose its vision of truth on non-Western peoples (p. 6).

Looking now at this study, the participants see the public school system perpetuating the attitude exhibited by Pope Innocent IV from so many centuries ago. As pointed out by the participants, the public education system forces a curriculum on them which glorifies the dominant society while failing to recognize the Ponca culture, and proposes the idea of a superior teaching the inferior. The idea that the Native

American has nothing in his culture worth learning, saving, perpetuating, applying to one's self, seems to be alive and well in the educational system.

Summary of Findings

Findings of the Review of Literature

The purpose of this study was to discover the reasons why Ponca Indian males do poorly in the public educational system. The study was conducted with 20 Ponca males who had withdrawn from the public educational system before graduating.

Education for the Native American can be viewed as a problem of power. The Native American has been almost completely powerless to have an effective means of impacting the social and economic system in which they have found themselves. The dominant culture has defined what is good and relevant. This idea of what is good and desirable becomes part of the curriculum and is then taught in schools. The Native American has had no power at all to affect this system.

A summary of the review of literature for Native Americans shows that the parents and grandparents of the participants in this study were exposed to an atmosphere that did not value their culture and language and taught them the culture and values of the dominant culture. This is the same kind of atmosphere which has caused the participants to withdraw from the current educational system.

The loss of power can be seen most dramatically with the uprooting of the Ponca people from their homeland in South Dakota and Nebraska against their will. They were herded south, like cattle, by the U.S. Cavalry into what is now Oklahoma

(Brown, 1970; Jackson, 1964; Wishart, 1994). On the two years it took to arrive in Indian Territory, a great number of Ponca people were killed or died, among them were many elders who traditionally provided a knowledge of history and culture by which the younger generation had been educated.

No literature exists on how the Ponca continued to educate their children and youth on arriving in their present location in 1879. However, the literature which records the relationship of the federal government with Native Americans in general shows that the earliest attempts at education of the Native Americans by white Americans began in 1617. This initial attempt proved unsuccessful because of cultural differences between the Native Americans and the white Americans and the social differences which led to war between the two parties. As the white Americans consolidated their hold on the east coast, they began to assume the education of those natives who were not consumed by war, disease and poverty. Small appropriations by Congress to "civilize" and "Christianize" the Native Americans were made. Throughout the 1700's and into the 1800's, Congress, through various means, continued their attempts to educate Indians. The purpose of education was to change the Indian into a white man (Brown, 1991; DeJong, 1993; Jaimes, 1992; Nabokov, 1999; Rippa, 1997).

Within the last twenty to twenty-five years, the government has begun to allow Native Americans some input into their own education. However, except to make bureaucratic changes within the existing education system, there appears to be no significant change in the various aspects of public education which have historically posed problems for Native American students. The conflict of cultural values, societal

values, philosophies and worldviews of the white American and the Native American continue. The participants in this study saw no way to change the system, so they dropped out.

Findings from the Interviews

Records of the local public educational system shows that a disproportionately high number of Native Americans drop out of the system before graduating. Therefore this study was initiated to focus on the perceptions of 20 Ponca Indian males who had withdrawn from the public education system without graduating. The participants were interviewed in an informal setting and were asked the following questions:

1. What was it like being a Ponca Indian student in the public school system?

The participants perceived the experience in the public school system as being extremely negative. They saw themselves as being forced and coerced into a system which was both hostile and basically irrelevant to them. They were forced to learn a curriculum in which their people and culture was not included.

2. Tell me what school was like for you?

School was good only to the extent that the participants were able to socialize. At the upper levels, especially in high school, the curriculum was seen as a confirmation of the teachers' racist attitudes. Also the participants felt over-looked and left out of the process.

3. Why did you decide not to finish school?

Not all the participants left on their own. Several participants were not allowed to come back to school after being expelled. Others were encouraged to get a GED rather than a high school diploma. Others left because they felt that it was too much of a constant battle between themselves and the system. Some of the participants quit school when their girlfriends got pregnant so they could go to work and support their family.

4. Do you think the public school system would have benefited you had you stayed?

All but one stated that they felt that had they been able to finish it would have been a benefit to them. They saw a high school diploma as a means for economic gain or entrance into the military. None stated a desire to learn or the desire for a well-rounded education.

5. What can you think of that would have caused you to want to stay in school and graduate?

All stated that a strong inducement would have been cultural relevance and extra-curricular activities which they were not allowed to become involved in, in the public education system. Cultural relevance was defined as being able to learn the Ponca language, history and culture. Extra-curricular activities were defined as sports and athletic competition as well as debate and non-sports activities which they were not allowed to participate in.

6. Tell me about the teachers you had?

Elementary and some middle school teachers were seen as good and helpful. The high school teachers were almost all seen as bad. The participants all saw the high school teachers as being racist, because of their use of the curricula, the way in which it was taught and presented, and uncaring because they felt the teachers intentionally overlooked them or did not interact with students.

7. If you could take the knowledge you have now and go back to a year before you left school, would you have left school?

The vast majority of the participants stated that they would have tried to stay in school and graduate. The only reason given for this was economic gain. Well-paying jobs were easier to get with a diploma than a GED. A minority of the participants said they would have left no matter what.

Their reason being that it was simply too much of a fight and was basically irrelevant.

8. What would you say now to a student thinking of leaving school?

Most of the participants stated that they would encourage a student to stay in school and graduate. They pointed out the same reasons, to be able to get a better job or join the military. Only a small minority talked about furthering their education with a high school diploma.

Interview transcripts were reviewed and categorized into topics and themes and these results were found:

Teachers -- Grade school teachers were seen as being more caring and helpful. As the participants got into higher grades the teachers were seen as caring less. Some junior high and mostly high school teachers were considered outright racist in their speech and actions as perceived by the participants. The participants also felt that a racist curriculum was also the teacher's way of subtly teaching or expressing the teachers own racist feelings.

Curriculum – The curriculum was seen by the participants as not reflecting or representative of their own lives and culture. When asked what kind of curriculum the Native student should be taught, they all felt that a curriculum in which they were taught their own culture, history, language, ceremonies and all other things which give the Ponca their identity was the only way to effectively keep the Ponca student in school to graduate. Also all spoke of the necessity of a segregated educational system for Ponca students.

Perceived Meaning of Education – The majority of the participants saw education only as a means of escaping hard physical labor. Education was not viewed as a vehicle of learning or expanding one's intellectual horizons or learning anything. It is seen only as a means of getting a better job and making more money. Most said that if given the opportunity they would go back to school and get a diploma, but, again this was only to get a better job.

Desire for a segregated system – The public educational system was condemned by all participants for irrelevancy and racism. Everything was taught from the perspective of the dominant society; the minorities were marginalized and not given credit or validation in the system. The participants all expressed a desire to learn only

their own history, culture and language, but yet at the same time be taught how to successfully deal with the majority culture. They felt that a segregated educational system for Ponca students should be on Ponca land, be under Ponca control, the curriculum should be taught from the Ponca perspective. Ponca history should be taught along with the concept of sovereignty. Extra-curricular activities, including sports, should be emphasized because they felt these activities would give the student a good feeling about himself.

Positive Aspects – Not all participants saw public education was absolutely negative. Some teachers were seen as being very good and dedicated to their work, concerned that the student learn regardless of the student's ethnicity. Other participants saw school as a positive place for social interactions with girls, and a place to make friends who later were helpful in gaining employment or encouraging them in college or vocational-technical school. Some also saw school as a place to learn how to get along with different kinds of people.

Recommendations

The Public Educational System

The Ponca male youth on whom this study centered are very negative concerning the public educational system. It is seen by the participants as being racist, uncaring with a curriculum that is biased and irrelevant to them. From the beginning of public education for the Native American in 1617, the constant and unending theme has

been to teach the Native American that he is inferior and needs to change from who and what he is to being a brown white man. For instance, the participants report that nowhere does the public education system praise or validate the Ponca culture or identity.

The educational system does not address what the participants see as being important or meaningful in their lives, who they are or their life experiences. They did not see education as a means of learning or coming to know the world and all it's inhabitants in a more profound, eloquent or explicit way. They perceived education only as a means to get more money, eliminating economic problems in their lives or gaining material possessions.

If we are to follow the words of Schubert (1986), Dobson & Dobson (1981), Dobson, Dobson & Koetting (1985), Glatthorn (1994), Goodlad (1984), and Sowell (1993), then we must accept that radical change is needed in education for the Native American. According to these educators, the ultimate aim of education should be one where the learner can see the value, meaning, and relevance in what is taught in schools. The learner should be able to see how these aspects of education fit into their lives and how their lives are made richer and more meaningful for it. The educational system should teach a desire for learning, an appreciation for knowledge and the ability to see how this learning and knowledge has practical application to their lives, not only in the area of economics and material well-being, but also in caring for the earth, inclusion of those who are different from themselves, and an appreciation for other cultures, belief systems and governments.

The Ponca student does not fit into the current American public education picture. The Ponca student needs to be provided with a separate, segregated educational system which will provide the Ponca student with the identity and social reinforcement the participants feel is required of an educational system.

Perspectives on Education for Ponca Students

The Ponca participants in this study expressed great concern over the necessity of education. Although the current educational system is seen as an “enemy” system, that is, thoroughly hostile to the Ponca learner, and exclusively the domain of the white man, all participants acknowledged the need and necessity of obtaining a quality education in order to survive the social and economic system they live in. However, in expressing their concern for this educational need, all participants believed that the only secure way for the Ponca student to get through the system, graduate and be assured of a reasonable chance to gain employment was for the Ponca people to establish a separate and segregated educational system. This is seen as necessary because the public educational system is seen as racist and bigoted against the Ponca student. The participants state that this system should be established on Ponca land, be operated by the Ponca people through their government, and have a curriculum taught from the Ponca perspective, which would include Ponca language, Ponca songs and ceremonies and cultural knowledge that give the Ponca learner a Ponca identity. Additionally, they felt this school should also teach the Ponca learner how to successfully contend with the dominant society including teaching the differences

between the white man's view of the world and the Ponca view and the concept of sovereignty.

The desire for and idea of a segregated system is a valid idea. The Ponca, for untold generations prior to the coming of the white man, completely controlled the education of their young. With the confiscation of their homelands by the American government, the deliberate destruction of their culture, society, government and religion, the introduction of private ownership of land and a cash economy, and the forced education of their children, the Ponca have sunk deeper and deeper into the intricate entanglement of an alien society which invalidates who they are and requires them to be someone and something they are not. The participants in this study are aware of this invalidation and called for a return to segregation, at least in education.

There is no literature on the education of segregated Ponca students. Therefore Afrocentric educational literature was reviewed to find examples of segregated school systems. Writing of various educators such as Murrell (1993), Fordham and Ogbu (1986), Cross (1991) and Leake and Leake (1992) were reviewed and ultimately rejected as a paradigm for a Ponca school on the grounds that the basic reasons for separation are different. Compared to society and culture of white America, on which these Afro-centric schools are based, the Ponca have a much different history, culture, language, society, religion, government, philosophy and worldview. To be successful, the education of the Ponca student should be based on the Ponca pedagogical beliefs.

Ideally, the Ponca system of education would involve as much of the student's family as possible. Primarily the school is established for the Ponca learner, children and students, but will be open to all persons desiring to learn.

I believe that before the concept of segregation is even attempted, everyone should fully understand the meanings and implications of the word. In my opinion, even though the participants use the word "segregation" what would be best is a culturally relevant curriculum for Ponca students. The culturally relevant curriculum would teach all that the participants ask for and yet prepare the Ponca student for the world of the dominant society. Also, in the culturally relevant school, the Ponca student can be "educated" in that they will have the opportunity and be encouraged to see education as an opportunity for life-long learning as opposed to training for a specific type of job. All participants in the study see schooling as only preparation for employment.

It is well known in educational research and in other disciplines as well, that different people from different cultures have different perspectives, philosophies and worldviews (Campbell, 1991; Frazer, 1963; Jung, 1933). A common question posed by Native Americans is why it is necessary for them to be in a public school system which teaches only eurocentric values and perspective.

Historically, the United States government has not lived up to its treaty obligations with native peoples, except in the areas where it could gain an advantage or create an environment whereby native peoples could be further manipulated. The only part of any treaty that was honored was that part which dealt with education. This was because they knew that through their educational system they could "civilize the

savage" by destroying his culture, government and religion and remake him into the image of a white man (Canby, 1988; McBride, 1996; Williams, 1990).

Only in the 1970's and 1980's did legal scholars and the various court systems realize and acknowledge that of all the things native peoples were forced to give up so that America could exist, the native people never gave up their sovereignty, that is, their right to govern themselves as they always had. Because of sovereignty, a native group, such as the Ponca, is legally able to educate their own students in the way they themselves define. Therefore, in establishing a school for Ponca students, a curriculum is here proposed which would give the student both a Ponca identity and the ability to live successfully within the dominant society.

Ages 5 - 8

Ponca Language - compare with English

greeting people

days of the week

seasons of the year

names of animals

names of clans

numbers to 100

names of modern items

Ponca Social Norms

interaction with siblings

interaction with older children

- interaction with adults
- interactions with elderly
- social customs and practices
- songs, ceremonies and rituals
- children's stories

Ponca History

- names of famous leaders
- accomplishments of these leaders
- original homeland
- origin stories

English

- alphabet
- reading
- writing

Computers

- basic uses

School is open and non-graded; curriculum is child-centered, individual, flexible and oriented to the Ponca culture.

Ages 9 - 12

Ponca Language - compare with English

- spiritual/ religious concepts
- philosophical concepts

feelings and emotions

modern words

evolution of the language

foods

Ponca Social Norms

marriage (male concept & female concept)

family life

child rearing

food handling/preparation

clothing creation and meaning

kinship system

ceremonies, rituals and songs

children's stories

Geography/History

Ponca homeland

towns & cities in

landmarks

boundaries

relationship to North America

relationship to the world

wars and conflicts with other Native Americans

wars and conflicts with white Americans

English

reading

writing

Math & Science

personal use

business use

professional use

use in trades and labor

Computers

languages

programs

personal use

business use

School is open and non-graded. Curriculum is relevant, accessible and open-ended.

Ages 13 - 16**Ponca Language**

names of towns & cities in Oklahoma

names of U.S. states and cities

kinship names

names, ideas, concepts & philosophies endemic to the

Ponca world

Ponca Social Norms

marriage and family (male & female roles)

children, relatives, extended family

child rearing

children's stories

ceremonies, rituals and songs

kinship system

Geography/History

Ponca homeland

Ponca leaders

Ponca government

concepts of leadership

requirements for leadership

forced removal to Oklahoma

collapse of culture and society

entering modern America

Math & Science

personal use

business use

professional use

use in trades and labor

Computers

languages

programs

personal use

business use

English

reading for pleasure

reading for meaning

writing for pleasure

technical writing

writing for business

School is open and non-graded. Curriculum is relevant, transactional and interactional. Learning occurs only when curriculum has personal meaning.

During the course of their education students will be allowed and encouraged to decide whether they will go into the trades or a professional career. The school will coordinate with the local educational system, colleges, universities, trade and vocational schools to coordinate course work. Students will be allowed and encouraged to take course work outside the school to prepare for their chosen career.

Ponca School

Students

Open to all children and learners but strictly oriented to Ponca culture.

Teachers

Teachers will be identifiably Native American.

Teachers for five to eight year olds will not be required to have a college degree but must have demonstrated that their lives are oriented to children.

Teachers of groups II and III must have earned a four-year degree in education. The exceptions will be the teachers of Ponca language, history and culture.

Certification will be by the Ponca Indian government.

Administrator

Identifiably Native American with a minimum of a Bachelor's degree in education with a background in management/administration. Preferably, this person will be a member of the Ponca people.

Council of Elders

Composed of six members of the Ponca people, three men and three women. They will hold equal authority over the curriculum and teachers as the administrator. They will act as advisors to the teachers and counselors to the students.

Recommendations for Further Research

There is a great amount of literature written on Native American education.

One thing that can be described as a problem is the fact that a great percentage of the literature has not been written by Native Americans. When literature has been written by someone who is Native American, that person is frequently not fluent in the culture and language of his or her own people. Because the Native American cultural view of the world is very different from the white American's view of the world, for instance, ideas involving generosity, cooperation, sharing, a non-materialistic view of the society

in which one lives, writing from a culturally Native American perspective will show different results than one writing from a western perspective. Most of what is written on education does not appear to be from the Native American perspective. In order that the Native American perspective on education gain preeminence, and a clearer picture be presented on Native American education, more research in education should be presented from the Native American perspective.

I would recommend that a study on Ponca girls who have dropped out be done to discover their perspective on their reasons for failure to graduate. Additionally, studies on Ponca males and females who have graduated from the public educational system would be beneficial. The studies of those males who graduated and those who did not, along with a study of those females who graduated and those who did not, would give a fuller perspective on the Ponca educational experience and be a positive addition to the existing literature on Indian education.

The purpose of this paper has not been to explain Ponca pedagogical beliefs. In order to provide a clearer picture of this concept, further research is necessary with Ponca elders who still retain knowledge of Ponca forms of teaching. A video/audio recording of them would add immeasurably to the literature on Indian education.

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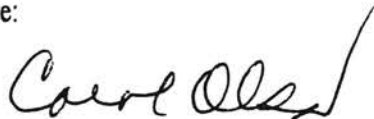
APPENDIX

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Date: September 2, 1999 IRB #: ED-00-157
Proposal Title: "PONCA EDUCATION PROJECT"
Principal: Natalie Adams
Investigator(s): Sherman Bold Warrior
Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt
Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Signature:



Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

September 2, 1999

Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modification to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

VITA

Sherman Bold Warrior

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: PONCA EDUCATION PROJECT

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Pawnee, Oklahoma, On July 25, 1946, Member of the Blood Clan of the Ponca people.

Education: Earned a GED while serving in the military in Germany, 1966; received a Bachelor of Science degree in History Education from Central State University in May, 1977; received a Master of Science degree in Education at Oklahoma State University in May, 1990. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree with a major in Curriculum and Instruction at Oklahoma State University in May, 2000.

Experience: Served three years in the U.S. Military, October, 1965- October 1968, Hawk Anti- Aircraft Missile Batteries, Kaiserslautern, Germany. Past CEO and Chairman of the Ponca Tribal Business Committee, Administrator, Planner and Technical Writer for various governmental entities since 1977. Ponca cultural leader, reorganizer and leader of the Ponca Ghost Medicine Society.