HUNGRY GHOSTS: PONCA GIRLS

IN TWO WORLDS

By

ANN MARIE WASILEWSKI

Bachelor of Arts
Augusta College
Augusta, Georgia
1969

Master of Education
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia
1976

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Thesis Approved:

Pamela U. Brown

Thesis Advisor
Pamela Fry

Gary J. Conti

Katye M. Perry

Dr. Al Carlozzi

Dean of the Graduate College

Dedicated to my mother and father.

Catherine Howard Wasilewski
Walter John Wasilewski

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CHAPTER I

Introduction: It is Important that You Recognize Us

It is important to acknowledge our Native American heritage… so they won't forget where we came from and who we are. (Maggie, 2001)

The Community

White Eagle is a Native American community that has a reputation for being a rough place, and, as one Ponca said, is frequently considered a place that is the epitome of all social ills. Although there are very serious problems in White Eagle, it is also a place where strong family ties, generosity, and compassion are abundant. It is among the Ponca people that I chose to do this research.

Wanting to take a quick drive through the area, I turned west from a main state highway onto the road that enters White Eagle, named after Chief White Eagle. I passed a statue of a bald eagle and a large billboard at the entrance that heralds this community as "The Ponca Tribe of American Indians." As I recalled comments by Poncas, these took on a new significance to me as representations of a people who wish to retain their culture, but have felt compelled to subordinate it in order to survive in close proximity to the dominant society. The bald eagle, a symbol of the United States, had no cultural

significance to the Poncas. It was the golden eagle that was important. The Ponca name for the golden eagle is *Xee Tha Honga*, the head or main eagle. Chief White Eagle's name does not refer to the bald eagle; it has a spiritual connotation that has nothing to do with a bald eagle. A second irony is the billboard itself. Some Poncas consider it to be the representation of those who feel compelled, despite sovereignty to openly declare their subordination to the *American* government.

I entered White Eagle as I had many times. The road slowly curves through the community, and just as I entered, I saw on the south side of the road the old White Eagle School, now housing Ponca administrative offices. Continuing, I passed the buildings of the Indian Methodist Church: a building with a kitchen and tables where meals are eaten, the main sanctuary, and what was the old mission church. To the north are the pow wow grounds. There are actually two pow wow grounds there; the main one, where the Ponca Pow Wow is held in August every year; and a smaller area to the west, where smaller dances are held during the pow wow. The pow wow grounds are also where shinny, a traditional Ponca game similar to hockey, is played by the males of the community in the spring.

Continuing on the road, I rounded the bend, and to the west, first sighted the homes of White Eagle. The first ones I saw are the homes for the old people. I use the term *old people* because the Poncas do not consider being old something to be rejected but rather something to be respected. *Elders* is a term I read mostly in books, hear in movies or when Poncas talk to non- Indian people. The homes in White Eagle were built through funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and look alike. On the east side of the road is the bingo hall, a blue, metal building

sometimes called the Blue Star building. It is the one place in White Eagle that many White people and African Americans will come to. Beside the bingo hall is the old police station. Next, a 35' X 15' blue, metal pre-fabricated building originally intended to be a convenience/grocery store stands empty. Two past attempts to have a convenience store in White Eagle had failed, and this little store which sold pop, chips, gum, and candy also failed after about four months.

Continuing on in the loop I saw the new police station with a Native American style geometric design around the top of the building and a picture of a buffalo with the word *Wanas'e* which means police. Historically the *Wanas'e* were the men who were in charge of keeping order during travel for the buffalo hunt.

Beyond the police station, to the west, is the Indian Health Clinic, a professional looking brick structure, recently placed under the control of the Ponca tribe, rather than the Indian Health Service which had controlled it since its inception years ago. Prior to the Poncas taking control, there were rumors that the tribe would fire all non-Poncas and hire only Poncas to staff the facility. That did not happen. To the north of this is a small building where the old people have lunch. Adjoining this is a distribution center for U.S. government surplus commodities, food stuffs including items such as canned vegetables, fruits, juices, and meats, frozen gristly meat, and dry goods like flour and beans. Many Poncas, as well as non-Poncas, receive these commodities each month.

Next is a large, concrete block, single story building where dances are held. The front part of this building is separated into small office spaces, and the back is a large gym with a wooden floor and bleachers along one side. During certain times of the year, such as Christmas and New Year dances are held here daily. During the summer, dances

are generally held every weekend. Finally, I exited the White Eagle community and am back on the state highway.

Ponca people live within this community as well as on Indian land to the north, south, east, and west. The children of school age who live in the White Eagle community and the surrounding areas ride the bus to attend the public schools in Edgewood City, but very few ever graduate.

Education after the Arrival of Europeans

Historically, the European and Euro-American attempts to educate Native Americans have been predominately from the point of view of the superior educating the inferior – the civilized educating the savage. The dominant culture saw little of value within the native cultures of what was to become the United States and sought to destroy all remnants of these cultures and replace them with what it saw as the civilized manners of Christian Europeans (DeJong, 1993).

Moor's Charity School was founded in 1617 as a training school for youth (Szasz, 1988) followed in 1636 with the establishment of Harvard College, the New England colonies first attempt at higher education for Indian youth (DeJong, 1993). Neither of these attempts was considered successful, perhaps because the focus was toward changing the youth and not toward providing an education that would have been considered of value to the native peoples themselves. As the Council of Jamestown, Virginia stated in 1619, the purpose of providing education for Indian children was to educate them in "religion, a civil course of life and some special trade" (Bass, 1969, p.1).

From the late 1700s to the 1870s, many churches supported missionary activity among the Indians that included the establishment of schools.

The Congress of the United States, in 1802, approved up to $15,000 annually to "civilize the savages." Congress, by 1819, had turned these funds over to the different missionary groups that were active in the "civilization" effort. This federal government funding to the missionary groups was continued until 1873 (Fuchs & Havighurst, 1972). These educational efforts were also considered a failure (DeJong, 1993).

In the 1820s the federal government wanted to clear the land of Indians to make way for White settlers. Thomas McKenney, Superintendent of Indian Affairs at that time, pressed the view that Indians in contact with White settlers would despair of ever becoming as civilized as the superior White settlers and would give up attempts to achieve civilization. He recommended that, for the educational benefit of Indians, they be removed from areas in which they were in contact with White settlers (Spring, 1994). The Indian Removal Act was passed in 1830, leading eventually to the removal of the Poncas to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) in 1876.

In the late 1870s, an Army officer, Richard Henry Pratt, was allowed to test his belief that it was necessary to "kill the Indian" by destroying all remnants of Indian language and culture and ways of being in order to "save the man" on seventy-two adult Indian male prisoners (Pratt, 1964). After the partial success of this experiment, Pratt decided his educational methods would be more effective if Indians were taken away as children from their parents. This was accomplished and Pratt used a combination of off-reservation boarding schools which separated Indian children from their parents by long distances and an outing system in which students were placed in the homes of White

families to strip them of “peculiar Indian ways” to effect assimilation (Pratt, 1964). Assimilation implied that an Indian would abandon his or her religious and social cultural behaviors and replace them with Christianity and White social manners. The increased acceptance of this method for “civilizing” Indians led, by 1881, to 106 federal and missionary Indian schools. By 1887, the government was funding Pratt’s schools in excess of one million dollars a year (Pratt, 1964). By the end of the nineteenth century, there were twenty-four off-reservation boarding schools modeled upon Pratt’s system of education.

Although Pratt’s intention was to educate Native American youth for assimilation, the reality was that the White community was not interested in having Indian people assimilate with them. Those students who were “outed” to White families were used as household servants and personal social relationships between the two were generally prohibited. Education, then, became a method of producing Indians who would be prepared for servant positions in American society or remain isolated on farms and be compliant with the wishes of the federal government (Almeida, 1977).

After forty years of systematized Indian education, it seemed that Indians were not making the progress that the government desired, so the government began to study the situation and created acts to remedy the deficiencies found. The first comprehensive governmental study of Indian affairs, *The Problem of Indian Administration,* was published in 1928 and is commonly referred to as the Meriam Report after Louis Meriam, the head of the committee that did the study. This study found poor health conditions, inadequate curriculum and poorly qualified personnel among the many problems in the boarding school system. It recommended that this school program be ended and that

students be educated in their own communities (Meriam, 1928). The Johnson-O'Malley Act, passed by Congress in 1934, was an attempt to implement this recommendation to move Indian education from the boarding schools to state public schools by allowing the federal government to contract with states and private corporations for the education of Indians. With the implementation of this Act large numbers of Indian students began attending the local public schools rather than off-reservation boarding schools. However, Indian students were still not making progress in the public schools and were dropping out at high rates. A special Senate subcommittee investigated this problem and in 1969 reported its findings in *Indian Education: A National Tragedy – A National Challenge* (DeJong, 1993). This commission discovered dropout rates twice the national average and, in some places, as high as 100% (U.S. Congress. Senate, 1969). There were similar findings in a 1971 study which found that the money given to the states through the Johnson-O'Malley for the education of Indian students were being misused, and funds intended to assist Indian children to pay school expenses that would allow them to remain in school were instead placed in school systems' general funds leading to Indian drop out rates as high as 85% (Huff, 1997).

The Educational Assistance Act (a component of the Self-Determination Act) was passed in 1975 to allow native communities to have more control over their reservations and the education of their children. However, it was criticized by native peoples as creating only cosmetic alterations, where beadwork and basket weaving were taught but public schools were still indoctrinating Indian children into the manners and history of the dominant society while ignoring the history and cultural traditions of the native peoples (Almeida, 1997).

President Clinton called, in 1998, for the creation of another task force to focus on improving Indian education (Clinton, 1998) and President George W. Bush reaffirmed the trust relationship for the education of Indian Children in 2002 (Reyhner & Eder, 2004).

For almost 400 years a Eurocentric education has been provided for or forced on Native Americans with little acceptance by the native peoples themselves as evidenced by the high numbers of dropouts. The Ponca people reflect this national pattern (Bold Warrior, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

It has historically been a treaty obligation of the United States government to see that Native American peoples within this country receive an education. That it has been unsuccessful in the attempt to keep many Native American students in school long enough to graduate from high school can been seen in the many reports and studies that have been done (Cahape & Hawley, 1991; Meriam, 1928; U.S. Congress, 1969). According to a speech given by the U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige at the 2003 Executive Council Winter Session of the National Congress of American Indians, the achievement level of American Indians is abysmal. The latest National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores show 83% of American Indian fourth-graders are not proficient in reading and 86% are not proficient in math. Paige (2003) further stated that despite “waves of well-intentioned school reform efforts…still too many children are falling through the cracks” (Paige, 2003).

The Title IX Indian Education coordinator, and other administrators in the school system in which I did my research expressed concern about the drop out rate of Native American students within its schools and have been making attempts to keep more Native American students in school (personal communication, 1999). Statistics compiled by the school system itself (Edgewood School, 1999) show that, although Native American students make up 14.32% of the total student population, they make up 39% of the drop outs in ninth grade and 35% of the drop outs in tenth grade; 31% of the Native American students in grades three and seven score below the fiftieth percentile on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS); and 40% of the Native American students in grades five, eight and eleven do not pass the mandated state tests. Although the state mandated test is not required for graduation, the score received on the eleventh-grade test is recorded on the student's transcript (Noname State Department of Education, 1999). In addition to these figures an educational attainment survey conducted by the Ponca Tribe in 2000 indicated that 41% of the adults within the White Eagle Community did not have a high school diploma nor a GED (Ponca Tribal Even Start Family Literacy Project, 2000).

The drop out and testing information I have does not give separate data for male and female students. There is, however, a steady decline in enrollment for girls beginning in the tenth grade.

Purpose of the Study

Poncas have an incredibly high dropout rate, at least as high as 41% compared to the overall dropout rate in the public school of 5%. Why are Poncas dropping out in such

high numbers? Bold Warrior (2000) conducted research with Ponca males who dropped out of school and cited a lack of caring teachers, overt discrimination, subtle racism, and a racist curriculum as reasons for their dropping out. However, the question is left to be answered by the girls. Why do they drop out in such high numbers?

This study seeks to understand the issues surrounding the dropout rate from the perspectives of Ponca girls in grades nine through twelve. Because the teachers and administrators in the school system are not Ponca, there needs to be a place where the voices of the Poncas themselves can be heard and the lenses through which they view their experiences can come into focus. It is hoped that this study will bring about a greater understanding of the issues involved in dropping out so that changes can be made.

Significance of the Study

Formal education of native peoples in America has been attempted since 1617 with poor results. Only one study has been done among the Poncas in which the Poncas themselves have had their views presented. This was done by Bold Warrior (2000) when he researched the views of Ponca males who had dropped out of school.

Almeida (1997) indicated in her research which focused on the education of Native American women in the United States from 1878 to 1997 that there are educational issues unique to Native American women, whom she calls “the hidden half.” Among these issues is the role formal education has had in breaking down women’s traditional roles within their Native communities. Although there has begun to be some educational research done that looks at Native American girls (Almeida, 1997;

Lomawaima, 1994) research in the area is still scarce, and no study has been done among Ponca women and girls.

This study looks at Ponca girls and their perceptions of the reasons for many not graduating from high school. If a school system is going to attempt to improve this dropout rate without listening to the voices of those who are the object of the change, the old colonialist attitudes which created the first schools for Indians and decided what, how and for what purposes they should be educated remain in place.

Research Questions

Despite multiple attempts by various organizations and federal commissions to discover and address the reasons for the high dropout rate among Native Americans, their national dropout continues to be high. Ponca girls reflect this national trend as they exit the public school system in large numbers prior to graduating from high school. This paper seeks to explore through a qualitative case study the girls' reflections regarding the choice to remain in school or drop out. The following are the research questions that guided this research.

1. How do Ponca girls who remain in school explain their choosing to stay in?
2. What impact does the curriculum (explicit, hidden, null) have on dropping out or remaining in school?
3. What impact does the relationship between the Ponca community and the majority community in which the students attend school have on dropping out or remaining in school?

4. What issues are there within the Ponca community that influence dropping out or remaining in school?

Research Design

Qualitative Case Study

Because the purpose of my study involved coming to an understanding of a particular cultural and gendered perspective of the issues involved in dropping out or remaining in school, a qualitative research design was more appropriate than a quantitative one. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated:

> If you want people to understand better than they otherwise might, provide them with information in the form in which they usually experience it. They will be able, both tacitly and propositionally, to derive naturalistic generalizations that will prove to be useful extensions of their understandings. (p. 120).

Because qualitative research also provides a somewhat "holographic" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) image of an issue as opposed to the more one-dimensional image of quantitative research, it is more appropriate to this study. Within the qualitative dimension of research, I chose case study as my methodology. Case study, designed to give an "in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19), fits with the purpose of this study to explore the meaning of dropping out from the perspective of the Ponca girls.

Concerns with Use of Methodology

Case studies often involve concepts that come from anthropology, history, and psychology. There is an ethnographic flavor to my study because I am involved in trying to unravel the complexity of meaning that involves words, actions, culture, and history of a group of which I am not a member, the Ponca people, in order to explore and analyze the significance of remaining in school or dropping out. Ethnography has a long history in social science, especially in the field of anthropology, and is especially appropriate to the study of culture (Short, 1991; Spradley, 1997). However, anthropological studies have been viewed with disfavor among indigenous peoples, and anthropologists have themselves been victims in a game of ego boosting in which native peoples present themselves as experts in areas where they do not have accurate knowledge in order to be thought highly of by the researchers (Deloria, 1988). Because of this, I frame this study within feminist theory which draws on traditional female qualities such as empathy and human concern and also acknowledges the risk in ethnography of perpetuating a patriarchal system (Johnson, 1997) that subjects the researched to exploitation (Stacey, 1988) and seeks to protect against it. Research places me, as a researcher, in a position of power. My goal, through the use of a feminist perspective, is to use this privileged status to let the voices of the girls I study be clearly heard and to be cautious of imposing my own voice.

Researcher Bias

This dissertation is part of a very personal journey (Kvale, 1996), one in which I am both insider and outsider. In the 1980s I began working in a school system in Oklahoma. In my particular school about 25% of the students were Native American and most of these children were affiliated with the Ponca tribe. Because some of the Poncas feel the term “tribe” is a racist term implying either an inferior or a non-human status, I will, from this point onward, use the preferred term *Ponca*. In a conversation with a principal in which Native American parents were the topic of discussion, he mentioned to me that at a recent board meeting a Ponca parent had ranted and raved and generally made a scene. I learned that it was a common belief that Ponca parents made scenes or could present a physical threat when they came to the school to complain about the treatment of their children. The principal was dismissive of what this parent had to say, stating, “Of course, he’s a radical. He was at Wounded Knee.” It seemed that I should know what he was talking about, but I did not, so, I started looking for information. I happened upon a book, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* (Matthiessen, 1992). It is a rather thick book, over five hundred pages, but I could not put it down once I got started. I read it in every spare moment that I had. I was appalled by what I read. I remember being so angry that I threw the book across the room. I was sickened learning that the Cavalry had chased women and children, firing at children for target practice, and chasing some for at least a mile until they were killed or left dying in a pool of their own blood in the South Dakota snow (Matthiessen, 1992; Perry, 1996; Stannard, 1992). That, however, was the first Wounded Knee. The second occurred after an incident in 1972 in which fifty-one

year old Raymond Yellow Thunder was severely beaten by two white brothers named Hare, stripped from the waist down and “paraded before a patriotic gathering at an American Legion dance in Gordon, Nebraska.” (Matthiessen, 1992, p. 59). Later he was stuffed into a car trunk and driven around town before being dumped out. He returned to the used car lot where he had lived and perished. Because there was a lack of effective interest in the case, the family decided to call on AIM who then came to Wounded Knee where a siege and eventual firefight occurred leaving Indians and an FBI agent dead (Matthiessen, 1992).

As I read, I began to see the dismissive/combative and submissive communication styles between Native American parents and the school (Deloria, 1991) and the high dropout rate among Native American students as issues of history, oppression and power (Foucault, 1995; Freire, 1996).

Thus began my search to try to find a solution to what I saw as the problem of the high dropout rate in the school system. In my search, I met a Ponca man who was working on his doctorate in multicultural education. We had many hours of conversation in which I began to learn to see the world from a perspective different from the one I had grown up with. After two years we married, and in 1997 I entered graduate school with the idea that I would write a dissertation to help create a bridge, to be a link, sharing with teachers and the school system the many things I had learned from my involvement with the Poncas and from my living among them. Before my dissertation was begun, however, we were divorced, and the dissertation itself became a tremendous personal struggle for me. I saw within the pages of the history I read, the research I did, and the words of the participants of my study, the sorrow and the pain of the people of the man I loved and the

destructive legacy of prejudice and attempted genocide that was the root of the problems within our marriage. Through to the end, my tears have poured over the words I have read and the words I have written. There have been times when my grief was so intense that I could not continue, and many deadlines I set for myself were not met as I psychologically resisted dealing with the painful content.

Smith (2001) states:

> Research "through imperial eyes" describes an approach which assumes that Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings. (p. 56)

I am a White woman, and I acknowledge that I cannot know in my soul what it is a Ponca knows. I am White and I cannot be otherwise. However, I have learned much from my Ponca husband, his relatives and the people in the community, and I do not come from the perspective I once may have had, that my way of being and knowing was the best reality.

I am insider and I am outsider. As an insider I have struggled with the consequences of my research in my personal life. What would those I care about say if I reported something that could be interpreted negatively? How do I negotiate the ins and outs of family loyalty? Which of the many explanations do I accept as the "valid" Ponca belief?

Geertz (1983) spoke of *emic* (insider) and *etic* (outsider) analysis. The terms *emic* and *etic* come from linguistics in which *emic* represents classification of sounds by use and *etic* classification of sounds by acoustics. *Etic* would present a more outsider

understanding and *emic* a more insider one. Additionally, Geertz (1973) said "analysis…is sorting out the structures of signification… and determining their social ground and import" (p. 9). I have, through my experiences within the culture, become more able to find internal meaning, but I am still an outsider and do not know all the significance of what I see and hear.

As an outsider, I have had to question myself constantly to make sure that I do not repeat the mistakes of others who have worked in indigenous communities, that I understand that this study is intended to reflect the understanding of the participants and not be overridden by me. I have done that by constantly checking my understanding, both with the participants in the study and with others in the Ponca community.

Although I have made every attempt to make this dissertation as objective as I can, my research, like all research, carries within it the life and view of the person doing the research. It carries part of my life and my tears and my hopes and my heart.

Feminist research has concerned itself with "giving voice to the voiceless" (Lather, 2001, p. 199). However, this has been problematized as researchers have come to understand the impact on those voices of the choices the researchers make. The questions a researcher asks frame the voices according to the researcher's particular lens. The way the answers are interpreted and categorized further layer the researcher's opinion over that of the participants. For my purposes, even seeing the lack of a diploma as a "problem" imposes the researcher's views on the subject.

Acknowledging this paradox, however, I am encouraged that textualizing the research will be of benefit. An example of such textualization is provided by Rebecca Faery (1999), who explored the impact of the writings of Mary Rowlandson and the story

of Pocahontas. Rowlandson left a text which, although appropriated by a patriarchial society, left her representation of herself. Pocahontas, on the other hand,

> left no known text of her own, never represented herself or her point of view or her own experience in any way we might read…. The absence of any self-representation by Pocahontas, unlike Rowlandson's written narrative, offered no resistances to the inscription of race, sex, and emergent nationhood that her legend has for centuries been made to serve in so many ways.

By textualizing the responses of the participants in the study, there is a representation in their words that can later be viewed and re-interpreted as understanding increases.

Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on the view and opinions of 13 Ponca girls in grades 9 – 12 who attend the local public school. It does not attempt to present the male point of view, nor does it attempt to present the perspectives of the teachers and administrators in the public school. It presents the opinions of the girls at a particular point of time. If these same girls were to be interviewed ten years from now, their opinions might reflect a different understanding that could come from their new position in life and time.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I presents a general introduction and overview of the problem and purpose of the study and touches on the

issue of researcher bias. Chapter II presents the review of the literature. The first section reviews the history of the Ponca people from both oral traditions and written sources with specific information about Ponca women's activities within the culture. Next is a history of Indian education presenting the type of education that was found to be of benefit by the native peoples themselves and proceeding into the education that was presented by the European newcomers prior to the establishment of the United States. It continues with the history of missionary and government attempts to impose a foreign way of thinking on the native peoples and discusses the reasons for this and the consequences. The major research studies that were done by the government are also covered in this section. Last is a review of dropout theories, especially those that deal with the reasons for dropping out among minority students. Chapter III explains the research methodology used, beginning with an overview of quantitative and qualitative research and a rationale for the appropriateness of qualitative research for this study, and the choice of case study and a feminist framing. Also included is a description of the setting of the study and information about the participants and the method by which they were selected. Finally, the chapter includes an explanation of data collection and analysis. Chapter IV gives the findings of the research organized according to themes emerging from interviews with the participants in the study. Chapter V deals with the meaning of the results and gives implications of the study and recommendations for further research.

Definition of Terms

Assimilation: Defined by Webster (1961) as “sociocultural fusion” in which individuals and groups acquire the attitudes and habits of another culture.

Medicine: Defined by Webster (1961) as possession by American Indians of natural objects which gave control over natural or supernatural forces for protection or healing.

Dropout: Defined by Webster (1961) as referring to an individual who drops out of school before achieving the goal of a diploma.

Outing: Sending a student to the home of a White family in order to learn the attitudes and habits of White society (Pratt, 1964).

Off-reservation boarding school: Boarding schools for American Indian students that are not established on reservations. Generally these schools were a great distance from the student’s home and made interaction between the family and the student rare.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

History of the Ponca People

Introduction

The first problem encountered in writing a history of the Poncas is to try to begin to make sense of what has been written almost exclusively by non-Poncas and by non-Ponca anthropologists. Different written accounts of Ponca history and culture seemed at times, to be at odds with the oral tradition that I encountered. An example of this contradiction can be seen in the missionary, Dorsey's 1884 account regarding menstruation:

Among the Omahas and Ponkas the woman makes a different fire for four days, dwelling in a small lodge, apart from the rest of the household, even in cold weather. She cooks and eats alone, telling no one of her sickness, not even her husband. (Howard, 1965, p. 146). Bold Warrior (2000) states that "Ponca spiritual beliefs are alien to the western mind" (p. 39) and, because of this, can be interpreted incorrectly. I had been told by Poncas that a woman separated herself during her menstrual period because she was spiritually powerful during this time and people were very careful of spiritual power and

medicine. The idea of menstruation as a “sickness” seems to be Dorsey’s view and not the view of Poncas. Additionally, because a woman would go to a separate lodge during her menstrual period it would be obvious to the community why she had gone and there would be no need for her to tell her husband.

There seem to be several reasons for recorded misinformation; first, those who knew the culture would probably not have given that information out; second, those who did give information sometimes told the inquirer what they thought he would like to hear; third, sources did not always know as much as the inquirer believed they knew; and fourth, researchers interpreted what they saw through their own cultural lens, and sometimes with a preconceived end in mind.

Ethnographic bias was apparently common enough that Jablow related:

> Every ethnographer has his limitations, and it would be desirable that they be known and stipulated so they may be taken into account in any ethnographic description and interpretation…. Boas had asked Kroeber “to collect Arapaho traditions without regard to the ‘true’ … forms of ancient tales and customs, the discovery of which dominated, at that time, the ideas of many ethnologists. The result was a collection of stories some of which were extremely gross. This excited the wrath of Alice C. Fletcher who wanted to know only the ideal Indian, and hated what she called the ‘stable boy’ manners of an inferior social group.’ (Boas, 1940, p. 306 in Jablow, 1974, p. 65)

Although the Omaha and the Ponca traveled together and had almost identical language and cultural patterns, Fletcher and LaFlesche, well known ethnographers, made a report to the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1905 detailing the culture of the Omaha.

Within this report the Ponca are found. Because of much confusion (among ethnographers) as to the origin of the Poncas, the Omaha were considered the standard and the Poncas were mentioned only when they deviated from that standard (Jablow, 1974). So, what was said of the Omaha was also probably true of the Ponca, though that was not clearly stated.

Smith (2001) observed, “History is also about power. In fact history is power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions from which they can continue to dominate others” (p. 34). A series of ethnohistories prepared for the Department of Justice is an excellent example of this. The stated purpose of these ethnohistories was to ‘clean up the mess’ to put an end to the stream of suits and claims against the federal government, each of which had required Congressional approval before it could be brought to trial” (Jablow, 1974, p. 17). These suits came out of legal arguments regarding the claim to ownership of the land by indigenous peoples, a western legal ownership question that went as far back as Charles V of Spain’s consultation with Franciscas de Victoria. In *U.S. v. Santa Fe Pacific Railroad Co.* (1941) the court stated:

> Occupancy necessary to establish aboriginal possession is a question of fact to be determined as any other question of fact. If it were established as a fact that the lands in question were, or were included in, the ancestral home of the [tribe]… in the sense that they constituted a definable territory occupied exclusively by [the tribe]… (as distinguished from the lands wandered over by many tribes) then [they] … had “Indian title.” (Jablow, 1974, p. 15)

The “determination of fact” is what ethnohistories tried to establish “to be used as evidence in legal proceedings to determine the aboriginal rights of various Indian groups to certain geographical regions or areas within the United States” (Jablow, 1974, p. 7). Given the political climate in which land was being taken from the Indian peoples, the accuracy of these ethnohistories is questionable.

Newspaper accounts of the 1800s and early 1900s vilified native peoples, and horror stories were printed filled with racist stereotypes about demonic, lurking savages. The intention was to inflame the populace and encourage and justify those in positions of political leadership to clear the land of its native peoples (Nichols, 2000). Many lives in many different places throughout history have been lost due to misrepresentation and outright lies. The same has been true of the indigenous peoples of the United States. The history of native peoples was written in this atmosphere and the histories that were written gained acceptance through the telling and re-telling of them in schools and texts. Often information that has been textualized (put into print) is treated as fact. However, “it should be remembered that an individual point of view, however ‘objective,’ however rooted and researched in facts is nevertheless partial and to all intents and purposes ‘fictional’ in the broad sense of the word” (Nakhjavani, 2000, p. 8). And, what someone personally remembers is also a reconstruction, a representation of reality. “Fact” written and researched and memory are only representations.

In my brief history I tried to be sensitive to the problematic nature of these records and gave deference to the oral traditions of those to whom this history belongs, the Ponca. My hope was that through my research I could blend the different oral and written records, and, like a poem, begin to bring out the different facets of reality.

Coming to North America

The following are two accounts of the coming of the Ponca to North America. The first, told by Standing Buffalo, was written down prior to 1905 according to Fletcher and La Flesche (1992):

> When I was a boy I often asked my mother where my people came from, but she would not tell me, until one day she said "I will give you the story as it has been handed down from generation to generation.
>
> In the beginning Wakonda made… men, women, and children. After they were made he said 'Go!' So, the people took all they had, carried their children, and started toward the setting sun. They traveled until they came to a great water. Seeing they could go no farther, they halted. Again, Wokonda said 'Go!' and once more they started, and wondered what would happen to them. As they were about to step into the water there appeared from under the water rocks. These projected just above the surface, and there were others barely covered with water. Upon these stones the people walked, stepping from stone to stone until they came to land. When they stood on dry land the wind blew, the water became violent and threw the rocks upon the land, and they became great cliffs. Therefore, when men enter the sweat lodge they thank the stones for preserving their lives and ask for a continuation of their help that their lives may be prolonged. Here on the shore the people dwelt; but again Wokonda said, 'Stand still!' The people obeyed. They questioned each other, and found they spoke the same language, and became friends.

> Wokonda gave the people a bow, a dog, and a grain of corn. The people made other bows like the one given them and learned to use them for killing wild animals for food and to make clothing out of their skins. The dogs gave increase and were used as burden bearers and for hunting. The corn they planted, and when it grew they found it good to eat, and they continued to plant it.
>
> The people traveled on and came to a lake. There the Omaha found a Sacred Tree and took it with them. The people (Ponca) went on and came to a river now called Nishude (the Missouri). They traveled along its banks until they came to a place where they could step over the water. From there they went across the land and came to a river now called Nibthacka (the Platte). This river they followed, and it led them back to the Missouri.
>
> Again they went up this river until they came to a river now called Niobrara, where we live to-day.' (p. 49)

The second is an account of the story told to me by a Ponca man, Sherman Bold Warrior, part of which can be found in Bold Warrior (2000). The story told to me states that long ago the Ponca people were living in another land and were helping to build a structure of some kind. The Poncas were working on the inside of this structure to make it waterproof when the Creator came to them and told them to follow Him.

> 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 Wah shah 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.” (Bold Warrior, 2000, pp 40-41)

The Ponca (variously spelled Ponka, Poncaries, Poncarars) are part of the Degiha -speaking linguistic group which includes the Osage, Omaha, Ponca, Kansa and Quapaw (Bold Warrior, 2000; Howard, 1965; Jablow, 1974). The term Degiha was one used by the people themselves. In their own territory, when challenged in the dark, the Omaha and Ponca would reply “I am Degiha” (Howard, 1965, p. 5).

There is disagreement as to whether the Ponca were part of the Omaha and split off, or merely traveled with them. Poncas did not see themselves as part of the Omaha and Standing Bear's story quoted above might be the ancient memory of their meeting. Sources do indicate, however, that the Ponca, Omaha, and Iowa traveled together and had a similar language and culture and built a fort and village near the Big Sioux River. After leaving this area and arriving in South Dakota, Howard (1965) indicates that the clans were assigned. The final separation of the Omaha and the Ponca is listed variously as 1390, 1650, and 1715 (Howard, 1965).

In 1947, a Ponca man, Peter LeClaire gave the following history:

> The chiefs gathered in their tent and prayed and they wanted someone to talk to God, and there was a stranger came in, a chief they didn't know, who sat in the door. They wanted this man to go and talk to God. There was a mountain nearby and they told him to go up there and talk to God. He went up there and stayed four days and four nights and on the fourth night God talked to him in his sleep. "You go back and tell them to cross this and do not look back when you are crossing. Don't take anything, only your dogs."
>
> He woke up and started home, he was so weak that he just barely made the camp. They wet his lips with water and fed him little by little until he was able to talk. He told all he had heard and they moved. They crossed this water and they reached the end, there was all kinds of fruits and they were in a wonderful land.
>
> They came on each side of the Ohio… River and when they got to the Mississippi River they were on both sides of the river camping and one of the little chiefs from the side sent a word that he wanted war, but the head chief

refused and this was repeated four times and the head chief said, “Tomorrow morning we shall have war.” Seven of the chiefs in their tents heard a voce from heaven telling them, “Wake up, wake up. Put cold water on the children’s eyes so they can open their eyes. There is a man coming. He is light complected and sitting and looking down. He is going to eat from the ground. As you go west… there is plenty to eat and try everything, as you go, there are animals, in the water there is something to eat, there are birds, there are fruit trees with ripe berries.”

They came and lived in Pipestone, Minnesota. While they were living there they found the pipe stone after a hard rain in a deep buffalo trail. They saw the red stone and the head chief was called and he told them to dig it and get it out as God has given us a pipe. The pipe was made there and the stem was made in Ponca, Nebraska. There is a creek they called Ash Creek across the river from Ponca. When they were in Pipestone they started marking their trail on the big boulders. This was done by the Medicine Men. It was a two-toned picture, part of the picture is already on the wall and it is finished and only a few Poncas can see it, make out what it is…. Pa-dah-gah, he was the chief that kept the Sacred Pipe, he was the head chief and handed down to sons and grandsons for thousands of years until by some error, it fell into White man’s hands [this refers to the 1930s “misappropriation” of a Ponca pipe by an anthropologist].

They moved to another place where the little town of St. Helena is and from St. Helena, Nebraska, to Santee, Nebraska where the old agency is now. On the Chalk rock walls near Springfield, South Dakota is one more of the drawings of the Medicine Men.

From these villages, they would go on Wah-ni-sa (Buffalo Hunt) up the Missouri River, way in the Rocky Mountains. They say where they step over the Nu-sho-day (Missouri River) they would follow the Rocky Mountains to Pikes Peak and they would come back to Nebraska and they would follow on the rivers back to Wah-ta where Fremont, Nebraska is. From Santee to Niobrara River, here they saw a Pa-snu-tah dead (an Elephant) and they also saw a prehistoric animal they called (Wah-kon-da-gee).

This animal was of long body, had forked feet, yellow hair, about 8 feet high, and about 40 feet long. They saw this animal go into its hole northwest of Verdel, Nebraska. This place they called (Way-kon-da-gi-mi-shon-da). At the coldest days of the winter it would go into the hole. They found Niobrara River to be ideal place as they found everything they wanted to eat there, in the water, under the ground. They found wild beans and potatoes and fruits of all kinds.

….The Ponca camp is called Hu-thu-gah, it is round the entrance in the east. There are seven bands in the Hu-thu-gah or camp. Each of these bands has duties in the camp. From the entrance left to right are Wah-jah-ta. Their duty is to watch the entrance, they see who goes out, anyone going out and gets lost, they track them as they are expert trackers.

The next band are Ni-kah-pah-schna. Their duty is to know all about the human head and how it should be dressed.

The third band are Te-xa-da. This band when the camp is getting short of meats they would get their bows and arrows out and make believe they are shooting animals saying “I’ll shoot the fat one.”

> The band in Center west are the Wah-sha-ba. The head is in this band. He gives out orders. He prays daily.
>
> The band next to them are the mi-ki-Medicine. They know all about medicines.
>
> The sixth band are Nu-xa-ice. They know everything about water and ice.
>
> The seventh band are called He-sah-da. The rain makers they know all about the heavens and the clouds. (Howard, 1965, pp. 17-19)

First European Contact

Many writers indicated that the Poncas were a small group (Flecher & La Flesche, 1992; Howard, 1965). However, Jablow (1974) brings out the confusion of the Poncas with the Omaha as an indication that these reports may be in error. The recorded Ponca estimate of their numbers comes from Bold Warrior (2000):

> 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 were slightly more than 900 of the People remaining."(p. 45)

By the time Lewis and Clark reached the Ponca in 1804 at Ponca Creek, Poncas had already made contact with Europeans, traded with the British, and been affected by smallpox during the winter of 1800-1801 (Howard, 1965). Pressure was placed on the Poncas from increasing contacts and demands from these contacts (Jackson, 1964). The Ponca village was a regular stopping place for many: George Catlin, Prince Maximilian of Weid, H. M. Brackenridge, the Atkinson-O'Fallon party, military men, and traders (Howard, 1965). The United States government entered into its first treaty with the Poncas in 1817 with the stated intention of establishing "perpetual peace and friendship." In 1826, another treaty again promised friendship and protection. Mormon travelers were invited to be guests of the Poncas and were given provisions through the winter of 1846. In the spring the Mormons moved on to join their co-religionists and were told by the Poncas the best route to take (Howard, 1965; Jacobs, 1977). An Omaha treaty with the United States in 1846 ceded a portion of land to the government, part of which the Ponca claimed as historic homeland (Klingensmith, 1941) and, because of this, the Poncas threatened to exterminate the Omaha. White settlers were already moving onto the Ponca land by 1857 and the Brule, whose numbers were over three times that of the Ponca, had cut the Ponca off from their hunting grounds. From 1855 to 1857 the Ponca repeatedly expressed interest in selling some of their land in return for permanent boundaries and annuities (Jacobs, 1977; Wishart, 1994).

A delegation of Ponca went to Washington, D.C. in 1857 to treat with the government and meet with Commissioner Charles Mix. A Ponca delegate, The Whip, reminded the commissioner that the Ponca had never "wasted a gunful of powder" (Wishart, 1994, p. 134) on the Americans. Despite the Ponca claim that their land was

given to them by the Creator long before Whites had come, Mix would not recognize their land claim. Mix even “with a display of petulance… pointed to the medal The Whip wore around his neck and ridiculed the assertion that the Ponca had never received anything from the United States” (Wishart, 1994, p. 134). The government did sign a treaty with the Poncas in 1858, giving a fraction of the land and payments the Poncas had requested.

The Ponca back in Nebraska, meanwhile, had very little food because the land they usually farmed was being occupied by settlers; however, they did survive the winter on meager rations. The following summer, when the Ponca went out for the summer hunt after planting every available spot, the Brule swept down on their camp, killing one of their leaders and carrying off children, destroying tepees, and burning their food (Wishart, 1994). In September 1859, the Brule again attacked. This time the Ponca went back to the Niobrara area with only five weeks of provisions left because Congress had still not made appropriation for the provisions of the treaty signed eighteen months previously (Wishart, 1994).

While the Ponca starved, the new reservation was being surveyed, and, despite protests by the Ponca and attempts by young warriors to stop the survey team, the Ponca were moved to this reservation. The land there was poor, and the Poncas were again attacked by the Brule who took half of their horses. The 1860s “was a decade of misery… insecurity and hunger” (Wishart, 1994, p. 144). The United States was not living up to its treaty obligations; the Ponca lived a “submarginal existence on rations, and their population dropped to 750” (Wishart, 1994, p. 144).

Government assistance did not provide what the Poncas had provided for themselves through hunting and agriculture prior to receiving the “protection” of the United States Government. Money was misappropriated and misused by the government and the Ponca could not get an accounting from the government. An 1862 shipment of “useful goods” included “useless axes, fish hooks and lines which did not work for catching fish, thirty-six dozen pairs of mirrors… spoons, butcher knives, and scissors which were already in abundance at the village” (Wishart, 1994, p. 150). The Army, which was to provide protection for the Ponca was a threat. In December, 1863, a small party of Poncas was returning from a visit with the Omaha. Two soldiers demanded to know where they had been and if they had a pass to be off the reservation, which they did not have. The soldiers left but returned later demanding sexual access to the five women and offering the men money. When the Ponca men refused, the soldiers fired at them as they tried to escape. The soldiers burned blankets and saddles, scattered corn and destroyed all that was there except for skins and buffalo robes which they took with them. After the soldiers had left, the Ponca returned and gathered what they could and, at sunrise, continued for the agency. When they stopped to eat and the women went to gather wild beans, the soldiers returned. The soldiers then shot the women and a child who were in the camp. A barking dog gave away the location of the women who had gone to gather and

> two of the soldiers dismounted and approached the women with drawn revolvers. They shot three women in their foreheads, and riddled a twelve-year- old girl’s breast with bullets. They stripped the clothes of one of the dead women and almost decapitated another with a saber. (Wishart, 1994, p. 188)

Despite eyewitness accounts and common knowledge in Niobrara of the men who did this, no one was ever charged with the murders.

Another blow to the Ponca came in 1868 when the Dakota ceded their land to the government and agreed to live on the Sioux reservation, which "through an incredible oversight" included the Ponca reservation. So, Ponca enemies now resided on Ponca land (Heerman, 1974). Finally, in 1872, Commissioner Francis Walker who advocated the "Peace Policy" stated "the westward course of the population is neither to be denied or delayed for the sake of all the Indians that every called this country home. They must yield or perish" (Wishart, 1994, p. 188). Five years later the Ponca were forced off their land by the government and moved to Indian Territory.

Forced Removal

Eight Ponca leaders were chosen to go with an agent of the Indian Bureau in 1876 to select a reservation site in Indian Territory. The Poncas did not want to move to a reservation and were assured that if they did not find a site to their liking they would not have to move. The Ponca leaders, after looking at the sites, refused to choose one and asked to go back, which the agent refused to allow. Because of the agent's refusal, the leaders, with only a blanket for each of them, made the trip home, walking 500 miles in the winter in 40 days. Agent Kemble rushed back and started the removal (Wishart, 1994). The last group of Poncas began their forced march to Indian Territory in May of 1877 (Howard, 1965; Tibbles, 1972). The first part of the removal began with crossing the flooded Niobrara. In this crossing, Poncas rescued some of the guards who were

swept away by the strong waters (Howard, 1965). By May 21, one child had already died and every few days another person died. Three weeks into the forced march a tornado hit, devastating the camp. Throughout the march, people would drop out and head back to their homeland: however, when they were missed, they would be found and returned. Two months later when the Ponca arrived at their temporary placement in Indian Territory at Baxter Springs they numbered 681 (Heerman, 1974). One third of the people had died. Those who survived were now ill from sickness and the hardship of the journey. No provisions had been made for them, and they were in the hot summer months with no crops. In 1878, Congress moved the Poncas from this temporary location to the east section of the Cherokee Strip on 101,894 acres.

Standing Bear, in 1878, left the reservation without permission to return to the Ponca homeland to bury a son who had died. The Secretary of the Interior was notified of this “escape” and Standing Bear and his party were arrested. Sympathizers hired legal counsel who applied for a writ of habeas corpus. However, it was denied because “an Indian is not a person within the meaning of the law” (Howard, 1965; Tibbles, 1972). Thus began the famous trial of Standing Bear which ended with the recognition of Indians as people. Standing Bear and his family were allowed to return to the Niobrara reservation; however, those still in Indian Territory were not allowed to return for fear it would “set a precedent which might well destroy the entire military – political – reservation complex” (Brown, 1970, p. 363).

The Ponca were now separated into two groups, the Osni-Ponka (cold Ponca) in Nebraska and the Maste-Ponka (warm Ponca) in Oklahoma (Howard, 1965; Jablow, 1974; Tibbles, 1972). According to Howard (1965) assimilation became the goal of the

northern Ponca while the southern Ponca tried to retain their Ponca ways. Another blow to the Ponca people came with the Dawes Act of 1887 (Otis, 1973) in which Ponca lands were allotted into 160-acre tracts. Bold Warrior (2000) describes the implications of the act:

> One of the basic principles of the Ponca culture is compassionate giving, sharing, and generosity toward one's fellow human beings. To the Ponca… to be otherwise is to be in human. 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 the land it would be necessary to destroy the culture…. 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 land 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. (p. 47)

Implementation of the Dawes Act led to the gathering of people who were fullbloods so that their legal rights could be sold to the highest bidders who would then "assist" them in choosing their allotment. "The grafters… then directed them to sign another paper, which always turned out to be a lease of their 'surplus' and usually carried

an illegal contract to sell it as soon as it should become alienable" (Debo, 1970, p. 84). In the early 1880s the pressure to open Indian Territory to White settlement caused George Miller, of 101 Ranch fame, to begin leasing lands from the Poncas. White Eagle recommended that 100,000 acres be leased for which Miller would pay one cent an acre. (Gipson, 1946)

Heerman (1974) stated:

> It should be understood that in some cases the Poncas did not fully comprehend what was transpiring. The mistaken cession of northern lands, their hurried and forced removal; the leasing and selling of their lands in Oklahoma, all represent instances in which the Poncas were not fully apprised of the situation. (p. 43)

Twentieth Century

E. W. Marland began exploring for oil in 1907, and secured leases from the Millers and the Indians in the area. The Millers by this time had leased almost all of the Ponca lands and were able to get title to some. Marland was even able to get the right to drill for oil on the small Ponca cemetery. Although it was published that Poncas received "immense royalties" from their oil fields, it may have been only a few who benefited, with most Poncas receiving very little (Heerman, 1974). Heerman concludes that the Ponca failed to gain the advantages of the oil boom because they were sold out by their leadership and the leadership that did exist had a subordinate position in the White legal, political, and economic institutions that controlled Indian affairs.

Poncas were allowed to set up governing bodies with the passage of the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act in 1836. However, it was not until September 27, 1950, that the Poncas adopted their constitution and the Bureau of Indian Affairs began to transfer control over to the an elected tribal council. Because this system was an artificial, imposed governmental system not based on Ponca culture, it was beset with factionalism that continues today with part of the community advocating assimilation and part of the community advocating militancy.

Ponca Culture

The Ponca are a patrilineal people. Originally the Ponca were divided into eight clans with clan membership determined by the father. The seven clans that still exist are the Monkon, Wahshahbeh, Wazha'zhe, Nenkahpahshon, Nuxeh, Hesahdah and Thexeday. The Nashtah clan has died out. In recent times a "part White man" clan was added (Bold Warrior, 2000).

Poncas were both hunters and agricultural people. In the spring, Poncas would plant and tend their crops until they left on the summer hunt, returning in the fall when the crops ripened. Corn was a staple, but squash, beans, and watermelons were also planted. Today a squash, commonly known as a Ponca squash, is still grown and is a favorite among older people. Small game such as rabbit, geese, turtles, possum, raccoon, and even skunk were hunted and eaten as well as larger game such as elk, deer, bear, and buffalo. Both crops and meat were preserved and stored underground (Jablow, 1974).

Ponca clothing, until contact with White men, was made of skins. Poncas sometimes dyed their moccasins black, which no other Native American tribe did (Jacobs, 1977). Among the Poncas black is considered a color of strength (personal communication, 1999). Clothing was also elaborately decorated with beadwork and quillwork. They lived in four types of homes, earth lodges, elongated or hemispherical hide lodges, and three-pole tepees (Jacobs, 1977). Most of the construction was done by the women and the women were the owners of the homes and contents.

Poncas acquired horses around 1750 and had a unique way of taming them in the water which protected both the horse and the rider (personal communication, 2001). Poncas also raised and bred three different types of dogs, two of which were used for work and one for food (Jablow, 1974).

Poncas followed the concept of primogeniture which gave preference to the eldest son. If the oldest child was a girl, she was honored, but did not inherit.
Young boys engaged in play activities related to the hunt, while girls emulated their mothers in their play activities. When both males and females were old enough, they started participating in adult work. In marriage, a man could have more than one wife and when he did they were usually sisters. Women, however, had only one husband. Divorce, though infrequent, could be initiated by either party. Women who wished to divorce would just throw their husband's belongings out of the house and men would simply announce it. (personal communication, 1999)

Women enjoyed playing games of chance such as the plum stone game (similar to dice) and hand game (which is still played today). In the hand game, participants are divided into two groups and one person is chosen from each group to "pick." One side

starts, with the first person shaking two beans in her hands to the rhythm of the drum. She places her hand behind her back and places the beans in one hand and then brings them to the front. The opposing team member tries to guess which hand holds the beans. Score is kept as the score keeper moves sticks from one spot to another. Jacobs (1977) said that shinney (a game similar to hockey) was played by both men and women. However, I have been told it was always a man's game. Today, in the spring, it is played the four Sunday's after Easter, and only by the men.

There were several ceremonies that were exclusively for women: the Pipe Dance ceremony, the Tattooing ceremony, and the White Horse Rider ceremony. None of these is practiced today. The Pipe Dance ceremony was a right of passage ceremony for the female descendents of chiefs, which took them out of childhood and into adulthood. It defined their social station and marked them as women who were kind, hospitable, generous and nurturing. During the ceremony the girls would receive a tattoo on their forehead (illustration 1). There are songs specifically for this ceremony which were sung

Illustration 1. Woman with forehead tattoo.

and gifts were given away. After a girl completed this ceremony she was allowed to wear an eagle plume. The Tattooing ceremony was similar to the Pipe Dance ceremony; however, it was open to all women. Instead of a girl's forehead being tattooed, a star was tattooed on her left hand. A girl who went through this ceremony was also marked as one who was kind, hospitable, generous and nurturing. The White Horse Rider ceremony was for chief's daughters. This could be held at any time, but was frequently done during the hand games. One would call for a White Horse Rider song and the family of the girl being honored, or the woman herself, would give generous gifts. These ceremonies, as well as the Sun Dance, held late in the summer; were considered important to the Ponca people (Bold Warrior, 2000).

There were two societies for men that existed among the Ponca: the Hey thu shkah society, a warrior society for the protection of the people, and the Not Afraid of Death Society dedicated to offensive and defensive war. The women had a Scalp Dance society whose purpose was to care for those in need in the community. Any woman could be in one of these Scalp Dance societies (and there were several) but there was one that was specifically for chief's daughters and wives.

Poncas are known worldwide for their songs. Although most songs were made by men, one that still exists was written by a woman chief mourning the death of her grandson. Women, as well as men, were warriors. One song that celebrates a woman warrior tells of a woman who rescued the young man with whom she was in love. The names of neither the woman nor the young men in the story survives today. As the story goes, two men liked a particular young woman and knew they were rivals for her affection. Both went on a war expedition against the Sioux. It was common prior to a

battle for the men to pair off, with each partner being responsible for the other in case of a defeat in battle. As it turned out, the two rivals were paired. The battle turned against the Poncas and as they were retreating, one of the rivals called out to the other (who had a faster horse) to wait for him. When the young man caught up with him, the rival cut his bow and left him defenseless to be captured. When the rival returned with the rest of the warriors to the camp, he told the young woman that the other had been killed in battle, effectively eliminating his rival. The woman, however, suspected this was a lie. She found out which band of Sioux they had been fighting and where they were camped. She took a horse, food, and her medicine and traveled for several days until she found the camp. At nightfall, she took her horse and wrapped her horse blanket as if it were a baby and entered the camp. Her medicine was of the type that caused people to go to sleep. She walked around the camp and, using her medicine, caused even the dogs to fall asleep. She then cut the Ponca man free and they returned to the Ponca camp (personal communication, 2002).

Indian Education

Overview

Historically the European and Euro-American attempts to educate Native Americans has been predominately from the western point of view of the superior educating the inferior; the civilized educating the savage (Pearce, 1988). The attempts made to educate were attempts to destroy what was seen as inferior, savage, uncivilized

behavior and replace it with what was considered to be the civilized manners of the educators and the Christian religion. These attitudes have continued into the latter part of the 20th Century with an educational legacy that has brought child and spousal abuse to peoples who had been kind and loving to their children and spouses, destruction of the cultural knowledge that transmitted parenting skills, and an alienation from themselves that has left Native American peoples with high rates of poverty, suicide, dropouts, and alcoholism. (Huber & Skinner, 1991)

To begin to understand the magnitude of the problem, one must begin with an understanding that there was education prior to the coming of Europeans. Frequently, the continent of North America was described as a vast wasteland with wild, uncivilized peoples roaming and hunting prior to the coming of Europeans. The reality is that there were many different nations of indigenous peoples with their own governmental systems and spiritual beliefs. The Iroquois Confederation, which influenced the Constitution of the United States (Lyons, Mohawk, Deloria, Hauptman, Berman, Grinde, Berkey, & Venables, 1992) finally began to receive recognition for this with an official expression of appreciation from the United States Congress ("The Iroquois Contribution" 1991). Just as each indigenous nation had its own spiritual beliefs and system of social organization, it also had its own way of teaching what it felt was important to its children. However, some characteristics appear to be common from group to group. Children learned by imitating and applying what they learned rather than memorizing principles. Sharing and cooperation were valued, with the needs of the group receiving priority over the individual. Tribal history, science, manners, hunting, agriculture, and religious training were all common elements of Native education (DeJong, 1993).

Among the four nations -- England, France, Spain, and the Netherlands -- involved in European movement to the North American continent, the French were the ones who valued Native knowledge and assimilated into the Native groups. Their economic goals of hunting and trading included an affirmation of Indian ways, and they did not have the intense drive to change Indians that others did (DeJong, 1993). The English, to the contrary, wished to "civilize" the Indian, i.e. have him adopt European ways. The Puritans especially saw Native culture as barbarous. John Eliot, a preacher who spoke the Algonquin language, said of them "these poor Indians have no principles of their own nor yet wisdome of their own" (Szasz, 1988, p. 106). The Reverend Cotton Mather believed that the devil had possibly "decoyed [them] hither, in hopes that the gospel… would never come here to disturb his absolute empire over them" (Szasz, 1988, p. 107). And, it was the English colonies, who were to become the original thirteen states, that had the greatest influence on future governmental policy toward educating Indians (DeJong, 1993).

The first "Indian Praying Town" was established in 1651, by John Eliot on "reserved land" set aside for Indians. The Indians, who had converted to Christianity, agreed to allow their children to receive a Puritan education. However, unlike the French, the English only wished to change the Indian culture to an English one, and did not attempt assimilation (DeJong, 1993). The New England colonies established Harvard College in 1636 to provide higher education for Indian youth. However, it was not successful, and its focus was changed to educate English youth (DeJong, 1993). The reason for this lack of "success" can be seen in a statement Canassatego, an Iroguois, made in 1744:

> Several of our young People were formerly brought up in the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences, but, when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cain, take a deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, nor Counselors; they were totally good for nothing. (Fuchs & Havighurst, 1972, p. 3)

Cadete, a Mescalero Apache, expressed the cultural difference in the goals of European education and Native education in these words:

> You desire our children to learn from books, and say, that because you have done so, you are able to build all those big houses, and sail over the sea, and talk with each other at any distance, and do many wonderful things; now let me tell you what we think. You begin when you are little to work hard and work until you are men in order to begin fresh work. You say that you work hard in order to learn how to work well. After you get to be men, then you say, the labor of life commences; then too, you build big houses, big ships, big towns, and everything else in proportion. Then, after you have got them all, you die and leave them behind. Now we call that slavery. You are slaves from the time you begin to talk until you die; but we are free… The river, the wood and plain yield all that we require, and we will not be slaves; nor will we send our children to your schools, where they will only learn to become like yourselves. (DeJong, 1993, p. 5)

From the late 1700s to the 1800s many Christian churches supported missionary activity, which included schools, with the idea that to educate and civilize the Indians was

a more moral decision than the genocide advocated by many. The Congress of the United States was influenced by different church organizations and in 1802 approved up to $15,000 annually to “civilize the savages.” Congress turned these funds over to different missionary groups in 1819 which were active in the “civilization” effort. This annual appropriation did not end until 1873 (Fuchs & Havighurst, 1972). Both the government and the missionaries wished the native peoples to become farmers and cast off their own native traditions and spiritual beliefs. Although missionary/educational activity continued for almost a century, it was considered a failure. Indian people held firmly, for the most part, to their own spiritual and cultural beliefs (DeJong, 1993).

In the 1820s the federal government wanted to clear the land of Indians to make way for White settlers. Thomas McKenney, Superintendent of Indian Affairs at that time, pressed the view that Indians in contact with White settlers would despair of ever becoming as civilized as the superior White settlers and would give up attempts to achieve civilization. He recommended that, for the educational benefit of Indians, they be removed from areas in which they were in contact with White settlers (Spring, 1994). The Indian Removal Act was passed in 1830, leading eventually to the removal of the Poncas to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) in 1876.

Three other events had significant educational impact on Native Americans. In 1887, the Dawes Act, designed to end communal ownership of land by allotting portions to individuals, was passed. This was a prelude to opening a portion of Indian Territory to White settlement and the eventual establishment of the state of Oklahoma.

For the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Seminole, the Curtis Act of June 28, 1898, provided for the distribution of their lands, abolition of tribal courts, and

the federal control of their highly successful tribal schools. The Cherokee are a good example of the results of this federal control. In the 1969 Kennedy Report *Indian Education: A National Tragedy – A National Challenge* (U.S. Congress, 1969), it is reported that prior to the government take-over of the schools, the Cherokee had a 90 percent literacy rate in their own language and a higher English literacy level than the White populations of Texas or Arkansas at the time. They also had a system of higher education with more than 200 schools and academies and sent numerous graduates to eastern colleges. After the Curtis Act and sixty years of federal government control, the median number of years completed by a Cherokee adult was 5.5 years; 40 percent of all Cherokee adults were illiterate, and the level of education was well below average for Oklahoma (DeJong, 1993).

Richard Henry Pratt began in 1875 to test an Indian educational hypothesis he had developed. Pratt was considered friendly with Indian people and believed that education was an alternative to killing them. However, he believed that it was necessary to “kill the Indian” to save the man, i.e. destroy all vestiges of his culture. Pratt, then a captain in the U.S. Army, conducted seventy-two Kiowa, Comanche, and Cheyenne prisoners to a fort in St. Augustine, Florida where he remained as their jailer. This became a laboratory in which he would show that “wild Indians” could be turned into peaceful citizens. He cut their hair, changed their clothes, and regimented their daily lives in a military fashion. He was successful in teaching his prisoners to adapt to these manners; however, when they were released to return to the reservation, almost all reverted to their old cultural manners. Pratt was disappointed; however, he believed that Indian children, if taken away

from their parents early enough and kept apart from them, would permanently adapt to White ways (Adams, 1995).

Pratt used his experience in Florida and began a school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1879 which became the nation's center for Indian education. Two hundred children representing a dozen tribes were enrolled. In the late 1800s the "accomplishments" of the Carlisle school led to an increasing preoccupation with Indian education and a corresponding increase in funding, from $150,000 in 1800 to more than a million dollars in 1887 (Pratt, 1964). Unlike McKenney, who felt that the Indian needed to be removed from the White man, Pratt felt that the Indian needed to be in contact with the White man in order to learn civilized behavior and developed an "outing" system which placed Indian young people in White homes. Pratt's goal was to strip the Indian student of all vestiges of his own culture and language, to strip him of "peculiar Indian ways" so that he could assimilate. He felt it would take from three to five years to totally assimilate Indians if the United States put its resources to the task. Pratt (1964) stated:

> I suppose the end to be gained, however far away it may be, is the complete civilization of the Indian and his absorption into our national life with all the rights and privileges guaranteed to every other individual, the Indian to lose his identity as such, to give up his tribal relations and to be made to feel that he is an American citizen. If I am correct in this supposition, then the sooner all tribal relations are broken up; the sooner the Indian loses all his Indian ways, even his language, the better it will be for him and for the government and the greater will be the economy to both. Now, I do not believe that amongst his people an Indian can be made to feel all the advantages of civilized life, not the manhood of

> supporting himself and of standing out alone and battling for life as an American citizen. To accomplish that, his removal and personal isolation is necessary. One year in the midst of a civilized community where, whichever way he may turn he can see the industrious farmer plowing his fields or reaping his grain, and the industrious mechanic building houses or engaged in other manufactures, with all the realities of wealth and happiness which these efforts bring to the farmer and mechanic is worth more as a means of implanting such aspirations as these you desire for him in his mind than ten years, nay, than a whole life time of camp surroundings with the best Agency school work that can be done (Utley, 1964, p. 266).

Students were taught at Carlisle to look down on their native ways and to consider them inferior (Almeida, 1997; Utley, 1964). Although some students did assimilate, many students ran away, and others died of disease and homesickness. Many upon graduating, returned to their own people, bereft of a language with which to communicate with their own families, and lacking in social skills and necessary knowledge to become fully re-integrated with their own people. The boarding school system destroyed traditional roles of women as they were taught Euro-American methods of running a household and preparing food. Students were taught to look down on their Native ways and to consider them inferior (Almeida, 1997). Pratt's Carlisle School was the first of many government schools which become known for their abuse of children and using them as a labor force for nearby farmers.

The success of this system in destroying culture (Medicine, 1993; Rippa, 1997) led by 1899 to twenty-four off-reservation boarding schools modeled upon Pratt's system

of education. Among these was Chilocco Agricultural Indian School in Oklahoma which many Ponca children attended.

Chilocco

Chilocco was an off-reservation boarding school for Indian students and was named Chilocco Indian Agricultural School. The school, which opened in 1884 and closed its doors in 1980, was located north of Newkirk, Oklahoma. Today, when the gates are unlocked, one can still enter the school grounds passing through the arch that names the school and drive down the tree lined road to the school buildings.

Congress passed an act in 1819 intended to assist in providing education "for the purpose of providing against further decline and final extinction of the Indian tribes… to instruct them in the mode of agriculture suited to their situation, and for teaching their children in reading writing and arithmetic" (Lomawaima, 1994). At that time, the act authorized funding of $10,000. By 1842, the funding, called the Civilization Fund, had been increased to $214,000 and was given to missionary organizations which maintained the schools. Because of the arguments among the different religious groups competing for these funds, the government set up its own schools based on Protestant religious beliefs, and emphasized agricultural and manual skills for the boys and domestic training for the girls. Chilocco, one of these schools, was established in 1884 as an agricultural school, but had no organized agricultural curriculum. At that time, any agricultural education that did exist at the school was a by-product of the work necessary to keep the school functioning. Building maintenance, mending, sewing, working in the kitchen,

bakery and butcher shop were all essential to the functioning of the school. In a 1901 annual report, Superintendent McCowan, expressed the need for Chilocco to become a true agricultural school:

> Not only has the education of the White boy been "away from the farm and toward the factory" and the city, but the education of our Indian boys has been toward the city and the professions instead of to the higher, broader, and better life of the farm and country. Methods of teaching, even in our best Indian schools, have been of such a nature as to disgust the Indian boy with the farm. Drudgery has been called farming, and chore boys have been dubbed farmers. The result has been a continual and constantly increasing exodus of our most promising boys from the rural homes they own to the professions they are as yet unfit to adorn, and to fields of football where they shine. Chilocco makes the farm the center of interest, and its industries, its economies, its science the subjects of thought and study. (Lomawaima, 1994, p. 17)

A significant influence on the curriculum of these schools was the General Allotment Act (also called the Dawes Act and the Indian Emancipation Act) which was passed in 1887. This act divested tribes of their land and mandated the allotment of quarter sections (160 acres) to individual Indians. The actual size of the allotment, however, depended on the age and marital status of the allottee. At the end of twenty-five years the allottee was supposed to receive a title to the land and U.S. Citizenship (Prucha, 1986). Tribes in Indian Territory/Oklahoma were the primary targets for this. Leftover land was allowed to be claimed and settled by non-Indians. Part of the purpose of the off-reservation boarding schools became to give Indian men and the women skills that would

allow them to live on this allotted land, transform their manners and habits to conform to White ways of behavior, give the students skills that would not take jobs away from White workers, and make them compliant to the wishes of the government.

All children at Chilocco had a garden plot of their own by 1906. The boys, fifth grade and older, were assigned small fields. Students left to tend their gardens and fields at four in the afternoon with rakes and hoes. By 1907, the school had a fully equipped creamery, fifty stands of bees, and one hundred Shropshire sheep had been added to the poultry department.

A two-year normal course was added to offer a new career. Although this was for the boys as well as the girls, it was essentially for the girls “for teaching is essentially women’s work” (Lomawaima, 1994, p. 18).

Classes at Chilocco by 1916 consisted of primary grades (grades one through three), a prevocational program (grades four through six) and a vocational program (grades seven through ten). Although initial enrollment for the school might have been 800 students at the beginning of the year, the average daily attendance would drop to only 640 due to the loss of students through illness, transfer, and running away. Desertion records from January to April 1927 showed that 18 girls and 111 boys ran away. Girls were not able to run away as frequently because they were much more severely restricted than the boys. Although the boys would have freedom to go to the farm, or to work with horses and animals and be out in the wooded area or in the fields, girls were restricted to their home and to their yard. When they were outside, they marched from place to place, long after the practice was discontinued among the boys. The dress of the girls was more

restricted, and surveillance even went so far as the matrons keeping track of the girls' menstrual periods.

Girls received domestic training which reflected not only the belief that a woman's place was in the home but also the belief that Indians were to provide labor for weak White women. In 1893, when Dr. Sylvanus Stall spoke to the National Congress of Mothers, he said: "At war, at work, or at play, the White man is superior to the savage, and his culture has continually improved his condition. But with women the rule is reversed. Her squaw sister will endure effort, exposure and hardship which would kill a White woman" (Lomawaima, 1994, p. 83).

Having Indian girls become accustomed to simple labor was seen as more important than developing truly vocational skills. The girls labored in the kitchens scrubbing pots, working in the sewing room darning socks, or polishing floors. By the 1920s, the administration was beginning to make changes in the girls' vocational education. Training for girls then involved menu planning, nutrition, gardening, clothing construction, embroidery, mending, and some childcare and home nursing. For the girls, though, "acquiescence to federal authority was more important than the details of needlework, laundry, or food preparation. Chilocco's 'Requirements for Graduation' in 1938 emphasized the acquisition of proper codes above academic or vocational skills" (Lomawaima, 1994, p. 87).

Boys' education was also meant to produce an individual who was acquiescent to the federal government. However, his training was in agriculture and other manual skills. Like the girls' program, the boys' program was more drudgery than vocational education. By 1929, however, a new plan was developed devoting fifty percent of a boy's time to

academics and twenty-five percent to art, music and other activities and twenty-five percent to vocational work.

Chilocco's Annual Report in 1934 gave the goals of the trade department:

> When an Indian boy arrives at one of the government schools he has been accustomed to doing the things which he likes to do, he has had plenty of time to work as slowly as he chose, and to follow the dictates of his own fancy. Vocational education of the modern type will teach the Indian the value of time, it will eliminate the fault that many have contracted, that of "puttering around" a job, he will be taught to follow instructions carefully, and finally, he will realize for himself that speed and accuracy are essential for vocational success.
>
> Vocational training of the type offered at Indian Boarding Schools should prepare Indian youth for effective citizenship more efficiently than any other method known. Indian youth is naturally shy and timid and needs to come in contact with tradesmen, tools, materials, and processes… in order to make the adjustments necessary for social efficiency (Lomawaima, 1994, p. 67).

Although Chilocco was, in name, an agricultural school, its real function was to have Indian students become prepared for their inferior position in American society.

It would be a mistake to think that Indian students were passive recipients upon whom the school acted. Resistance permeated the school, both openly in the form of running away and in many surreptitious ways. Students who were placed in positions of authority would generally not report misbehavior. Male students recalled building dugouts near creeks where they deep-fat fried on a piece of curved tin roof, chickens they had stolen. Girls told that there would usually be some boy who would sneak a stolen

chicken to a girl. Then a small group of girls would go into the kitchen in the middle of the night and cook and eat it.

Runaways were highest during the first months of the school year, when those students who had been able to go back home returned. Students were awakened at 5:30 a.m. to the sound of reveille, the first of twenty-two bugle calls throughout the school day that directed student activity and movement. By 1932, Chilocco had been accredited by Oklahoma state school law, and by the late 1930s the school only had junior and senior high grades.

Children in the 1920s to 1930s often came to Chilocco because they could not attend public schools. Chilocco was an option for the Indian students who could not afford public school and for those students whose parents, because of general poverty, could not afford to feed and clothe their children. Life was difficult enough for two-parent families, but it was especially difficult for single-parent families. Chilocco enrolled many of these children. As one Creek girl who entered Chilocco when she was nine in 1927 said, “I don’t think [my mother] *wanted* us to go, it was a question, she had three kids and she couldn’t support us. They had us in a children’s home in Wichita at that time, my brother and I, my sister was seven years younger than I, she was too young to go [to Chilocco] and that was all my mother could handle, was the one child. And she didn’t feel that Children’s Home was the proper place for us, so [she] sent us [to Chilocco]” (Lomawaima, 1994, p. 33-34).

Those who staffed Chilocco, the matrons and the disciplinarians, were not necessarily well educated. In 1927 the Civil Service Examination for Matrons required

that a matron meet very limited standards of education or experience (Lomawaima, 1994).

Discipline at Chilocco was severe as evidenced by a Potowatomi girl, who was twelve when she entered Chilocco:

> …if anybody was bad in mess hall, the whole school, the whole room, the whole three companies in each building had to stand for an hour, without *moving*…. Many of the girls would faint and have to be carried out. Revived and brought back to stand in line again. That was about the worst punishment you could get, I thought, standing for an *hour* without *moving*. You weren't supposed to even move your eyes, or head, in any other direction (Lomawaima, 1994, p. 107).

Francis, a sixteen year old Cherokee male recalled:

F.: I used to play hooky from school and you'd get a demerit every time you missed school. You get ten demerits, you had to work Saturday afternoon, or all day Saturday, on the rock pile. That's where I spent all my spare time, on the rock pile. [Laughter] It wasn't hard to get a demerit, spit on the floor and get a demerit. They [had] military, what do you call it? Discipline? And some of them officers was pretty rough.

T.L.: They had that beltline then, didn't they? That sounds pretty rugged to me.

F.: Well, if you was slow, it was. [Laughter] There could be a bunch of them, and if you crowd 'em, they couldn't hit you very often. Just run like hell and, you kind of learned tricks. And they'd make you stand, too. If you had to stand in the basement for thirty minutes, an hour, two hours without moving. Some of 'em would pass out, just keel over, faint. [They] just lem

> ‘em lay there, ‘til the hour was up, or the two hours, whatever.
>
> (Lomawaima, 1994, p. 111-112)

One Ponca man now in his eighties told of being tied to a wagon wheel as a child for speaking his language. He said, “They beat the shit out of me” (personal communication, 2000).

From 1884 until 1980 Chilocco was the home to many Indian students. There children were parented by an institution that used harsh, sometimes brutal, physical punishment for the smallest infractions of the rules. They were taught that who they were was inferior, that the White man and his way of doing things was superior. Although many students did receive academic and vocational training, they were also taught a parenting style that was abusive and they lost who they were in the process. The Ponca students who attended Chilocco brought this legacy of abuse, a belief in their own inferiority, and the disconnection to their own people and culture back to the reservation.

Twentieth Century

Although in 1925 Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Charles Burke, praised the government Indian school system as a success, not everyone agreed. In 1926 a comprehensive federal study of Indian affairs was conducted. The report, titled *The Problem of Indian Administration* was published in 1928. Because of this report and its findings in the boarding schools of poor health conditions, poorly qualified personnel, inadequate curriculum, and other problems, it was recommended that the boarding school

program be ended and that students be educated in their own communities (Meriam, 1928).

The Johnson-O'Malley Act (JOM) was passed in 1934 as a method of providing funds so that Indian students could attend local public schools. It allowed the federal government to contract "with any appropriate State or private corporation" for the education of Indians. Indian enrollment in public schools had increased by 1953 with 51,000 Indian children in public schools, 31,000 in schools that received funds from JOM. However, despite JOM funds, Native American students had a dropout rate as high as 85 percent (Huff, 1997). In a 1971 study the government found that the JOM funds given to the states for the education of Indian students had been misused. Some school systems placed the money into the general operating fund, thereby reducing the tax-burden of the White community. 19.6 million dollars was used in that way. The JOM funds had been intended to provide money for parental costs of school lunches, athletic equipment, books (at one time, parents were required to rent or purchase books when they enrolled a child in public school), school supplies, and graduation fees. Although the schools had received the money, they were still charging Indian parents. Indian children were dropping out of these schools because they could not pay school fees or buy supplies (Huff, 1997).

The system of public education was still failing Native American students. In 1968 and 1969 a special Senate subcommittee investigated reports of the inadequate education of Native American students in the public school systems. Their findings were reported in *Indian Education: A National Tragedy – A National Challenge*, known as the Kennedy Report (DeJong, 1993). This report was a major indictment of the failure of the

public schools to provide education for Native children. The Kennedy Commission discovered dropout rates twice the national average and in some places it neared one hundred percent. It found one fourth of teachers preferred not to teach Indian children, and that Indian children perceived themselves to be below average in intelligence. Among the Kennedy Report recommendations was that the federal government contract with Indian tribes and communities to provide education for their children and that public schools be required to demonstrate a readiness for Indian children to be part of their school system.

The Educational Assistance Act was passed by Congress in 1975 as a component of the Self-Determination Act. The Self-Determination Act was supposed to allow Native communities to have more control over their reservations. Native peoples criticized the Educational Assistance Act because they saw it as another attempt by the federal government to continue to maintain colonial domination over the Indian Nations. Noriega, quoted in Almeida (1997) said:

> Aside from some cosmetic alterations like the inclusion of beadwork, traditional dance, basket weaving and some language classes, the curriculum taught in Indian schools remained exactly the same, reaching the same conclusions, indoctrinating children with exactly the same values as when the schools were staffed entirely by White people…. You've got to hand it to them in a way. It's really a perfect system of colonization, convincing the colonized to colonize each other in the name of “self-determination” and “liberation.” (p. 768)

President Clinton issued Executive Order 13096 on American Indian and Alaska Native education in 1998. In this Order he re-affirmed the unique political and legal

relationship of the federal government with the tribal governments, and he reminded the people of the United States of the special and historic responsibility the federal government has for the education of the indigenous peoples of this country. The Order called for focusing on six goals:

> (1) improving reading and mathematics; (2) increasing high school completion and postsecondary attendance rates; (3) reducing the influence of long-standing factors that impede educational performance, such as poverty and substance abuse; (4) creating strong, safe, and drug-free school environments; (5) improving science education; and (6) expanding the use of educational technology (Clinton, 1998).

As a way of meeting these goals, President Clinton called for the development of a long-term, comprehensive federal policy to be developed under the auspices of an interagency task force that would conduct research into the problem of Indian education. In 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Title VII of this act reaffirmed the Federal Government's "unique and continuing trust relationship to the Indian people for the education of Indian children" (P.L. 107-110, Sec. 7101). That same year the Bush administration also "floated a plan to 'privatize' the remaining BIA schools" (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, P. 322) which critics saw as an attempt to get out of the trust relationship (Reyhner & Eder, 2004).In 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Title VII of this act reaffirmed the Federal Government's "unique and continuing trust relationship to the Indian people for the education of Indian children" (P.L. 107-110, Sec. 7101). That same year the Bush administration also "floated a plan to 'privatize' the remaining BIA schools" (Reyhner &

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Dropout Theories

Ogbu and Voluntary/Involuntary Minorities

Ogbu's (1974) early educational research concentrated on comparing the performance of minority students with students of the dominant culture. This was done looking at students in six different countries: Britain, India, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States. In these countries, he concentrated on the education of what he termed castlike minorities. Castlike minorities are those who occupy a subordinate group which has been denied equal access to educational resources, equal treatment in schools, and equal rewards in employment. His conclusion was that the differences in educational outcome between minority groups and the dominant groups was caused by the difference in treatment of the groups by the communities at large and in the schools and by how the

minority groups perceived and responded to schools because of this (Ogbu, 1974; Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Ogbu later began to look at the differences between minority groups themselves rather than the differences between minority groups and dominant groups in order to explore why some minority groups did well while others did poorly. He divided the minority groups into immigrant minorities and nonimmigrant minorities, and saw that the latter did less well. From his research, Ogbu articulated his cultural-ecological theory. The two parts to this theory dealt with the way the system (educational policies, ability to get jobs) affected minorities and how community forces (minority perception and response to school and the circumstances surrounding how a group became a minority) affected minorities.

Important to Ogbu's theory was the definition of minority status. A minority was not defined numerically, but was defined by virtue of its subordinate power position in a society. Ogbu separated the minorities into autonomous, voluntary (immigrant*)* minorities, and involuntary (nonimmigrant) minorities.

Autonomous minorities were those who could be of a different race, ethnicity, religion, or language from the dominant group, who could be discriminated against, but were not totally dominated. Jews and Mormons were examples of those groups. The school achievement of those groups was the same as the achievement of the dominant group. In the United States there are no non-White autonomous minorities (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Voluntary (immigrant) minorities were those who had come to the United States expecting better opportunities than those available in their places of origin. Members of

those groups were distinguished from involuntary minorities because they chose to move to the United States. Examples of those groups were people coming from Japan, Africa (not as slaves), Poland, or Mexico. Ogbu distinguished refugees or people who felt forced to be here temporarily (as migrant and undocumented workers) from the voluntary minorities by their belief that their stay in the United States was only temporary so they accepted language and cultural differences as a tourist would.

Involuntary (nonimmigrant) minorities were those who were conquered, enslaved, or colonized by the United States, making them a part of the United States against their will. African-Americans whose ancestors came here as slaves, Alaska Natives, American Indians, and Puerto Ricans were in this category.

Voluntary minorities were generally willing to accept unequal treatment to gain economic success, believing discrimination to be temporary due to their status as foreigners or to their inadequate command of the English language (Ogbu, 1978; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Members of these groups also believed that the opportunity for success and the “good life” was greater in the United States than in their country of origin (Ogbu & Simmons, 1998). In contrast, involuntary minorities generally saw discrimination as permanent, not temporary and did not have a perception of their place of origin as providing inferior opportunity. They did not believe that anyone could succeed in the United States with hard work.

Voluntary minorities had a hopeful attitude when they arrived which lead them to trust White-controlled institutions (such as schools) and see academic success as necessary to achieving their own goals (Ogbu & Simmons, 1998). Involuntary minorities, however, had a history of discrimination and unequal treatment and were distrustful of

institutions. Involuntary minorities frequently opposed speaking standard English and saw academic success as succumbing to the oppressor and “acting White” (Fordham, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Ogbu held that these historical, community, and institutional conditions and experiences are what lead to different educational outcomes for voluntary and involuntary minorities.

Acknowledging that there were involuntary minorities who did very well academically and achieved a high status in the dominant community, Ogbu pointed out that not all members of a minority group act and think the same way. However, there are dominant patterns of belief and behavior within the group that are frequent enough to form a pattern. It is those dominant patterns that formed his theory.

Cultural Deprivation and Cultural Difference/Discontinuity

Cultural deprivation and cultural difference/discontinuity are two cultural theories proposed to explain why students drop out of school. Cultural deprivation, a theory popular in the 1960s, framed dropping out as a problem of the home in which children were not provided by their parents with the nurturing, experiences, or tools to be successful in school. Parents were perceived as not caring about their children sufficiently to read to them, to buy them crayons pencils and scissors, or to teach them proper ways of behavior. Head Start was a program begun to address this problem and is often considered one of the most successful government programs ever established (Mallory & Goldsmith, 1991).

Cultural difference/discontinuity posited that the difference between the home culture and the school culture, particularly in communication style, was the reason students had difficulty in school and eventually dropped out. According to this theory, if a teacher could adapt to and respect the culture of the minority student, then the student would have a greater chance of achieving academic success. The Kamehameha Early Education Program was an example of this theory in action in the classroom. In the Kamehameha program, teachers used a method of teaching reading based on the Hawaiian communication style. This style replaced the western communication style of speaking one at a time. This program was also taken to a Navajo community, and adapted to the Navajo communication style (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995).

Arguments against the concept of cultural deprivation come from critical theorists who saw this as a Eurocentric view which favored maintaining a power relationship in which the dominant culture maintained superiority. Arguments against cultural difference/discontinuity come from those who see it as a

> …plot [of White liberal educators] to prevent the schools from teaching the linguistic aspects of the culture of power, thus dooming … children to a permanent outsider caste where liberal educators [who] believe themselves to be operating with good intentions, but that these good intentions are only conscious delusions about their unconscious true motives (Delpit, 1995, p. 29).

Critical Theory

Critical theorists see schooling as a form of cultural politics in which schooling is an introduction to, preparation for, and legitimating of particular forms of social life, always implicit in relations of power, social practices, and the favoring of forms of knowledge that support a specific vision of past, present, and future. In general, critical theorists maintain that schools have always functioned in ways that reproduce inequality, racism, and sexism and fragment democratic social relations through an emphasis on competitiveness and cultural ethnocentrism (McLaren, 1989).

Schools are seen as the place status quo is maintained and students are filled with the information that maintains the power position of the dominant group and students are taught to "…fit the world the oppressors have created, and [not] question it" (Freire, 1997). Students who are critical and questioning are those who leave. Those who stay know to be quiet, to be silenced (Fine, 1991).

Critical theory posits that students are pushed out of school through a system in which already existing discrepancies are not only maintained but increased. In the United States there is a belief in universal access to education. Given past history in the United States where all students did not have access to education, Fine (1991) stated that although today there is universal education, access to education does not mean there is justice. Fine argues that we must look at schools to determine why, with universal access, there are discrepant outcomes in which those who "begin school already privileged end up that way – only more so" (p. 181). In addition "well-meaning, underpaid, often quite caring women and men" (p. 182) implement the policies and practices that produce

unequal outcomes so the policies and practices themselves need to be examined. There needs to be a shift from looking at the intentions of the teachers to the policies and structures themselves. Additionally, there is the view that there should be a separation between the school and the home -- that the school's responsibility ends at the school door. This seems to perpetuate the system in which the interests and mores of the already privileged are reflected in the schools and the concerns and interests of those who are marginalized are ignored.

Conclusion

Poncas have been under extreme stress since the early 1800s, due to disease, war, displacement from their homeland, the deaths of the old people who held cultural knowledge, and the decimation of their numbers. As White society began to force "civilization" on them through education and forced individual land ownership, the culture that held them together as a community began to fragment. Educational theorists have begun to see a connection between the treatment of minority people within the society and within the schools and their lack of educational achievement. Exploring Ponca girls' understanding of the reasons why they remain in school or drop out before graduation is another step in this process.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

I will discuss in this chapter my rationale for qualitative methodology and case study for this research. I will also discuss ethical issues specific to doing research in indigenous communities and with children. I will cover issues of rigor and the specifics of the research.

Introduction

Qualitative research is useful in providing a holographic, holistic image rather than the one-dimensional image of quantitative research. It recognizes that reality has multiple interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). I have chosen case study within qualitative methodology for its usefulness in gaining an in-depth understanding of the meaning of a particular event (in this case dropping out or remaining in school) for those involved (Merriam, 1998). However, too often, researchers have gazed at and interpreted the lives of indigenous peoples through an imperialistic lens and then appropriated the culture and gifted back a distorted and barely recognizable re-presentation (Bold Warrior, 2000; DeLoria,1988; Smith, 2001). Through the threads of feminist theory woven throughout this research I have tried to mitigate this problem.

Rationale for Qualitative Method

The purpose of educational research is to increase our understanding of "educational processes, practices, and issues" (Gay & Airasian, 2000) and to build theory (Graue & Walsh, 1998). In some instances quantitative methods which seek to prove or disprove an hypothesis are appropriate. However, quantitative methods have the potential of directing the researcher away from important aspects which are not easily measured (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995). Qualitative methods, however, work on the premise that there are multiple realities and that methods which bring out those perspectives through the interaction of the researcher and the participants are most appropriate (Cresswell, 1994). Merriam (1998) stated "research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (p.1) and lists six characteristics that reflect how qualitative research does this. The first characteristic is the key concern of understanding from the participants' perspective, not the researcher's, an emic rather than an etic view (Geertz, 1973). For example, Bohannan (1966) wrote a story of her experiences in a West African village trying to explain *Hamlet*. Because the concepts were not culturally transferable, she found that what she had considered "universal" themes were not, and the elders, in turn, tried to explain to her the "real" meaning of the story based on their culture. The second characteristic is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data analysis, rather than an instrument like an inventory or questionnaire. The researcher can be immediately responsive to what the participant says verbally and non-verbally, and re-direct the

research in response. The third characteristic is that the research is usually done in the field, i.e. the researcher physically goes to the people in a natural setting. The fourth characteristic is that the method is inductive and builds hypotheses or theories from the interactions with the participants rather than in isolation from them. The last characteristic is that the product is richly descriptive, using words and pictures rather than numbers. The data is in the form of the participants' own words.

Because this study seeks to avoid the past problems of a patriarchal system that overwrote the voices of those being researched (Johnson, 1997) and to let the voices of the girls in the study be heard, qualitative methods are best.

Feminist Frame

Feminism is a diverse movement, but generally holds the view that women are less valued than men in society and that this can be seen is the way women have been represented, or omitted from texts (Gamble, 1999). Feminism tries to bring women and their concerns to the forefront. I frame this study within feminist theory which draws on traditional female qualities such as empathy and human concern and also acknowledges the risk of perpetuating a patriarchal system (Johnson, 1997). Research places me, as a researcher, in a position of power. My goal, through the use of a feminist perspective, is to use this privileged status to let the voices of the girls in this study be heard and to be cautious of imposing my own voice.

Of concern in feminist issues is that women and their contributions and experiences are frequently absent in written accounts or serve to perpetuate an

undervaluing of women. This lack of presence in the literature is apparent when one looks at the literature on Indian education. *To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893-1920* (Ellis, 1996) has some reminiscences of girls who attended that school, but girls are generally missing in the narrative, but it does include how gender was used to shame males: "Commonly administered punishments for running away also included…mak[ing] boys wear dresses" (p.107) or making them wear "sandwich boards reading 'I like girls'" (p.106) because they spoke Kiowa. Being female was positioned as inferior, something one would not want to be; as one White, woman teacher at a boarding school said, "It's bad enough for us to be women. No one thinks much of women in this country. And no one likes them…" (Carter, 1995, p. 58).

Two teacher narratives by women who went west to "teach the Indians" in the late 1800s, include stories about the experiences of Native American girls attending the schools as well as stories of other Indian women (Jenkins, 1951). In one instance, Jenkins tells about a Navajo girl's name and the White teachers' reaction to it: "Mildred then explained to me that Nita had said the child's [an eleven year old girl] name was 'Born-on-the-battle-field.' As we resented such a name for the little girl, we decided to call her 'Pretty Girl.' Thereafter we always called her that. The Navahoes' [sic] tribal custom was to give the girls war names" (p.83). Jenkins' narrative also includes instances of girls who were quarantined in a cave because they had small pox raiding the school dump for cardboard to use for making cards to gamble with. Although many texts talk about the regimentation and the school, Jenkins gives a narrative of a class of "little girls" learning to sew:

> Her class of little girls was fascinating. When she held up a pin and asked "What is this?" they named it or were taught its name, its point, its head; the needle, its point, its eye; a spool, the thread. Each child took her spool.
>
> "How long must your thread be?" Miss Baker asked. "As long – as – my – ar-rm," was the answer in concert. They always dwelt on that "ar-rm." Each child then cut her thread "as – long – as – my – arm," held it until the direction came, "Now thread your needle."
>
> The needle threaded, Miss Baker asked, "What did you do?" and in concert came the answer, "I threaded – my – needle."
>
> It was surely a pleasure to see these classes of wonderfully clean, well-behaved little children, who wore such good clothing. (pp. 268-69).

McBeth (1983) in *Ethnic Identity and the Boarding School Experience of West-Central Oklahoma American Indians*, stated:

> The majority of my informants and my most intensive social contacts were with women, and so, it will be their experiences that will be emphasized. It is my conclusion that their general experiences and evaluations of their experiences are indicative of the overall community attitudes toward the boarding schools. All my male informants were in general agreement with my primary female informants concerning the negative and positive aspects of the boarding school experience. (p.6)

However, without this statement at the beginning of the book one would not know that this was primarily told from a woman's point of view. And, I have not so far seen

any book that indicates women were checked with to verify that male informants' stories were "in general agreement" with female experiences.

DeJong's *Promises of the Past: A History of Indian Education* (1993) has educational experiences specific to girls that would cover about three full pages of his 268-page book, and these experiences all occurred before 1871.

Adams (1988) has only two lines specifically about girls in "Fundamental Considerations: The Deep Meaning of Native American Schooling, 1880 - 1900" in which he says they were taught skills considered appropriate for wives and mothers, cooking, sewing, etc. I suppose there was no "deep meaning" that the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Women's National Indian Association believed that it was through the education of native girls that American Indian cultures could be destroyed (Carter, 1995; Trennert, 1982).

Two books stand out because they do address issues of gender and school, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* by Lomawaima (1994) and *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851 - 1909* by Devon Mihesuah (1993). Lomawaima's book is full of narratives in which both girls and boys who attend Chilocco get to relate their experiences. She makes the point that education at Chilocco was divided by gender and the girls were much more severely restricted than the boys. Although the boys had the "freedom" to go to the farm or to work with horses and animals and be out in the wooded area or in the fields unsupervised, the girls were restricted to their dorm and to their yard. When the girls went outside, they were marched from place to place, long after the practice was

discontinued among the boys. Girls' dress was more restricted and the surveillance of girls went so far as having matrons keep track of the girls' menstrual periods.

Girls received domestic training which reflected the belief that a woman's place was in the home, but also the belief that Indian women were to provide labor for weak White women.

> At war, at work, or at play, the White man is superior to the savage, and his culture has continually improved his condition. But with women the rule is reversed. Her squaw sister will endure effort, exposure and hardship which would kill a White woman. (Lomawaima, 1994, p. 83)

Having girls become accustomed to simple labor was seen as more important at Chilocco than developing truly vocational skills. The girls labored in the kitchens scrubbing pots, working in the sewing room darning socks, or polishing floors. For girls "acquiescence to federal authority was more important than the details of needlework, laundry, or food preparation. Chilocco's 'Requirements for Graduation' in 1938 emphasized the acquisition of proper codes above academic or vocational skills" (p. 87).

There is little research on Native American adolescent girls, or specifically on Native Americans girls in school today. Interest still seems to be on Indians as a relic of the past. Current research either prefers to look at gender apart from race (Green, DeBacker, Ravindran & Krows, 1999) or addresses deviancy issues such as "American Indian Female Adolescents' Sexual Behavior: A Test of the Life-Course Experience Theory" (Murry & Ponzetti, 1997) and "An Epidemiological Study of Suicide and Suicide Attempts Among the Papago Indians" (Conrad & Kahn, 1973). Two articles, "The Process of Native American Influence on the Education of Native American

Children" (Barlow, 1984), and "Reflections on Indian Education" (Van Otten & Tsutsui, 1984) that did deal with current issues, however, did not look at issues of gender. Even *Indian Nations at Risk* (Cahape & Hawley, 1991) speaks of "students" rather than looking at issues of gender and race in schools

My research specifically involves Ponca girls and therefore adds to the visibility of girls and their opinions in the literature.

Case Study

Qualitative case study allows the reader to go where one would not ordinarily or easily go, to see there something familiar to one's own experiences and to be less defensive and more able to learn (Donmoyer, 1993). This was important to me as a researcher and to the participants in the study. White Eagle is often characterized as a dangerous place, one that I had been warned, by a high-ranking administrator, not to enter for fear of my own safety. Many teachers do not go into this environment because of fear, lack of time, or lack of interest. I chose to enter and was pleasantly surprised. The participants in the study wanted to make changes in the school system they attended, so it was important to them that teachers and administrators hear what they had to say.

Case study is descriptive, heuristic, and particularistic (Merriam, 1998). The heuristic quality relates to the explanation of the reasons for a problem. In this instance, the history of the Ponca people was explored as well as the history of Indian education in the United States. Although women's experiences and points of view were rare in the literature, I did try to bring out what was recorded of those experiences. The descriptive

quality illustrates complexities of a situation and includes vivid material such as quotations and interviews. I tried through my use of quotations in the review of literature and the words of the participants in the interviews to bring out vivid descriptions. Through the use of description the complexities involved in the particularistic issue of dropping out or remaining in school were brought out. For the participants in the study it involved issues of the meaning of being Ponca, of family and peer loyalty, of making one's own way, and of creating a path for others to follow. Through the use of a variety of materials (interviews, quotations, newspaper and magazine articles, observations, photographs) different facets of the issue began to come more into focus and reflected the differences of opinion that added to the complexity of this issue and the difficulty in coming up with a clear definition of what the "problem" was to be "solved."

The particularistic quality allowed me to confine what was studied. Miles and Huberman (1994) illustrate this as a heart surrounded by a circle. The heart is the focus of the study and the circle creates the boundaries of the study. In the instance of this study the girls and their viewpoints were the heart.

Case study allows for reader participation as "readers bring to a case study their own experience and understanding, which lead to generalizations when new data for the case are added to old data… unlike traditional [quantitative] research, the reader participates in extending generalization" (State, 1981, p. 36). As readers read the words of the participants in the context of the history and culture of the Ponca people and Indian education, they can hopefully make additional connections that are applicable to their own lived experiences.

Ethical Issues

Indigenous Issues

"It is surely difficult to discuss *research methodology* and *indigenous people* together, in the same breath, … without understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices" (Smith, 2001, p. 2). In previous writing about indigenous peoples, whether through personal diaries which were later published, or through research field notes kept with the intention of publication, the lens through which the writer viewed native peoples colored the interpretation of what was seen and later what was reported back. Just as in the dark ages when people did not "see" meteor showers because their existence would have been against the "plan of God" (Manchester, 1992), research among indigenous peoples often created a fictive reality. A Western system of knowledge objectified and dehumanized those being researched. It collected, classified, and condensed (Bold Warrior, 2000; DeLoria,1997; Smith, 2001). Ethnographers' research into how Ponca males sexually stimulated their wives and what parents did to "guard" the "virginity" of their daughters reflected more about the ethnographers' thinking and world view then it did about Poncas or what was important to them. It also allowed for falsification that perpetuated myths.

In the process of textualizing information about indigenous peoples, researchers also en-gendered information. Just as the Omaha became the standard from which the Ponca practices were "deviations" women's lives and knowledge were either

marginalized or eliminated altogether, making information about men the standard from which women deviated.

> The process of en-gendering descriptions of the Other has had very real consequences for indigenous women in that the ways in which indigenous women were described, objectified and represented by Europeans in the nineteenth century has left a legacy of marginalization within indigenous societies as much as within the colonizing society. (Smith, 2001, p. 46)

Women, when they were noticed, were noticed through the lens of current western male thinking as in the missionary Dorsey's (1884) "sickness" interpretation of the menstrual separation of Ponca women (Howard, 1965).

Textualizing of native knowledge through a western lens went hand-in-hand with the intentional destruction of the cultures within which that knowledge was useful and led the "gifting back" of that knowledge in a dissected, meaningless form. Frequently, now, one finds native peoples themselves trying to find their way back to their own cultural beliefs adopting these distorted representations as their own reality. An analogy can be found in the story of Mataatua, a carved Maori house that was sent to an exhibition in Sydney in 1879. Because it was too expensive to re-build the house in the Maori manner for exhibition, it was re-built inside-out and then lined with Chinese matting.

> The house itself had undergone a transformation as the result of being assimilated into a British Empire Exhibition. It changed from being a 'living' meeting house which the people used and had become an ethnological curiosity for strange people to look at the wrong way in the wrong place (Te Runanga o Ngati Awa quoted in Smith, 2001).

Among the Ponca I have heard that women previously participated in the shinney game. I have also heard that it was “always” open only to the men and boys and not the women. Today it is an exclusively male event. I have also been told that there were women who were chiefs -- and that there were never women chiefs. Could it be that the remembering of women as not participants is a reflection of the western view of women and the success of the government’s attempt at cultural annihilation (Medicine, 1993)?

It is because of these issues that I have taken care to check and re-check my understanding of what was being said to me. I did this through going back to the participants in the study and through talking with knowledgeable members of the Ponca community to make sure my interpretations accurately reflected their perceptions.

Children’s Issues

Graue & Walsh (1998) stated that “to act ethically is to act the way one acts toward people whom one respects” (p.55). Jackson (1987) stated:

> When you’re in doubt about whether an action on your part is ethical or not, a good starting place is to put yourself in the subject’s position and consider how you would feel if you learned what that friendly person was really up to. If you’d be annoyed and offended that you were made a sample in a study you didn’t want to be part of…, don’t do those things to others. If you’d feel betrayed because things you said in confidence were made a part of a public report, then don’t betray confidences… (pp. 278-279)

Entering other people's lives, questioning them about their beliefs, concerns, and history is intrusive and requires permission. Seldom, however, do adults ask permission from children. Adults are used to being the permission granters, the authorities, and the knowledge holders. They are the ones who tell children what they can and cannot do. In this research I made a concerted effort to be transparent and respectful to the participants as well as to their parents. Because of the school's needs, I set my initial meetings with potential participants at the main high school campus at their lunch time. In an effort to be respectful of the participants' needs, I provided pizza and drinks for them to eat while I explained the purpose of my study. In order to not have the students at the other campuses feel slighted, I also provided food and drinks for them, even though I did not meet with them during the lunch hour. With participants, I was clear about the purpose and limitations of the study. They were given opportunities to ask questions, and they, as well as their parents, had a permission/consent form to sign (see Appendix B). Throughout the interviewing, I made sure that the time and place was convenient for the participants. The participants were informed that they did not have to answer any question they might feel uncomfortable with, and that they could decide not to continue to participate in the study at any time. Because the participants are part of a close community, there are times when I felt the information they gave me could identify them if included in my results. In those cases, I either did not report the information, or I changed the information in such a way that it would disguise the participant.

Validity and Reliability

Internal and External Validity

Internal validity concerns itself with how findings match reality. Becker, quoted in Merriam (1998) humorously stated “reality is what we choose not to question at the moment” (p. 201). In qualitative research an assumption is that reality is multidimensional and changing; it is not something static that waits to be discovered. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data analysis and the interpreter of reality. Merriam gives five strategies that I used to enhance internal validity:

1. *Triangulation*: Participants were interviewed from three different campuses at different times and different days; multiple sources of data included interviews with participants, statistics from the school, informal discussions with administrators, and knowledgeable members of the Ponca people.
2. *Member checks:* Throughout the study I asked participants to clarify my understanding of the data.
3. *Long- term observations:* I had been involved with the Ponca community and the school system for several years and continued to be involved with the Ponca community over the course of the study. This allowed me to gather historical and cultural information that assisted in my analysis.
4. *Peer Examination:* I chose two members of the Ponca community to comment on the findings as they emerged.

5. *Researcher's biases:* I clarified my biases and theoretical orientation in this study.

External validity concerns itself with the generalizability of a study. In case study, the researcher tries to illuminate a particular situation rather than to generalize to a larger group, to provide perspective rather than truth. However, because of the narrative quality of this research, the reader can use lived experience to look for patterns that generalize to other situations. Rich, thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) assist the reader in determining how closely his or her situation matches the research situation. The Ponca history, description of the research sites, and the quotations from the participants help the reader to make this determination.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the ability to replicate a study and get the same results. Qualitative research, however, does not try to find one reality, but to describe "the world as those in the world experience it" (Merriam, 1998, p. 205). Lincoln and Guba (1985) prefer to use the term "dependability" or "consistency" of results. This means that when outsiders look at the data they agree that the results make sense, that the results are consistent with the data. To ensure dependability of results, three techniques are suggested:

1. *Investigator's position:* I explained my position with the group being studied and my basis for selecting the participants as well as a description of them.

2. *Triangulation:* Multiple sources and methods were used in data collection and analysis.
3. *Audit trail:* I have explained in detail how the data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made.

Evolution of the Study

This study originally began as a grand idea to write a definitive history of the Ponca people with special emphasis on women's history and culture. It was to include interviews with Ponca girls and with their mothers, and focus interviews in which groups of the girls and groups of the mothers I had interviewed would gather together to discuss emerging themes in the data. My desire was to make this research highly participatory. The pragmatics of needing to work to support myself and my sons, intervening personal illness, being able to finish a dissertation, and the desire to graduate at some point caused me to narrow the focus. Once I was actually on the site of my research I was confronted with the reality of research. The first hurdle I had to overcome was diplomatically overriding a list that had been prepared for me of girls who would make "good" participants in the study, i.e. they made good grades in school. I also had to deal with the difficulty of gaining access to participants due to the school's schedule, bus schedules, and absences. Since I wanted a place where the participant and I would have privacy, the place for the interviews had to be negotiated each time I went to the sites.

Gaining Access

Prior to conducting my research, I consulted with the Title IX Indian Education Counselor of the school system to determine if she thought my study would be possible. After discussing the matter with her, I then talked with the Superintendent of Schools, the Assistant Superintendent in charge of the Title IX Indian Education program, and the principals of the main high school, the alternative school, and the teen parent program. All of these people expressed an interest in trying to reduce the drop out rate among Native American students and gave permission for me to conduct the study.

My main contact in gaining access to the participants was the Title IX Indian Education Counselor who was housed at the high school. Initially, she made a list for me of Ponca girls who were attending the high school that she thought I would get "good" information from. Upon discussing the matter with her, it became clear that all the students were those who were doing well academically. Since I wished to have the perspectives of both students who were doing well, and those who were not, it was agreed that I would have meetings in which to explain my study and request participants. Because the counselor was concerned about the appearance of bias, the meetings were open to all female Indian students, not just the Poncas. The first meetings were held during the lunch hour at the high school, and I provided pizza and drinks for the students. I explained the purpose of my research and explained that this study was to be of Ponca girls. Additional meetings were held at the alternative school and the teen parent program. Those who wished to participate were given a parental permission form (see Appendix A) to have signed by a parent.

Sites

The participants in this study attended one of the three campuses connected with the public high school; the main high school, the alternative school, and the teen parent program. The main high school housed grades nine through twelve in five buildings on the large campus. The alternative school campus was in a portion of a building that had once been an elementary school. Portions of this building were being rented by other organizations including a church. The teen parent program was housed in the basement of a beautiful community church in the central part of the town. In addition to the two main classrooms, there was a room where day care was provided for the children of the students attending the center.

Participants

Thirteen girls met the qualifications of being Ponca and returning a parental permission form in order to participate in the study. At my first meeting with each of the girls I also received written consent from them to participate in the study, using a form I had given to them with the parental permission form. The participants ranged in age from 14 to 18 years. Six of the participants attended the main campus of the high school, four attended the teen parent program, and three attended the alternative school. Three of the girls had children and one was expecting a child. All participants had jobs outside of school, from babysitting to working at a local discount store or fast food restaurant. One of the participants lived with the father of her child, but all other participants lived in a

parent's home. All participants had mixed ethnic backgrounds, but considered themselves Ponca.

Interviews

All interviews were held at the campus the participant was attending in a room where privacy could be maintained. In the main high school the interviews were held in one of several conference rooms. At the teen parent site they were held in a small room off the main room where students gathered when not in class. At the alternative school interviews were held in empty classrooms. All interviews were recorded, except for the interview of one participant who did not wish to have her interview recorded. In her case, I took detailed notes of her responses. The interviews were semi structured and were from thirty minutes to one hour in length, depending on the time available due to class constraints and bus schedules. I deviated from the structured questions (see Appendix C) when the participant brought up an area not in the questions that I wanted to have elaborated. They were held at various times of the day. All students were interviewed at least twice and several students were interviewed a third time. I transcribed half of the interviews and had the other half transcribed for me.

Analysis

Initially, I had planned to do my analysis using NVivo coding software. All of the interviews were uploaded to the program, and I began to code them with the demographic

information regarding the participants. Next, I coded the responses by the question that was asked and then began to look for themes that ran through the data. At that point, I had a computer failure and all the data was lost, so I decided to move to a paper method of analyzing data. I chose to follow the method described by Rubin and Rubin (1995). First, I read through all my interviews one time. Next, I had a second reading and began to think about different themes, concepts, and ideas that were present, coding them as they presented themselves in the interviews. For coding, I used colored pens and highlighting because it made the categories easier for me to see. For example, in the margin of the interview I would write the word “fighting” and then highlight the text that applied. Sometimes two concepts were coded using the same text, such as “race” and “fighting.” In those cases, I wrote the second word in the margin using a different colored pen and made an arrow to the text. A third reading allowed me to code for categories I had missed in earlier interviews that I found later. I then separated my interviews according to responses to the questions asked and then, I read the interviews a fourth time and continued to code. I then let the data sit for a while to allow my mind to rest. When I came back to the interviews, I read through them again, and began to see over arching themes that had earlier escaped me.

Additionally, I used data from Edgewood High School, discussions with school administrators, and discussions with knowledgeable members of the Ponca people to triangulate data as it emerged from the interviews. Members of the Ponca community discussed problems they had as students and problems their children were experiencing in the public school, affirming the alienation the girls in the study experienced. Data from the school and administrators confirmed a high dropout rate and the desire American

Indian parents had that culturally relevant activities and instruction be incorporated into the curriculum.

Conclusion

Research in practice turned out to be more difficult and more exciting than I had first imagined. The twenty-five girls I had hoped to be able to interview turned into only thirteen. It was frustrating to arrange to go to the school to interview a participant only to have to come back another day because a teacher was giving a test, or reviewing for a test, or the participant was absent. However, the interaction with the participant during the interviews was exhilarating as new ideas came up and I was able to follow the new line and gain more insight. And, I was amazed and thrilled as I saw themes truly emerge from the interviews as I read and re-read them. I have ended this research with a wealth of new areas to explore.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

Introduction

Don't be shady! (Kate, 2001)

Although it is a treaty obligation of the United States government (Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Szusz, 19740 to see that Native American peoples within this country receive an education, numerous reports and studies have shown that the attempts to keep many Native American students in school long enough to graduate from high school have failed (Cahape & Hawley, 1991; Meriam, 1928; U.S.Congress, 1969). There are approximately 26,000 people living in the Edgewood City community with a total of 5714 children attending school, including the Ponca children. The ethnic breakdown for the school is 14% Alaskan or American Indian, 4.5% Black, 4.8% Hispanic, .8% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 75% White.

Additionally, a study done on behalf of the Ponca Tribe in 2000 (Even Start, unpublished document) revealed that 41% of the adults surveyed did not have a diploma nor a GED. Figures from the Ponca Even Start Program, a program to assist parents of young children to get their GED, show that the overwhelming majority of their students

are female and the average grade completed was 9.5. However, some of the girls dropped out as early as 7th or 8th grade. The Ponca girls in this study provided insight into the reasons why they considered it important to remain in school and why Ponca females have not yet, in large measure, done so. The results of these insights will be presented using themes that emerged from interviews with the participants in the study.

In understanding the girls' responses, it is important to have a basic understanding of two Ponca words, *wah thah a theh* and *oosh ah thi^{n}geh* and how these concepts are seen enacted within the culture. *Wah thah a theh* is the first Ponca teaching. It means to love, to respect, to have pity and compassion for others. It is important that one exhibit *wah thah a theh* before exhibiting any other quality. Because members of the Ponca people practice *wah thah a theh*, they know that as long as they are among their people they will be provided for if something happens to them. This provides the strong sense of the importance of the group and identity with the group. One does not want to be separate from the group or stand apart from the group. Children can be seen expressing this sense of belonging to the group when they call elders who are not relatives "grandmother" or "grandfather."

Oosh ah thi^{n}geh represents a concept of a person who is aggressive, does not have the ability to be ashamed for bad behavior, and does not have good manners. One would hear Poncas express that in English by saying someone "doesn't have good ways." Among the Poncas one sees "good ways" shown by allowing another to speak as long as he likes without interruption. A Ponca would not argue nor debate with the person who is speaking. It is seen in the transmission of knowledge during which the person teaching is respectfully listened to and not questioned. It is seen in not doing anything that would

embarrass, single out, or point out another person. It is seen through the absence of a control and punish mentality. *Oosh ah thi^{n}geh* is in conflict with current public school culture which typically expects students to participate in the class by raising hands and asking questions and rewards students who stand out in the class.

In this chapter, I will present the findings of the research organized according to themes that emerged from interviews with the participants. They are categorized into reasons for staying in school which involved the majority view of the Ponca people, getting a better job, being able to help themselves, their children, their family and the Ponca people; reasons for dropping out of school which involved pregnancy, Ponca community environment, peer influence, lack of nurturing in school, prejudice, cultural differences; and changes the girls would like to see in the school system. All the names given for the participants and the schools they attend are pseudonyms. In reporting what the girls have said, I have included the exact transcription of their words. Although this may be difficult to read at times, I felt that it was important to hear the voice of the participant as she struggled to find the words to express what was important to her. In those cases where the reading is difficult, I would suggest that the reader trying reading the transcription out loud in order to hear the flow of the words that were spoken.

Results

Why Stay in School

The girls in the study expressed several reasons why it was important to remain in school. They saw the majority community as having a negative perception of Poncas and their abilities. It was important to them to graduate in order to not reinforce the stereotype that Ponca girls would not succeed and that Poncas, as a group, were lazy and would not be successful. Catherine expressed this in her comment on the importance of graduating:

> I think it is very, very important [to graduate] because… many of our Poncas are either dropouts or they are in teen pregnancy or something that keeps them out. Because, you know, most people think of Poncas as losers. I am not trying to be mean, but you know, I think that the more that we graduate the more that they will pull that loser stuff out of their head…. I will give you an example. One of my friends didn't know that I was Ponca. He didn't know and thought I was like half White or something. I don't know why he thought that. [When I told him] I was Ponca he just kind of looked at me and he was "Oh, my gosh, you are Ponca!" and I was like "Yeah." He was like "I would never have guessed." And I go "Why?" and he goes "Because most Poncas are losers." That kind of offended me, and I was like, well, you know, what am I going to do to change that? And I go "Not all Poncas are like that. There are very intelligent people in my tribe that can be people and do stuff." He was like "I was just kidding." And I was like "No, you weren't." I know what a lot of people think about Poncas, and I think the

> more people graduate and the more that go on to college and stuff, a lot of people will respect them because of their tribe. You know how they do. That is not true, not all of us are like that. And it is just like they see one Ponca and they think the rest of them are like that, and that is not true. So, I think it is really a positive thing to graduate high school, especially being a Ponca.

The girls also saw it as important to graduate in order to get a better job that would keep them out of trouble and help to provide a better life for their children, those they had now or planned to have in the future, and to help parents, family, and Poncas in general. Maggie stated that one needed to "have an education; you can't get a job without it." And Delores said that an education had an additional advantage: "They can get better jobs and won't be in trouble." Martha said:

> You really can't get a job anymore without having a high school diploma… if you want to succeed in life you are at least going to have one of those and a college one. So it is hard without one. I mean you probably can make it without one, but it's going to be a struggle. I have never seen anybody that has made it without one. But I'm pretty sure there are people out there that have. But, I mean, it is probably just luck that they have made it. I'm not meaning to be rude or anything, but it is probably just luck because they have made it in the real world.

Mary Ann expressed the idea of *wah tah a theh* when she said:

> I want to live in a nice home, you know, and have a good job, and be very successful, you know, and, I just want to have a good life… to provide things for my son and be able to… help my mom and my people and my family out as best I can. The only way I can do this is to get through school.

The girls expressed pride in being Ponca and the belief that the Ponca community needed educated Poncas. Maggie said:

> For me, I think that we have a lot to be proud of. I think that to be Ponca is a real gift. You know, because we are a small tribe and we struggle a lot and a lot of people that make it are Ponca and they are really something…. We are something to be proud of because we came from a tribe that has very good ancestors, like Standing Bear… because back in the days Poncas were really acknowledged as warriors, because we were warriors….I am very happy to be Ponca, I am very proud of my background.

Why Girls Drop Out

While the concept of *wah thah a theh* seemed to explain the reasons the girls gave for remaining in school, the reasons for dropping out were more diverse: the lack of local jobs; pregnancy; their home environment which included parental homes, White Eagle, and peers; a sense of not being nurtured or wanted in the school; and prejudice in the school and White community.

Income/Jobs

Although getting a good job is a reason for staying in school, earning money is also a reason for dropping out. The median income, which represented 96% of the total population of White Eagle, was $8, 813 per year as measured by a survey conducted in

2000. 53% of those surveyed had children under the age of seven living in the family. (Even Start, unpublished document**).** That same year, the Department of Labor gave $8,350 as the poverty level for a one person household. With the median income so low, a student who dropped out of school and worked for minimum wage at a local fast-food restaurant, earned $2,300 more than the median. Delores said,

> They [Ponca girls] don't work as hard because they think, "Oh, I am not going to do anything with my life. I can just stay here in Ponca and get a job at McDonald's or something." I think that's why they make a lot of bad choices.

The girls indicated that in order to get a good job, one had to move away from Edgewood City, away from the Ponca community. If one stayed in Edgewood City, the job expectations were low.

Pregnancy

An obstacle to remaining in school that is unique to women is pregnancy. Pregnancy came up many times as the girls reflected on the difficulty in remaining in school. Currently, the school system has a separate division of the high school for teens who are mothers or are pregnant. They can bring their children to an on-site nursery and work in a small-class environment toward their high school diploma. Unfortunately, students must be at least in the ninth grade to participate. Birdie related, "I got pregnant when I was twelve, had her when I was thirteen, and I dropped out in the 7th grade….My boyfriend's sister was pregnant when she was eleven." But, Birdie also said that the reason she returned to school was for her child:

Ann: So, why are you going now?

Birdie: Because I have a kid.

Ann: How has that changed your outlook? Why is it that?

Birdie: Because the Dad didn't ask me [to get married], so at least one of the parents will at least have an education.

Sophia said "They get pregnant, so they're just like, well, I'll just quit school….My cousin dropped out because she was pregnant; it's one reason why she didn't graduate." Delores said "my other sister has two kids and she did not graduate."

Community Environment

Poverty and illiteracy are challenges the Ponca people have been dealing with for decades. To combat these problems, the tribal government has implemented various programs. Some have been in existence for many years such as the Johnson O'Malley/ Youth Outreach Program, and others are fairly new, such as the Ponca Tribal Head Start Program and the Ponca Even Start GED Program. The girls in this study saw this high-risk environment as producing circumstances that worked against remaining in school. A typical response was Maggie's who said, "White Eagle isn't the greatest place to live."

The girls in the study indicated that it was important for parents to make their children go to school and encourage them to do homework and complete their high school education. One problem that interfered with education was coming from a "bad home."

Maggie: If they come from a bad home, then, like, no one really bothers, like tell them what to do. So most of them pretty much do what they want, and their parents don't even care about their grades and everything and if they are going to graduate…

Ann: Then describe for me a family that doesn't care. What is it like to be in that kind of home?

Maggie: Kind of like a broken home, where their parents are like always drinking or something. Like sometimes they don't even care, that they don't even know if their kids are going to school. They don't care if their kids go to school.

As young children, "most of them do care when they are little kids and go to school," however, as they get older several things get in the way of going to school. There is a peer environment that encourages drinking and partying, not just on weekends, but on school nights. So, as Catherine explained:

> I know a lot of girls that have already dropped out. It's because they drink on school nights, and then they are too tired to get up…. I know a lot of Native Americans who want to graduate and go to college. I know there is a lot of girls that want to but they just, it is so-- temptation and peer pressure just comes in so much and they just give in.

Peer Influence

Temptation and negative peer pressure are very difficult to overcome. Rejecting going with the group, or seeming to ignore the group can lead to being ostracized:

Kate: One girl and her sister saw me at a pow wow, and I was walking with my boyfriend, and I didn't see them. And they said "shady," and I looked up 'cause it was like real loud. So, I looked up and saw them. They were glaring at me. So ever since then they never did talk to me because I didn't say hello to them.

Ann: What does "shady"mean?

Kate: Shady means like, you know, you're acting shady, you're acting like you don't know them, you're acting stuck up and stink and stuff. That's what it means.

Tied in with the idea of acting "shady" is also the idea that one is acting "too good" or "White." Dealing with these accusations is hard on the girls. Sophia managed to avoid becoming involved with the partying:

Ann: Ok, did you get involved in any of it?

Sophia: No.

Ann: So you kind of escaped all that. How did you do that? How did you keep out of that?

Sophia: It was hard. It was really hard. I did once go with them because they were some of the students who didn't [party], that used to go [to school] and dropped out because [they started] drinking and smoking

and what not. I just didn't want to do that. I didn't want to turn out to like be that … drop out because their first priority was to drink and smoke and mine was to go to school. And they'd be like "well, you don't need to go to school. Just one more day, you know, stay with us one more day, you know, go out with us." And I was like "no"…. They used to give me, like, problems…. "well, yeah, well you, you know you're just acting too good, you're just acting White and everything. You need to show your color." You know, I'm just like "well, I don't mean I have to go and drink, you know, there's some Indian kids that do go to school and, you know" but they just, I don't know, they didn't think that….

Ann: Well, why do you think showing your color was connected with drinking and smoking?

Sophia: I don't know. I guess, maybe, because they did it, you know. Most of the Indian kids do it…. I'm not saying like just Indian kids drink and everything, they don't, but, I don't know, it's just, it's just kinda weird."

Nurturing at School

The girls did not see the structure of the main high school as conducive to remaining in school. It was considered too large, too isolating, unwelcoming, and unsupportive. Sophia described the classroom as a coercive place where the teachers

"own you for that hour [and say] do your work or else, you're going to go out in the hall, or you're going to the office, and here, just do your work, you know, and no problems or anything." And Catherine said:

> The Indians that asked the questions, and you know they are like really quiet and just sit there, and the teachers will be like well I will answer your question in a second and it is not, I don't know if its racism, I don't know. I kind of think it is, but I don't know. Then like if we start talking to one another in class they will get on to us before they get on to another group, because, I don't know, if they even want us to learn, or what, but it's a weird way of showing it.

In contrast at the Keyes Center Sophia said teachers "talk with you more and they ask you about your day and stuff and weekends…at the high school the teachers get their schedule out and they just tell you what you have to go over and everything and they don't really get involved with the students that much."

Martha said students wondered:

> Martha: whether there is a point to like getting up everyday and going when they know people here [at the high school] don't care about them.
>
> Ann: Do you think some of the girls feel that they don't care here?
>
> Martha: Yeah, I'm pretty sure a lot of them do just like hey, they don't care if we don't come to school and we don't show up.

One can understand why Martha might believe this by looking at the Even Start statistics of 56 females which show that 1 dropped out at the end of 6th grade, 10 at the end of 8th grade, and 20 at the end of 9th grade. (Even Start, unpublished document). Looking at

those figures, I wondered why someone had not come out to bring the girls back to school.

Mary Ann spoke about the desire to feel included in the classroom as well as the school in general:

> You know how some of them [high school students] don't talk a lot to Indians, they always sit to their own, you know. And the Indians don't like to talk to anybody unless they know them. I think that would help us to get a little social thing going with other races and teachers, maybe even teachers-- get to know teachers, to be like best friends with teachers. Because there are a lot of teachers that I like that are really cool you know. I think that would help, for us to do something. Just little deeds to build us up, to be like, I don't know. Then pretty soon you will have more people running for student council, more Native American girls like running for basketball or cheerleading or anything like that.

When the girls did not feel comfortable with the other students in the class, it inhibited their sharing their thoughts and questions in the class. Martha said:

> You basically know when you walk into the school if you are a prep or if you are a freak or if you're a nerd or if you're Indian or Mexican, or Black crowd or just one of those little wanderers around. At the very beginning some of them are snobby… you can't really go into a class and express real feelings.

Socializing at school, during the breaks, could also lead to problems for Ponca girls. During class breaks, girls socialize and are sometimes late to class because of this. As tardies add up, students are subject to suspension. Suspension causes students to get

behind in their work and then finally give up on the possibility of passing the class. Students also, according to the girls, drop out because of a lack of high school credits.

The girls expressed a desire to have a place within the high school and to get attention and support from the teachers. Elaine said:

> At the high school it was very, like, you didn't get much attention from your teachers, and you're pretty much on your own for everything…the teachers would assign something, explain it, assign it and then you did it. I mean you could go up and ask for help, but most people don't really do that. They just, you know, do whatever they can, and then just stop with their assignment. They didn't really sit down and explain it to you. You had to always go to them, and most people can't, don't like to do that…The teachers at the high school, they're just there to do the job and that's it….Sometimes they'll make a good friendship with some of the teachers up there, but you don't see that often.

The girls did indicate, however, that if they approached a teacher they would get help, but the initiative had to come from the student; putting themselves forward was culturally difficult for the girls. The girls also saw that the size of classes made the teacher's job difficult, dealing with students who misbehaved and not having the time within a class period to answer the questions students did have. As Mary Ann said, there were "just too many kids at the high school." Kate expressed having problems with an English teacher who assigned compositions that she did not feel she knew how to write, saying, "She gives us too many [compositions to write] and it is boring assignments and she wants it like tomorrow." But she also expressed appreciation for an English teacher who was able to work around this problem: "We had a teacher who would have fun with

us. She would, like, even though we didn't need help, she would come and check on us and see what we were doing and see that we were working." Maggie said, "When they work side by side you can get a lot done."

The girls wanted teachers who cared about them, and they defined those teachers as those who were transparent, shared their lives, truthfully shared their opinions, and showed an interest in the lives and activities of the girls. The participants wanted to know they were cared for and that their teachers wanted to be there and teach them. One particular teacher mentioned as a favorite had moved from a high paying job to teach at the high school. He had the characteristics of truth-telling and caring:

> He was so inspirational… He quit his [high paying] job because he wasn't happy there to come to teach. You know, making all that money then coming to be a teacher and not making as much money, I probably wouldn't do that if it was me, but he wanted to come and teach children. And, he would tell the truth about things and not like teachers do. We would have fun in his class and there would be time for work and time for fun…. He was a good teacher. He was the best teacher I ever had…He would bring a newspaper in sometimes, and he would just give us his opinion or he would ask us what we thought and he would tell us, like what the truth was like. (Delores)

Speaking about another favorite teacher and communicator Kate said:

> Kate: He is really nice and…he makes some stuff fun for us not, like, boring and read where we all fall asleep. He tells us stories about his self and about what he did and asks us about what we did and everything. So he communicates with us a lot.

Ann: So he takes a personal interest in you and all his students?

Kate: Yes.

The girls wanted a place where they could safely talk about what was going on in their lives and discuss the problems, in school and out, that were occupying their minds and distracting them from schoolwork. The participants at the Keyes Center and the Alternative School saw their environments as welcoming and nurturing in contrast to the Edgewood High School. They wanted a school in which they were not coerced to work, but freed to work. Without exception Keyes Center was described by the girls attending it as an ideal environment where teachers cared about them. Mary Ann said,

> You're paid attention to. It's like the teachers are not just your teachers, they're more like your friends, people you can turn to when you have a problem or something, or you're upset about something. You can go to them and tell them and they'll talk to you about it. And, they help you one on one. If you don't understand something, then they'll take time out and help you…. They're like a friend, like a person, like a counselor in a way, but more, more personal. Where the teachers at the high school, they're just there to do the job and that's it.

The girls indicated a desire to participate in the larger activities of the school, but were unwilling to force themselves forward. They needed to be invited to participate. Maggie explained that desire to be involved in the life of the high school community:

Maggie: I know sometimes when they make all those cute little things for the school and stuff, I go, like, well, I want to make that. And, Native American girls like, sometimes I think, oh well, just forget about it because if they really wanted somebody to help them, I don't know, it

is just like it is never any, I am not trying to make it a racial thing, but it is never any Indian people doing the cute stuff, and it is just making us feel left out sometimes, and it is, some Indian girls, I am not going to lie, do because they want to, but again they don't want to, and I guess it is just that laziness in them, but I don't know. I think that if they like gave us time to volunteer and everything. They announced it on the intercom volunteers and stuff like that, but they need to push us a little bit harder.

Ann: So, actually invite some of the girls to do these things?

Maggie: Yes, just push us a little bit harder. They don't really, they don't push us. They don't even worry about pushing us because they know we are not going to do it anyway, because they think we are lazy, which is kind of true, but not all of us are like that, and they will just give up. They just oh well they are not going to do it, they are not going to do it, and some of it is true, because, you know, we never actually done anything like that before so we wouldn't really know, and we would think it would be boring or something like that. They need to push us a little harder.

Ann: Now when you talk about the cute little things and stuff like that what are you talking about?

Maggie: You know, like the school posters and, like, how to take pictures of things and put it on the posters, like those track teams and stuff, you know, going on, and they take pictures of track, they like laminate it

and stuff and then put it around school. You know just the little things like that, just to get us started. That would be a good thing.

Ann: Okay, so who does that now? I thought the cheerleaders did that.

Maggie: Yeah, the cheerleaders do it.

Ann: But what you are saying is kind of expand it so that some of the Indian kids are invited to come in and

Maggie: Yes, because we feel like, I feel left out a lot too. But when we made the freshman homecoming things they, I got invited to help and stuff, and I really like, I liked hanging out with them that night because it was a Friday night and I am usually babysitting on the weekend. But I would have helped. But, I was like busy, and I know a lot of people are busy too but I helped a little bit. I helped buy some of that paper stuff and put it on, well, I didn't put it on but I gave it to them. Just little things like that can help us, you know. Then they don't just give up and are more into getting into stuff like that.

Ann: So part of it is the Indian kids, or the Indian girls are not volunteering for it because they've, maybe they have never done it before and they might…

Maggie: Well, or like it gets boring or something like that when they try. But you don't even know if you don't try. I think they used to push us into doing stuff like that, well, if you do this like if you help with this thing we will, like, do your certificate at the end of the year or just something like that just to get us into these things would help a lot.

Ann: And show some kind of appreciation…

Maggie: Yeah, because not a lot of us are into that stuff you know. Very, very rare do we absolutely want to do something. Either we are too busy or we just don't want to or we just don't know how it is going to be and it is just like, uh, it is just going to be around all these people, no. You know, stuff like that.

Ann: So it is kind of a concern to be around people that you don't know?

Maggie: Yeah, and just to get to know people. Because in classes, I don't know, you know how some of them don't talk to a lot of Indians, they always sit to their own you know. And the Indians don't like to talk to anybody unless they know them you know. I think that would help us to get a little social thing going with the other races and teachers, maybe even teachers get to know teachers, get to be like best friends with teachers. Because there are a lot of teachers that I like that are really cool you know, I think that would help, for us to do something, just little deeds to build us up to be like, I don't know. Then pretty soon you will have more people running for student council, more Native American girls, like running for basketball or cheerleading or anything like that.

Changes in the main high school were happening that were making it more attractive and welcoming to the girls. One was the change to a trimester system that allowed more time in class including time to work on homework and the opportunity

within the school year to re-take a class that had been failed and recover from the failure. Girls also appreciated the increase in activities, such as pep rallies.

Prejudice

Participants saw discriminatory behavior from the students and the teachers at the main high school. Students were seen as labeled before they ever arrived at the high school.

Martha: Everybody is labeled, even Indian girls. We were all labeled even. Just like Mexicans and Blacks are labeled as, oh, they're not going to do their job, they are not here to get an A or B or whatever. So, you're labeled before you even get here. I think you will always be labeled.

Ann: So if somebody is not White when they come to the school they have to pretty much prove themselves to the teachers?

Martha: I think so, because you know a lot of the teachers don't expect you, because they see you, and they don't expect you to actually do it and turn it in and get a good grade on it. And after you do it and, you know, all those White kids around and you're the only one who did it or whatever, then the teacher is going to like, oh, and after that they expect you and so, you know, then after that they expect you to do it so you are going to do it. That is how I work. They expect me to do it, and they expect me to get at least a B.… I've been discriminated against, and you are going to have to be strong, and you have to go on,

> don't dwell on it and don't, oh I'm not going to school because they discriminate against me. You have to do the opposite. You have to come and you have to show them that they're discriminating against me, that is fine, but at the end I am the one who is going to win because I am going to get my high school diploma. You can't stop me from doing it.

Catherine also related:

> Some of our teachers are a little bit harder on Indians than they are on Blacks or Whites because, like I said, they think of Indians as losers, sniffers, and all that stuff. And I think it really gets, it really hurts when people say stuff about, you know, and it hurts your feelings. Indians don't like getting their feelings hurt, especially Poncas… So you know when they do that, when teachers say just little mean things, because I sometimes get offended when I know it's not really an offended word. I think it is because most of the school, because what you see in like student council or something like that is all White people and they are all rich and sometimes you think it is basically about popularity. I think that is what it is about, and it is just like Native Americans, they, I don't know, they like when the school and the student council and the whole student body if they don't pay attention to somebody then they are just going to feel left out….They just don't know how they were taught, they don't know how, because we live in two different worlds. They live in, we live in our world as Indian ways. Then we have another world that we have to go along with otherwise we are not going to make it. And I think it is school as well as students because it is just, I don't know, it is

> all about either popularity. If you are popular and you're Indian the teachers are all going to like you too. And if you're not and you are just Indian, that is, just a quiet Indian, just an Indian, the teachers won't care. They just won't pay any attention to you. Some of them do, but some of them don't.

Prejudice, however, was not always seen as racial, but sometimes as economic:

> Well, I think there is definitely prejudice and it's not just against Blacks, Indians, Chinese, and then the Whites are favored. I think it's about the preps or the football players, cheerleaders against the, just the regular kids who aren't into those activities. That's where I see the prejudice. The teachers favor the cheerleaders and the highsteppers and the football players the athletes, more than just the regular kids who are there to learn and stuff.

Economics was also seen as a factor in getting caught when not following the rules. Mary Ann indicated that Indian girls were more likely to get caught than White girls when they skipped school. "White girls would skip because they had cars, you know, whereas Indian girls hardly any of them have cars so they'd have to go by foot" which made them easier to catch.

Racism was also seen among the students. Holly related this when she talked about a fighting incident:

> Holly: Well, right now it's been like the Mexicans against the Indians. And it goes on sometimes at school and then after school, like, oh like, after they get off the bus at Edgewood Middle School. And then on weekends they fight. Just a while back ago, not that long, not too long ago, like two weekends ago, they came in and got beat up by some

Mexicans. And like it affected us. And now like, and one, I guess, the guy that got beat up, his sister, like got into it. She's taking up for her brother and said something to the Mexican's girlfriend that goes to the high school and, um, now us Indians girls kinda backed her. I've never seen one Mexican on Broad Street since then.

Ann: So, kind of one of the things that happens is maybe a Mexican beats up somebody, beats up an Indian…

Holly: Um hmmm

Ann: and then, that, the Indian's family, then takes up and goes out after--

Holly: Yeah, and they bring all the other Indians in and they help him out and go looking for them.

Kate felt she had to overcome both the view that she would fight people because she was Ponca and the threat from other Indian girls:

Ann: What is it like to be a Ponca girl in this high school?

Kate: Well, it is kind of hard because some of them, like White girls, they classify the Indian girls as like bad and stuff and do these bad things. And they will think that I do that stuff. And I am like, "I don't do that." They just like, they act mean or whatever because they think I am like the other girls, the Ponca girls that, like, want to fight all the White girls and stuff.

Kate also felt intimidated by other Indian girls:

Kate: There is not as much, like, all the Indian girls that are here, all the freshmen, and they tried to make me scared and stuff. And, like, I

would be scared. But I don't know, I didn't go with them or anything, and since they have been gone, I haven't gotten into trouble.

Ann: So, how did they end up being gone? Did they get kicked out?

Kate: Most of them got expelled for, like, actions and stuff.

Delores, who had participated in fighting, chose eventually to separate herself from the group that was fighting:

Delores: I don't act like most of the other Indian girls do, because, I mean, I used to be like best friends with them, and I saw how people acted towards them like they were always scared or something. And I don't want people scared of me, not unless they have a reason to be you know. And I started talking to some of them and at first I didn't like it and then I started talking with them and we picked on the Black girls you know because we knew they were scared of us and looking back on it I think it was so stupid now. I kind of not really now, because I am friends with everybody now and that's a big difference.

Ann: What did you used to think about what you were doing?

Delores: I guess I kind of thought we were getting respect. But you know, it wasn't really, because I don't think you should gain respect like being mean to people or whatever.

Ann: So it was part of being respected, to have people afraid of you?

Delores: I guess that is what I thought.

Cultural Differences

In addition to the prejudice that the girls related, they also saw cultural differences as creating problems. They belonged to two worlds – "their" world and the White world. Catherine expressed this when she said:

> I am so used to like being of both worlds I just kind of mix it up, but I don't know, I think it is kind of because some of the Native Americans, when you talk to them, a teacher especially, comes up and sits and talks to them, they will look down and it feels like they are not paying attention, they are not listening, but they really are. They are just taught that way, not to, and then when they finally do say something everyone is just surprised and say, "Oh my gosh," and, you know, it is just like that because when they talk to me I am just like yeah, I am used to it now, but back in the day I wasn't I would just sit there like I didn't hear them but I really did and I would put my head down.

Irene related:

> Most Poncas actually are bashful because we were taught that way, to stay back and not be open. And we can't walk in front of our grandfather, we can't do anything like that. We have always been taught to be backwards, not backwards, but stay back in the back and not be shown. A lot of us are taught that way. I think that because of our teachings and because we are not used to standing up, well not all of us, because back in the day we weren't supposed to like stand up toward an elder or something like that. I don't know, it is just kind of difficult to

understand…if our teachers [at the high school] act strange to the students they will just, we won't go to that class.

Catherine explained how she behaved differently in her two environments:

Catherine: I have to do Native American ways in front of my people and do how I was taught. But, then when I come to school it is a whole different thing. You have to be, you just got to be outgoing just to be somebody and be something to make it. In front of my Native Americans I am, like, I am just me, I am quiet. I will make a little example so you can understand what I am saying, Okay, like if my Grandpa comes up and talks to me I couldn't hug him and I couldn't look him in the eye. I am not used to looking people in the eye and I am always, when I am talking to my friends and the teachers, they want you to look them right in the eye and it is hard to do that, and I am just like okay it is hard to do that and I think that is two worlds. It is a world of respect and another world of, not disrespect, but another kind of respect. A respect of the other people and the respect of our people and it is just, I don't know, it is really hard to explain, but it is two worlds and we have to, when I was small I was kind of bashful and then I was taught, you know, my Mom was always, you know, if you want to make it in the White man's world that is how they see it, a White man's world and our world, that is basically what it is.

Ann: Now do you have to behave very differently with your tribe?

Catherine: Well, I think so a little bit, because in my world, okay in this world, the White man's world you know I can be just as outgoing but when I am with my people I just have to keep it down a bit because they are not used to it. Because you can't talk when they are like praying or something you know. Sometimes you whisper and you cannot do that or my Grandpa will say, "I told you to be quiet." It is all about respect and teaching. That is what that world is about and I act different because I don't like, in my church, I don't get up and talk unless I really have to and when I am here I just get up and talk whenever I want and just don't care. But when I am around them I have so much respect for them, for my elders and for my people, I just have to keep down… or if it is a meeting and someone else is talking in front of a bunch of people I have to sit there and just be quiet.

School Changes

The Ponca girls had several changes they thought would be good for the high school, and these related back to many of the problems they had previously addressed in the interviews. Birdie said that she would change the tardy policy because "suspending people for being tardy… would make Indians not care and say 'I just won't go to school.'" Delores suggested that teachers "ask questions in class and keep everyone involved." For those students who are very quiet, April suggested "sometimes a Ponca girl will kind of sit and not ask questions, and if the teacher were to kind of encourage

them more, go over to them, do that kind of thing it would help." Kate thought the teachers should "involve themselves with the students, talk to them about what they did." And, she thought it would be good to have "a free day every once in a while so they don't like say you are a mean teacher, and you don't know what is going on." Maggie thought it would be a good idea to have someone who would respond when a girl didn't come to school:

> I would make… a job to where when this girl wouldn't show up, they'd go to the house, drag them out of bed and say "get your butt to school." If their parents aren't doing it, somebody else has got to, because they're not going to succeed in anything.

The girls also wanted more Indian teachers and Erin also suggested a support group:

> I'd have more Indian teachers, you know, and um, just, you know, more things that they can relate to in a positive way and stuff. Like more, um, like counselors that they know they can go to for help and stuff; like a support group, but also a teacher so maybe they could get help with whatever is bothering, going on at home that doesn't make them come to school or whatever's going on with them personally.

Several of the girls said they wanted a school that only had Indian students and Indian teachers. But Maggie, in contrast, wanted to "mix it up" in her ideal school:

> First, I would start with the school teachers. I would mix it up. I wouldn't have solid Indian teachers. I would mix it up to be Black teachers, Indian teachers, and White teachers, and some Mexican teachers, you know, if that was possible. I would mix it all up with the teachers, you know, so they couldn't say that "Oh,

> that person teaches racial" just because the teacher accidentally said something. Yeah, I would probably focus on my faculty being different.

Maggie also addressed the problem that the other participants had seen in the size of the high school and talked about the day's schedule:

> The first five hours you do core classes and then the last two hours would be your elective classes like some girls like to do like gym and some girls like to do like, I don't know, like Home Economics or something. That would be, the last two hours would be good so that the first five, because you know the morning's are all like you are tired and all but you get your work done. It seems like at the end of the day is when I don't get anything done, just sit there and like okay. I think the beginning of the classes, the beginning of the day, is when people get their stuff done. The last two hours is time you know to just have fun. I think that is how it should be. That would be easier on them and on me. Then I don't know, I don't know if I would want five hours or seven hours, probably go for seven, I don't know. Then I would like classrooms, like what we would have, I would want like a gym class and we would have like workouts and stuff and have me work out and stuff like get in shape and all this. I would probably have a swimming pool so some girls; some Native Americans like to swim because, I don't know, I just know a lot of people that like to swim that are Native Americans. Then, what else, I don't know. My school wouldn't be so big, because I don't know, a lot of Native Americans aren't used to the big environment you know some of them go to alternative because they don't like the whole environment, how big it is and crowded. I would have like maybe like 12 classrooms or something. I don't know,

> it just what I thought so it wouldn't be such a big environment for them. I would probably want the classrooms to be like, instead of like 27 kids probably like 12 kids in the classroom. I don't know something like that, yeah. Make it more easier and simpler.

And, all the participants wanted a Ponca language class. Maggie said:

> That is one thing me and my Mom talked about the other day is that we have to learn Spanish and French and all that stuff that you know people don't really care about. But I don't really care for it, but you have to learn it in order to go to college and you know most of your jobs that concern Mexicans you know Spanish would help but why would you have to learn their culture when we don't know our culture and most of us don't know how to speak that….I think that would be really cool to have Ponca language.

Summary

The Ponca girls in the study all said they wanted to graduate from high school in order to have a better life for themselves and their children and to be better able to help their people. However, they had to contend with many issues. An environment of poverty, pregnancy, prejudice, cultural discontinuity, and the size of the school all conspired to keep them from graduating. Although the girls found Edgefield High School's main campus of multiple buildings and large classes, an obstacle to graduating, they felt comfortable in the alternative school which was smaller and more intimate, located in part of an old elementary school. And, they saw the Keyes Center, located in

the basement of a beautiful church in the center of town, as warm and welcoming with small classes and a lot of one-on-one teacher-student interaction.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion: Making it in the Shark Tank

We live in our world as Indian ways. Then we have another world that we have to go along with. Otherwise, we are not going to make it. (Catherine, 2001)

People are stable and happy only when they are firmly rooted in their own traditions and culture. To uproot them would make them suffer. There are already enough people uprooted from their traditions today, and they suffer greatly, wandering around like hungry ghosts. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995)

The purpose of this study was to try to understand the issues surrounding the dropout rate from the perspectives of Ponca girls in grades nine through twelve. Chapter I presented a general introduction and overview of the problem and purpose of the study and touched on the issue of researcher bias. Chapter II presented a review of relevant literature including a history of the Ponca people, a history of Indian education in the United States, and a review of dropout theories. Chapter III explained the research methodology used and included a description of the setting of the study and information about the participants and methods by which they were selected. Chapter IV gave the

findings of the research organized according to themes emerging from the interviews. Chapter V is a summary of the findings with a discussion of the meaning of the results and implications of the study with recommendations for further research.

Interviews were held with 13 Ponca girls in grades 9-12 seeking to illuminate the answers to four research questions:

1. How do Ponca girls who remain in school explain their choosing to stay in?
2. What impact does the curriculum (explicit, hidden, null) have on dropping out or remaining in school?
3. What impact does the relationship between the Ponca community and the majority community in which the students attend school have on dropping out or remaining in school?
4. What issues are there within the Ponca community that influence dropping out or remaining in school?

As the research progressed, I gained knowledge from the Ponca girls as themes emerged from the interviews.

Reflections from the Interviews and Additional Data Sources

The first research question addressed the issue of choosing to remain in school. The Ponca girls said they believe that being Ponca is a “real gift” and something to be proud of. Because of this sense of pride, they wanted to graduate in order to show the majority community that Poncas were not lazy and could be successful. They also saw a high school degree as a ticket to a more successful life through a better job. Part of this

successful life was to be able to have a nice home and be able to provide for immediate and extended families. The girls also related that staying in school sometimes required separating themselves from other Indians as a form of resisting negative peer pressure. Adult members of the Ponca community also affirmed that receiving a high school diploma was important, both for economic well-being and to overcome the prejudicial beliefs of the dominant society. As one woman said,

> …it behooves us to be in the know about things so that when-- even just talking to, maybe, just a store clerk-- you know what they're talking about. You are not a big, dumb Indian walking in there, you know, wanting to know what's going on in the world.

Administrators also confirmed the presence of the negative peer pressure that the girls had related, including the concerns expressed about "acting White."

The second question dealt with the school curriculum. Eisner (1985) stated that there are three curricula that all schools teach: the explicit, the implicit (or hidden), and the null. The explicit curriculum is the publicly explicit educational goals of the school such as teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. The hidden curriculum is the "pervasive and ubiquitous set of expectations and rules that defines schooling as a cultural system that itself teaches important lessons" (p.107). The null curriculum concerns itself with what is not taught, options not afforded, or perspectives not known. The girls in the study did not address the explicit curriculum extensively, except to acknowledge the courses they were taking and to express the opinion that education was a useful enterprise for their goals in life. The girls, however, did address issues related to the hidden and null curricula. For the girls, social interaction, both with peers and

teachers was important. However, the Edgewood High School reinforced a top down environment in which the teacher, the bells, and the size of the facility "owned" the students. Members of the Ponca community also related negative interactions with teachers and administrators who held power in the school and were dismissive of Ponca parents' concerns. White patterns of cultural behavior were reinforced as superior to native patterns in the girls' experiences of having to look teachers in the eye and make themselves standout to be successful participants in the classroom. This environment reinforced the values of compliance, regimentation, and deference to authority, values also important in the assimilationist history of Indian education. The Keyes Center and the Alternative Center, on the other hand, reinforced collaboration and the importance of the individual in the educational process. The girls brought out the null curriculum when they discussed the absence of a Ponca language class and their absence in the groups that were situated as important to the school such as cheerleaders and the student council.

The third question addressed issues relating to the relationship between the majority community and the Ponca community. The girls in this study have said that they want their Ponca identity affirmed, in keeping with Nieto's (2000) findings. For the girls in this study experiences in the White community, which included the high school, were often negative. They were labeled as "losers" and "bad" and not much was expected of them. Ponca adults reinforced that fitting into the school environment was difficult for Ponca children. One issue was the desire to wear the "right" clothing so not to appear a loser. Some parents indicated that their children had stopped attending school because of the clothing issue. The girls said they were judged negatively because of their Ponca identity by both students and teachers, with preference given to White students. Some

teachers, however, displayed inclusive, caring attitudes and behavior, and were considered good, caring people by the Ponca girls. The girls also related that the culture of the school expected them to act contrary to their cultural training-- to be loud and to force themselves forward. The Ponca girls indicated that they lived in two worlds, "their" world and the White world, and that this cultural duality required they know how to behave in both to be successful.

The last question related to the influence of the Ponca community on dropping out. For the girls, problems came from their own community as they were pressured by their peers to "show their color" and not "act White" by being part of the drinking and partying crowd. The students in Fordham's (1996) research reflected this same attitude in their rejection of behaviors, one of which was speaking and writing standard English, which they considered "acting White." Parents who did not help their children with school work or make them go to school were also implicated as part of the problem, as were girls themselves when they made choices to party late into the night and not go to school. Ponca adults and school administrators also affirmed the girls' concerns. However, some Ponca adults said that even with concerned parents at home, students sometimes felt overwhelmed by their negative experiences at school and dropped out.

Catherine summed up her feelings and the feelings of the other girls in the study when she said "We live in our world as Indian ways. Then we have another world that we have to go along with. Otherwise we are not going to make it." Despite all their negative experiences, the girls still wanted to be part of the school community and get a diploma. One light that seemed to glow in this study was the Keyes Center. This Center is in the basement of a beautiful church located in the center of the downtown area. There is a

central meeting area with a sofa and chairs, and magazines on a coffee table. Here the girls relaxed after studying or talked before classes. The classrooms were well-lit and flexible to allow for group work. There was also a room specifically for child care for those girls who brought their children. The girls felt welcomed and comfortable in that environment. They felt that the teachers cared for them and were interested in them. The environment was non-coercive and conducive to both socializing and learning. It was truly a student-centered environment.

Implications

Ponca girls have said that they live in two worlds, "their" world and the White world. As someone who lived outside the United States among people with different cultures and moved to the segregated South and watched the turmoil as schools desegregated, I was distressed to find that in the 21st Century, Ponca girls still feel so unwelcome in the public school.

Beverly Daniel Tatum (2004), President of Spelman College, an historically Black college, said:

> Students are drawn to environments where they see themselves as central to the educational enterprise. Yet many institutions are still struggling to understand the ABCs of creating truly inclusive environments. The ABCs are affirming identity, building community and cultivating leadership.

All the girls in the study said that getting a high school diploma was important. It was part of the cultural capital that would lift them out of poverty and allow them to provide

for their children, family, and community. But, in order to get that ticket to a better life, they have to learn how to survive in an inherently unequal system that advantages Whites. Dyson (2004) said:

> When you are in the dominant culture, you have to master that dominant culture. You can be as well prepared as you want to, but when you're thrown into a shark tank and you don't understand the culture of the sharks you're in the tank with, you're at a disadvantage. I don't care whether it's a dominant culture of men over women, light-skinned Blacks over dark-skinned Blacks, you'd better know how not to trip and you'd better know how to navigate it.

The goal of destroying indigenous cultures and replacing them with White manners and ways of viewing the world runs throughout the history of Native American encounters with the dominant society, including the dominant society's educational structures (Almeida, 1997; Drinnon, 1996; Jackson, 1964; Mankiller, 1993; Missionary Committee, 1885; Prucha, 1990; Thompson, 1978; Weatherford, 1994; Williams, 1990; Zimmerman, 1941). However, being successful in school has been correlated with seeing oneself represented in the texts and structures of the school (Reyhner, 1992). The girls in this study wanted to be successful in school and to see their identity as Poncas affirmed in the school through inclusion in texts, in the important bodies of the school, and in the language courses offered.

Various studies (Fordham, 1996; Ogbu & Simmons, 1998; Reyhner, 1992) have shown that members of involuntary minority communities are distrustful of institutions such as schools because of their history of discrimination and unequal treatment. Littlebear (1992) suggests that Native American students and families be included in the

life of the school community and that teachers crossing over into the Native American community would be helpful in dispelling this distrust. The girls in this study indicated their sense that the school reflected the White world and not "their world" and that they received unequal treatment in this setting.

Recommendations

Practice

Instruction. People perceive the world differently, and they learn and demonstrate what they have learned in different ways (Swisher & Deyhle, 1992). Wax, Wax, and Dumont (1964) related in their research:

> Indians tend to ridicule the person who performs clumsily: an individual should not attempt an action unless he knows how to do it; and if he does not know, then he should watch until he has understood. In European and American culture generally, the opposite attitude is usually the case; we "give a man credit for trying" and we feel that the way to learn is to attempt to do. (p. 95)

The Ponca girls said that learning through "public mistakes" (Swisher & Deyhle, 1992, p.84) was not culturally appropriate for them. Research with other American Indian groups and "collectivistically minded learners" (Sinagatullin, 2003, p. 228) has shown that teacher-centered structures are ineffective, whereas small group, student-directed projects are effective (Swisher & Deyhle, 1992). The Ponca girls also stated that they found one-on-one teacher-student interaction and small groups more conducive to

learning. They also expressed cultural discomfort in putting themselves forward in a class and standing out which Swisher & Deyhle (1992) covered when suggesting that teachers remember that some students do not want to be "spotlighted."

The public education system must understand that in order for Ponca girls to graduate, it must become sensitive to their unique circumstances. I recommend that a program of intensive training in which the teachers and administrators become acquainted with the history of the Ponca people and the Ponca culture be developed. In addition, teachers should consider how they can make their classes more welcoming to students through a more collaborative class atmosphere. The trimester system that is already in place was praised by the girls because it allowed more time to interact with their teachers and get their work done. I would suggest continuing this system, but decreasing the number of students in each class to allow the teacher more time with each student to allow peers to get to know each other creating a safe environment for all.

Curriculum. Textbooks have been used as the authority in classrooms, and, because their function has been to transmit the culture and values of the White middle class, the implication has been that those values and that culture were superior to other cultures and values (Reyhner, 1992). Reyhner quoting Suina (1988, p. 298) shows the effect of textbook monoculturalism:

> The [reading series] …presented me with pictures of a home with a pitched roof, straight walls, and sidewalks. I could not identify with these from my Pueblo world. However, it was clear I didn't have these things and what I did have did not measure up…. I was ashamed of being who I was and I wanted to change

> right then and there. Somehow it became important to have straight walls, clean hair and teeth, a spotted dog to chase after. I even became critical and hateful toward my bony, fleabag of a dog. I loved the familiar and cozy surroundings of my grandmother's house but now I imagined it could be a heck of a lot better if only I had a white man's house with a bed, a nice couch, and a clock. In school books, all the child characters ever did was run around chasing their dog or kite. They were always happy. As for me, all I seemed to do at home was go back and forth with buckets of water and cut up sticks for a lousy fire. "Didn't the teacher say that drinking coffee would stunt my growth?"… "Did my grandmother really care about my well-being?" (Suina in Reyhner, 1998, p. 99)

Teachers should abandon the exclusive use of textbooks and include materials that represent indigenous viewpoints and experiences. Two approaches to curriculum change have been recommended to respond to the needs of students in a multicultural setting, additive and integrative (Roberts, et.al., 1994). In an additive approach, one would *add in* texts that represent perspectives of excluded groups. The integrative approach "is characterized by a richness of non-Western perspectives interwoven throughout the course content" (Roberts, et.al., 1994, p. 51).

The girls in the study also said that they sometimes felt at a loss in the classroom because they did not understand what the teacher wanted. Since some students require a more thorough explanation of what is required for an academic task, a clear declaration of the goals of the class and what the teacher requires for an academic task are important (Sinagatullin, 2003).

Teachers and Parents. Becoming involved with the Native American community would be helpful in building trust between Ponca parents and teachers. It would also allow teachers to learn more about the culture of the students they teach. Ben Nighthorse Campbell (1992) said that many American Indians remember the time when children were forced to go to schools where they were punished for speaking their language and forced to adapt White cultural patterns of dress including having their hair cut short. Littlebear (1992) suggested that teachers "cross the cattle guard" that divides the school community and the students' home community, saying that stereotypes and misconceptions are still prevalent in the dominant culture's understanding of American Indians and that American Indian parents continue to be excluded from participation in the education of their children. Journaling is one method teachers could use to illuminate cultural assumptions, record their new cultural knowledge, and make appropriate changes. Littlebear (1992) makes a suggestion that is extremely important for teachers of Native American students as they interact with Native American communities:

> If a need to speak about a local person arises, teachers should be well acquainted with the person to whom they are talking….because of the extended families, clans, and factions that characterize the social structures of Indian communities. These are closely interwoven, and regular communication among community members is a characteristic of Indian communities. This regular communication can bring much grief to an unsuspecting teacher if he or she is not mindful of the possible connections between people. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that everyone in an Indian community is related either by blood or marriage. A good

> rule is do not say anything about a person away from him or her that you would not say about that person in his or her hearing. (p.108)

As teachers, we continue to grow and improve our practice and can take comfort in what Andrea Ayyazian who was quoted in Ramsey (2003) stated:

> None of us has reached the promised land where we are free of stereotypes and prejudices….For me it has been more useful to pledge continually to move forward on this journey rather than to be crippled with shame or to be tied in knots with defensiveness or denial….We are not required to be perfect in our efforts, but we do need to try new behaviors and be prepared to stumble and then to continue. (p.112)

Teacher Education

When I first began to try to understand why Ponca children had such high dropout rates in the public school system, I felt at a complete loss. I could not even begin to ask questions, because formulating questions assumes the understanding of what knowledge is lacking. I did not know what it was I did not know. I, like the majority of teachers in the United States, am White and have a particular lens through which I view the world because of my experiences of privilege in this society. Children of color, children with experiences different from my own, however, are becoming the majority in the classroom (Howard, 1999). The girls in the study spoke repeatedly of the cultural disconnect that existed between themselves and the teachers. Although it has been popular to talk about the need for teachers to “give a voice” to students from minority communities (Howard,

1999), the girls in this study have shown that they already have a voice, and merely need for the school system and teachers to make a space and include their voices.

But, listening to "Other" voices can be difficult because we tend to deny the existence of experiences that are contrary to our perception of the world. Garcia-Lopez (2002) found that students in teacher education programs frequently denied that inequality existed despite the inclusion of literature describing this problem in their classes. French (2002) discovered that when issues of diversity were discussed in her teacher education class, "the room temperature went up" (p.39). However, as time went on members of the class began to build relationships, making themselves vulnerable and creating new knowledge and change. Interestingly, the Ponca girls expressed similar discomfort in speaking out, because it left them vulnerable in classrooms where relationships had not been built. French's experience would suggest that those relationships can be built with time and effort. Gary Howard (1999) summed up in the title of his book *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know* a major dilemma that teachers have and declared that the enemy to valuing diversity and multiculturalism is "dominance, ignorance, and racism, not White people" (p. 110) but that White teachers needed to understand their own "whiteness" in order to move from a position of dominance to a position of being multicultural teachers. Therefore, I suggest that teacher education programs create an environment in which teachers, and aspiring teachers, from a variety of backgrounds can explore their own cultural lenses and have the opportunity to interact with people who have different cultural lenses. This would imply that colleges of education become proactive in searching out people of color to enter teacher education programs and provide the necessary support to allow them to complete the program.

Two of Ladson-Billings (2001) recommendations for teacher education programs address the need expressed by the Ponca girls for culturally aware teachers who know how to interact with them. First, “prospective teachers working in diverse communities need the chance to learn about students in the context of the community” (p.135). Working within minority communities through placement in culturally responsive organizations would allow teachers to learn how those communities work and what the daily lives of their students and parents are like. Second, “prospective teachers working in diverse community schools need an opportunity to apprentice with skilled cooperating teachers” (p.136). Working with multiculturally aware and skilled cooperating teacher was also considered important by Rowland (2002) and Traudt (2002) who stressed the effectiveness of experienced teachers modeling culturally appropriate behavior for pre-service teachers.

Colleges of education are the gatekeepers who admit those they believe will meet their standards for effective teaching practice, and bestow upon them the exit key that is also the entrance key to the public school. Becoming invested in the importance of multiculturally knowledgeable teachers could have a tremendous impact on the lives of all students.

Two Communities

Although this is an educational study, the girls in the study live and are affected by worlds other than the school, so I feel that I would be negligent if I did not address recommendations to both the Ponca community and the Edgewood City community.

The dominant community is unaware of the effects that attempted genocide and years of racism have had on the Ponca girls who attend the public school system. This was shown when the community was surprised at the outcry by the indigenous communities when Edgewood City tried to put up a statue of a cowboy dismounting a horse to stake a claim, crying “This land is mine.” There needs to be a community-wide effort to bring understanding and positive communication between the Poncas and the majority community. This could be done with community events to celebrate the history and culture of the Poncas. Currently Edgewood City has “brown bag” lunches during one month of the year to expose the community to native culture. However, that culture usually consists only of such activities such as beadwork, ribbon work, and fashion shows. I would suggest that the community newspaper begin a series to familiarize its readers with the history of the Ponca people, and that the definition of culture be expanded for the “brown bag” lunches.

The Ponca Business Committee is the governing body of the Ponca people. It is the group that has been charged as the representatives of the people with the duties inherent in nation to nation relationships with the United States government and international governments. This was seen most recently when a representative was sent to Taiwan to discuss a problem regarding air pollution from a factory near Ponca homes (Jones, 2004). I would suggest that the Committee take a leadership role in advocating for Ponca children with the dominant community through establishing a strong line of communication and proactively addressing changes that would be helpful for Ponca children with the members of the school board and the administration at all levels.

The Ponca girls in this study expressed pride in being Ponca. However, with the exception of the Scalp Dance Society, they were unaware of the rich history of women's participation in cultural activities. Many of the old people who kept knowledge of the culture have died, and only a small number remain. In light of this, I would suggest that the Committee set about recording this cultural knowledge, including both the male and female forms of the Ponca language, so that it can be saved for future generations of Poncas. Perhaps cultural organizations within the Ponca community could also consider reviving women's ceremonies that have been dormant.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study was of a small group of girls who were in grades 9-12. Many girls, however, were not heard from. In order to have a better understanding of the complex issues involved, there needs to be a longitudinal study that follows Ponca girls from their entry into the public school system at kindergarten through their exiting the system. In this study, insight could be gained from students at different ages and their parents. How the cultures of the different schools and the methods used by different teachers affect students could also be examined.

Although there have been historical studies done on Indian education as a whole, no study has been done specifically about education for the Poncas. Research should be done on the Ponca school that at one time existed on tribal land. Documents could be researched and Poncas who attended the school and are still living could be interviewed.

In addition, records from the surrounding one-room schools that Poncas attended should be examined and interviews done with Poncas who attended those schools.

There is a serious lack of research done with Native women, and this is true for Ponca women. Without women's stories, the picture is not whole. Research needs to be done with Ponca women to gather history, culture, and stories before the old people who have that knowledge are no longer living.

The negative peer culture that encourages drinking and partying is a serious problem in the Ponca community. Research should be done with that peer group in order to more clearly understand the dynamics of the group and to try to come up with solutions to reduce this destructive behavior.

Conclusion

I was once told that, in this quickly changing world that we live in, I should "hang on, and enjoy the ride." I have been so privileged to have had the experiences in my life, both good and bad, that I have had. One of those incredible experiences has been my involvement with the Ponca people. I have been to sweats, gone to Sun Dance, and cried at funerals. I have received advice from old women about marriage and behaving in the right way. When I was embarrassed because I almost got up to dance during a song for chief's daughters and granddaughters, one woman told me, "Don't worry. People know you don't understand. They'll excuse you." And, I was teased by an old man who said my last name sounded like the Ponca word for "bug." I learned from Poncas that family and relationships are what is most important. And, as an epilogue to my personal story, I

want to say that I re-married the Ponca man I spoke of in the first chapter. He is my friend and my companion. I am especially appreciative to the Ponca girls who shared part of their lives with me in the interviews and helped to enlighten this White woman. Perhaps their courage will help to make things better.

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Appendix A

Parent Consent

PARENT CONSENT FORM FOR A STUDY REGARDING PONCA GIRLS' CHOICES TO REMAIN IN SCHOOL OR QUIT BEFORE GRADUATION

Dear Parents or Guardians of Edgewood City High School Students:

In cooperation with Oklahoma State University, I will be conducting a research study that looks at the reasons Ponca girls choose to either remain in school or quit before graduation from the viewpoint of Ponca adolescents and women. I plan on visiting Edgewood City High School throughout the 1999-2000 school year to conduct this study. I will observe in classrooms and after school activities as well as interview Ponca adolescents, their mothers or guardians, Ponca elder women, and a teacher of the adolescent's choice. I am a former classroom teacher and counselor and worked in the Ponca City Schools at Roosevelt Elementary as a counselor for nine years. I believe that the results of this study will make a significant contribution to understanding, from the Ponca woman's perspective, the many aspects that assist a Ponca adolescent in remaining in school and graduating or that hinder her from completing school.

Because there may be some non-Ponca adolescents who may wish to participate, I may also do a side-study that includes their perceptions.

With your permission, I would like to interview your daughter in small groups or one on one before school, during lunch or study periods, at other times approved of by the school/teacher, or after school for 30 - 45 minutes in a public area regarding their view on why Ponca adolescents choose to drop out or to remain in school and graduate. If given permission, I will tape record these interviews, however, your daughter can still participate if you do not give permission for the interview to be taped; I would, at that point, handwrite the answers to the questions. All interviews will remain confidential and locked in a secure place. The tapes (or handwritten responses to questions) will be destroyed two years after the study is completed. The students' names will be changed so that no one will know who said what; this is also true for the name of the school and the name of the city. My interviews will take place at a time that will not interfere with students' learning. Participants in the study will also be given a disposable camera with which to take pictures of people, places, events that are important to them. I will pay to process the film and give your daughter the negatives and a copy of the photographs. I would like, with your permission, to keep one copy of the photographs.

Parents or students may withdraw their voluntary consent at any time during the year by notifying Ms. Sarah Tibbles, Title IX Coordinator at Edgewood City School or me. Not participating in the project will not jeopardize the students' future relations with Oklahoma State University or their standing at Edgewood City High School.

If you have any questions you may contact me (Ann Wasilewski) at 580-268-3036. You may also contact Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, Oklahoma State University, 203 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK 74078. Phone 405-744-5700.

PARENTS CONSENT:

I have read and fully understand this consent form; by signing it, I give my permission for my daughter to participate in this research project conducted by Ann Wasilewski concerning Ponca adolescents' decisions regarding remaining in school or dropping out. I also give permission for the interviews to be taped. I also give my permission for Ann Wasilewski to keep one copy of pictures my daughter takes as part of this study. A copy of this consent form has been given to me. I understand that participation is voluntary and that my daughter will not be penalized if she does not participate. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and end her participation in this project at any time after I notify either Ms. Sarah Tibbles, Title IX Coordinator for Edgewood City Schools or Ann Wasilewski. If I have any questions, I will contact Ann Wasilewski at 580-268-3036 or Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, Oklahoma State University, 203 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK 74078. Phone 405-744-5700.

Date: _____

Student's Name: _____

Parent's Signature _____

Appendix B

Student Assent Form

STUDENT ASSENT FORM FOR A STUDY REGARDING PONCA GIRLS' CHOICES TO REMAIN IN SCHOOL OR QUIT BEFORE GRADUATION

Dear Edgewood City High School Students:

I am a graduate student at Oklahoma State University who is trying to understand what Ponca adolescents think are the things that help a Ponca adolescent remain in school and graduate or drop out. I will be talking to students and observing in classrooms to learn what you believe.

Because there may be some non-Ponca adolescents who may want to participate, I may also do a side-study that includes their perceptions.

I have made up questions and will ask the same questions to every student who agrees to participate in the study. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want to. The interviews will take approximately 30 - 45 minutes, and I will ask your permission to tape record it so that I will not miss anything you say. If you do not want the interviews tape recorded, you can still participate in the study; I would, at that point, handwrite the answers to the questions. All the names of the students who agree to be interviewed will be changed so that no one else will be able to find out which student said what. The list of student names will be kept in a locked file and destroyed after two years. The tapes (or handwritten responses to the questions) will be destroyed two years after the study is completed I will not interview any student until their parents or guardians sign the consent form. You will also be given a disposable camera with which to take pictures of people, places, events that are important to you. I will pay to process the film and give you the negatives and a copy of the photographs. I would like, with your permission, to keep one copy of the photographs. If at any time, a student does not wish to continue being a part of the study, the she may tell her parents who will notify Ms. Sarah Tibbles or me.

I hope you agree to participate in this study. I think that finding out what you think will help schools to be a better place for you to learn.

Date: _____

Student's Name: _____

Student's Signature: _____

Appendix C

Interview Protocol for Students

Interview 1

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. Tell me about the high school and what it's like to be a student here.
3. Describe for me a typical school day from the time you get up in the morning until you go to sleep at night.
4. Do you think it's important for a Ponca girl to graduate from high school? Why?
5. Why do you think Ponca girls drop out of school?
6. Why do you think some Ponca girls remain in school and graduate?

Interview 2

1. What is it like to be a Ponca girl at this high school?
2. Is there any difference between the life of a Ponca girl who graduates from high school and one who doesn't?
3. Describe for me an incident in your school life that you remember as being very good.
4. Describe for me an incident in your school life that you remember as being unpleasant or bad.
5. If you could create an ideal school for Ponca girls, what would it be like?

Appendix D

Institutional Review Board Approval

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 1/22/03

Date : Wednesday, January 23, 2002 IRB Application No ED00170

Proposal Title: TO REMAIN IN SCHOOL OR DROPOUT: PONCA INDIAN GIRLS-CHOICES

Principal Investigator(s) :

Ann Marie Wasilewski
237 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

Natalie Adams
237 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and Expedited (Spec Pop) **Continuation**

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) : Approved

Signature :

Carol Olson, Director of University Research Complian

Wednesday, January 23, 2002
Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

Vita

Ann Marie Wasilewski

Candidate for Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: HUNGRY GHOSTS: PONCA GIRLS IN TWO WORLDS

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Education: Graduated from Aquinas High School, Augusta, Georgia, June, 1965; received Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Augusta College, Augusts, Georgia in June, 1969; received a Master of Education degree from the University of Georgia, in Athens, Georgia in June, 1976. Completed requirements for Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 2004.

Professional Experience: Eleventh grade English/American Literature teacher at Langley, Bath, Clearwater High School, Bath, South Carolina, 1969-1970; Child Welfare Caseworker, Cherokee County Department of Family and Children's Services, Canton, Georgia, 1970-1971; Ninth and tenth grade English and math teacher at Greene County High School, Greensboro, Georgia, 1971-1973; Ninth and tenth grade English and math teacher at Lucy Laney High School, Augusta, Georgia, 1973-1974; Vocational Evaluator at Goodwill Industries of Tulsa, Inc., Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1975-1977; Residential Guidance Specialist at Kay County Youth Services, Ponca City, Oklahoma, 1977-1978; English instructor at Northern Oklahoma College, Tonkawa, Oklahoma, 1978-1979; Counselor at Ponca City Schools, Ponca City, Oklahoma, 1984-1993; Ninth grade English alternative school teacher at Ponca City Schools, Ponca City, Oklahoma, 1993-1995; Computer Support Technician at Sykes Enterprises, Inc., Ponca City, Oklahoma, 1995-1996; Juvenile Justice Specialist II at Osage County Department of Juvenile Justice, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, 1996-1998; Doctoral Graduate Teaching and Research Assistant at Oklahoma State University School of Curriculum and Educational Leadership, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1998-2001; English teacher at A. C. Flora High School, Columbia, South Carolina, 2002-present.

Professional Memberships: American Educational Research Association; National Council of Teacher of English