

**“Pensioners upon Our Humanity”:
Governmentality and the Reservation System
in the 19th Century**

John Mark French

DePaul University

Department of Political Science

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science
Association, San Diego, CA, April 18-21, 2019

I. Introduction

Assimilation or “civilization,” as it was more generally referred to throughout the nineteenth century, was the goal of U.S. policy toward Native Americans from at least the passage of the Indian Civilization Act in 1819. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, this goal was mostly pursued through a relatively passive “barrier policy,” aiming to separate Native and white Americans from each other while Indians gradually adjusted to the demands of the new society (Trennert 1975:2). This idea was fulfilled most completely in the removal policy of the 1830s, which relocated Native groups in the east to lands west of the Mississippi River. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 was followed by numerous removal treaties, by which eastern tribes ceded their current lands in exchange for new lands in the west, along with monetary payments and other inducements. It was widely believed that it would be decades before white settlement in the west would be substantial enough to seriously encroach on Native Americans there, and that they would therefore have ample time to effect the necessary transformation.

However, beginning in the late 1840s following the settlement with Britain of the Oregon border in 1846, the end of the Mexican American War in 1848, and the discovery of gold in California that same year the pace of white migration to the west accelerated far beyond the expectations of the previous decade (Danziger 1974:1; Weeks 2016:75). And the pace would only increase in the coming years; as Weeks (2016:152) points out, “The settlement of the trans-Mississippi West in the last four decades of the nineteenth century constituted the largest migration of people in the history of the United States.” These migrants came into increasingly frequent contact with western Native American groups, not only those who had been removed from the east but also the tribes of the Great Plains, with whom the United States had had no formal contacts. These contacts resulted in more and more frequent conflict, as white settlers crossed over or even occupied Native lands and killed vast numbers of the buffalo on which many of the Plains tribes depended.

In this context, the goal of “civilization” took on a new urgency. Policymakers probably could not have stopped the westward flow of white settlement if they had wanted to, but in general they had little interest in trying. For many in the latter part of the 1840s, “the lands

reserved for Indians had instead become an impediment to unifying a transcontinental nation, an open space that someday would have to be filled by American enterprise and settlers” (Weeks 2016:82). In any case, it became clear as the pace of westward migration accelerated that Native Americans would have years, not decades, to transform themselves into “civilized” Americans, or be wiped out by the rising tide of “civilized” society. The policy of “concentrating” Native American tribes in smaller, well-defined areas reservations emerged in response to these pressures. The idea of concentration had two main attractions for policymakers: it would clear Native Americans out of lands that whites wanted either to settle or to move through; once they were moved, it would be easier to monitor them and implement programs for their civilization and “improvement.” The concentration policy, which began with a series of treaties in the 1850s and continued through the early 1880s, thus set the stage for the period of intensive government efforts at assimilation land allotment, off-reservation boarding schools, etc. that would follow.

The goal of assimilating Native Americans was driven by several factors, whose relative influence shifted over time: simple ethnocentrism and racism; the desire for economic gain; genuine religious or philanthropic conviction; the need to establish or reinforce a distinctly American national identity; a belief in inevitable, linear historical progress; and the pragmatic desire to minimize conflicts between Native peoples and ever-expanding white settlements. Both the belief in the *need* for Indian assimilation and the specific *form* that assimilation would take were also, I argue, shaped by a complex historical change in ideas about the proper purpose and methods of political power a shift that Michel Foucault describes as the development of “government.” A complete understanding of the policies of Indian assimilation as they developed in the United States in the 19th and early 20th centuries, therefore, requires attention to this change.

I begin with an overview of Foucault’s description of the development of “governmental” rule, and an explanation of its relationship to the policy of assimilation in general. I will then describe the concentration policy and the development of the reservation system in greater detail, and continue by explaining how this policy, specifically, reflects the imperatives of governmental rule (in Foucault’s sense). I will conclude with a

brief look at concentration and reservations in the larger development of the policy of assimilation.

II. Assimilation and Governmentality

In his writings on “government,” Foucault describes a historical shift in the understanding of political rule, from an emphasis on the control of territory to a concern with the overall well-being of the “population,” understood as people in their relations with each other and with their overall environment (Foucault 2003:245). Foucault calls this a change from the model of “sovereignty” to the model of “government.” Where rulers in the model of sovereignty were primarily concerned with maintaining their own power, government is concerned with looking after the welfare—health, education, financial well-being, etc.—of the people; its definitive aims are their protection, security, and overall *improvement*. These aims are pursued by government’s intervention in the processes by which, e.g., wealth is produced, subsistence guaranteed, children produced, etc.—by achieving “the right disposition of things so as to lead to a suitable end” for the governed. (Foucault 2007:100).

This change in was driven in large part by the attempts of absolute monarchs to maintain control in the face of a series of novel challenges (Foucault 2007:249-251). From a demographic boom beginning in the seventeenth century through to the industrial revolution—with the accompanying growth and increased wealth of the middle class—in the eighteenth, absolutism seemed increasingly insecure, and the ways in which rulers responded to the new threats would, over time, result in new conceptions both of the ruled—the objects or targets of political power—and in what that power was understood to be *for*—its proper purpose.

In order to deal with the dangers to their authority, rulers sought ways of better comprehending the complex and various societies over which they ruled—the nature of the people themselves as well as the physical, environmental, economic, and cultural contexts in which they lived. This need for, essentially, more information “was linked to development of the administrative apparatus of the territorial monarchies,” by which they

came to exercise power in a much more continuous way over more of their territory, and in “a set of analyses and forms of knowledge that began to develop at the end of the sixteenth century and increased in scope in the seventeenth century; essentially knowledge of the state in its different elements, dimensions, and the factors of its strength, which was called, precisely, ‘statistics’, meaning the science of the state” (Foucault 2007:100-101). These new methods, in turn, make the ruled visible to rulers in a new way: not as a series of individuals, but as a unitary whole “the population” with its own distinctive characteristics, discernible only at the aggregate level.

In fact, statistics...now discovers and gradually reveals that the population possesses its own regularities: its death rate, its incidence of disease, its regularities of accidents. Statistics also show that the population also involves specific, aggregate effects and that these phenomena are irreducible to those of the family: major epidemics, endemic expansions, the spiral of labor and wealth...Statistics enables the specific phenomena of population to be quantified... (Foucault 2007: 104).

The new visibility of the various patterns and processes that characterize the population as a whole, in turn, leads to a growing tendency to use those phenomena as both a guide for what the things government should do, and metric or standard for assessing how well it is doing those things. Population becomes the “final end of government,” the object upon which governmental interventions are designed to act in order “to improve the condition of the population, to increase its wealth, its longevity, and its health,” as distinct from the health and well-being of every individual member (Foucault 2007:105). To govern—that is, to rule in a way that takes the total well-being of those ruled as its goal and purpose—is to rule through population, which is made visible through statistics.

The shift is therefore as much about changing methods—or practices of rule—as it is about different goals. The processes government directs and optimizes exist *only* at the level of the population, and so dealing with these processes is not the same as dealing with individuals. The state does not, for example, construct a sewer system so that no individual will get sick; it makes sewers so that the overall incidence of disease in the population will be reduced. This is true even though the individual is the one upon whom power is directly

exercised; the individual is simply the point at which government can take hold, so to speak, of the population.

Put very simply, then, the ways in which rulers respond to a particular set of challenges to their control allow them to see new aspects of the people and places they ruled; over time, those new aspects, themselves, become the focus of political power, and fundamentally shape the methods by which it operates.

The shift from sovereignty to government introduces into history a model of political power that depends on *definition*, on demarcating and “knowing” the objects on which power operates. Foucault describes this in terms of systems of “veridiction”, by which he means systems apparently governed by their own, natural rules, rules that, once discovered, reveal the right way to deal with those systems. The example of the market is an important one; market forces of supply and demand, understood as natural or inevitable, provide a system of veridiction that determines what is the right thing for the government to do (Foucault 2008:32). The concern is therefore no longer with “justice” in the classical sense of a distribution of wealth that gives each individual what he or she deserves, but with conceding to the natural laws of the market and finding ways of improving economic outcomes *within* those laws. Western history, Foucault argues, is marked by a transition from systems of jurisdiction to systems of veridiction (Foucault 2008:33).

The natural laws and processes of the population, discovered through statistics, are one such system. In the model of sovereignty, the power of the sovereign was defined spatially, by the boundaries of the territory he could claim to control; in the model of government, the power of the ruler is defined by the characteristics of the population, which is both the means and the end of his rule. As Foucault also notes, this represents a change from a model in which the limit of the power of the ruler was the rights of the ruled, to a model in which the only principle that limits government is *efficacy*, the ability of a particular policy to improve the situation of the population as a whole, as measured through the statistics that make the population visible (Foucault 2008:10-11).

In order for governmental forms of rule to operate, however, two very general conditions must be met. The first is that the population must be *legible* to government, in the sense in which James C. Scott uses this word (Scott 1998). Government must be able to

“see” the population to develop an accurate assessment of the phenomena which characterize it, which means that it must be able to gather and analyze statistical data about the population in standardized forms. Government must be able, for instance, to get an accurate count of the number of people living in an area in order to measure population growth, or an accurate catalog of properties and their owners in order to measure the population’s wealth (and to assess tax liabilities). Government will therefore deploy various “optical technologies,” like permanent family surnames, numerical addresses, and cadastral maps, to make the population more legible, both spatially and socially (the term “optical technologies” is in Scott et al. 2002: 33; see also, e.g., Rose-Redwood 2008; Mitchell 2002).

Native American societies, from the perspective of white policymakers, were profoundly illegible. Naming conventions, notions of property ownership, family relationships, and patterns of authority were all seen as arbitrary, irrational, or unintelligible (and, frequently, immoral as well). Native American societies were, so to speak, blind spots in government’s visual field. Many aspects of assimilation policy, therefore, were aimed precisely at transforming these aspects of Native societies in order to make them more legible, so that they could be “seen” as part of the population. Policies of assimilation were, among other things, “optical technologies,” in Scott et al.’s sense.

The second condition for governmental forms of rule has to do more directly with the individuals who make up the population. The kinds of techniques that characterize governmental rule are not primarily concerned with forcing individuals to behave in one way or another; instead, they seek to adjust the outcomes of the ways in which individuals choose to behave on their own. Government thus operates on the population through the freedom of individuals (Dean 1999:15). The classic example of this is the theory of the invisible hand, in which economic outcomes are the result of individual actors pursuing their own interests. Government does not primarily try to tell these individuals what to do, but rather operates on the economy by adjusting the conditions within which they calculate their interests and make decisions (Foucault 2007:22-23). Government in this sense is characterized precisely by projects like sewer construction, educational systems, and urban planning, which take for granted an idea of individuals who rationally calculate and pursue their own interests, and attempt to alter their calculations without attempting to dictate

individual actions directly. (For example, if a sewer system exists and is connected to your home, it is unlikely that the government would need to force you to stop using pit latrines). (Foucault 2007:47-48).

For these assumptions to hold, however, individuals must be seen as having the *capacity* to make such choices. Children were therefore excluded—as, for much of history, were women, who were described as less rational, governed more by passion than by reason. In other cases, individuals might require *training* to prompt them shape their choices into ones that could be aggregated into the picture of the population. Many of the techniques that Foucault labels “discipline” serve precisely this function (Foucault 1977). A substantial group of people with radically different behavior, evincing radically different preferences and values, creates anomalies that make it impossible for the state to “see” the population as a whole, or predict the outcome of proposed interventions. Native Americans, again, were seen as just such a group, and important elements of the assimilation program—in particular, the education of Indian children, especially in the off-reservation boarding schools—were intended to play a disciplinary role, reorienting the behavior and values of Native Americans in accordance with norms acceptable to white society.

The illegibility of Native societies and their deviance from white social norms together marked Native Americans as, in a sense, “ungovernable.” The effort to “civilize” or assimilate Indians—the explicit aim of Indian policy for over a century—was on one level an effort to make them into *governable* subjects, individuals who were susceptible to state interventions designed to promote the best possible outcome for the complex of “men and things” which are its object, and on whom the effects of those interventions could be readily measured and compared to other cases. As I have said above, governmentality depends on *knowledge* of the population—its size, its demographic makeup, its health, its education, its family relationships, its economic conditions, and so on. In order for such methods to function, therefore, the population must be *knowable*; it must be possible to observe and assess all of these characteristics, and to aggregate them into a picture of the “population” as a whole. Governmental power both *individuates* and *assembles* data; both tasks require that individuals be readily and repeatedly locatable and identifiable, and that their relationships to one another be similarly clearly defined. Excessive variation or difference

within the population, or excessive deviation from desirable norms, defeat such efforts, and must be limited. Assimilationist Indian policy sought to reduce the differences between whites and Indians by pushing individual behavior close to a (white) norm, thereby making Indian societies permeable to this kind of observation and assessment.

The policy of concentrating Native Americans on small, well-defined reservations was, first and foremost, intended to increase the legibility of Native Societies, by assigning them to specific and stable locations and making government supervision of them easier. The success of this policy, however, would also facilitate the use of more individualized, disciplinary methods. In the following sections, I will outline the historical and political development of this policy, and show in greater detail how it helped — or was intended to help — increase the legibility and governability of Native American societies.

III. Development of the Concentration Policy

As suggested in the introduction, U.S. policy toward Native Americans from the end of the Revolutionary War through the 1830s focused mainly on keeping Native and white society separate. The first major U.S. law dealing with Native Americans, the Indian Trade and Intercourse Act, mainly limited the ways in which American citizens could interact with Native Americans, for instance by requiring a federal license to engage in trade; this law, which was reauthorized and revised several times before being made permanent in 1834, was the primary legislation governing Indian affairs for most of the nineteenth century (Danziger 1974:3). The geographical boundary between white and Indian — drawn first down the Appalachian mountain range in a royal proclamation in 1763 — was moved progressively further west until finally, in 1830, the Indian Removal Act set it at the Mississippi River (Prucha 1984: I:315). As both Prucha (1984: I:315) and Trennert (1975: 3) both point out, many in the late 1830s believed that removal had achieved a permanent solution to the “Indian problem,” the sheer size and remoteness of the western lands guaranteeing ample time for tribes to transform themselves on their own — a change which was believed to be inevitable. Across the Mississippi, “they would need protection from

white invasion but little supervision while the slow process of acculturation took place” (Trennert 1975: 3).

As events developed, however, the “barrier” lasted less than a decade after the last removals, and hopes of policymakers for the slow, peaceful, and inexpensive “civilization” of Native Americans were dramatically dashed by a series of events in the 1840s: the acquisition of vast new territories (and their Indian populations) by the United States with the addition of Texas, Oregon, California and the Southwest from 1845-1848; the California gold rush that began in earnest in 1849; and the rapid expansion of the railroads—driven to a great extent by these events—from the 1840s through the 1880s.

“The Indian country,” Prucha observes, “was invaded, crossed and crisscrossed, and it was no longer possible to solve the question of the Indians’ destiny by the convenient scheme of repeated removal” (Prucha 1984: 1:316). Settlers and speculators alike “began to wonder why the national government was reserving this land only for Indians” (Weeks 2016:92). The commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1856, George Manypenny, noted in his annual report that “The rage for speculation and the wonderful desire to obtain choice lands, which seems to possess so many of the those who go into our new territories, causes them to lose sight of and entirely overlook the rights of the aboriginal inhabitants” (in Prucha 1984: 1:331). This inevitably meant conflicts, and protecting migrants on the westward trails became a major concern.

First Congressional interest in exercising more control over the western tribes came early in 1846. Leading the drive were a number of expansionists, largely Western democrats, who were keenly aware of the increasing emigration to Oregon and California and the role these settlers might play in annexing that territory. The travelers needed protection to reach their destination and the expansionists determined to give it to them (Trennert 1975: 18).

Yet, at the same time, government officials recognized that Native populations were declining dramatically, mainly through disease, but also through violence and the effects of alcohol. This, they believed, was not necessarily, or not entirely, the fault of either white migrants and settlers or Native Americans; rather, it was an inevitable result when “civilization and barbarism are brought together in such relation that they cannot coexist together.” Under such circumstances, “it [was] right that the superiority of the former

should be asserted and the latter compelled to give way” (Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1852:3¹). After all, asked the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1848, “If in the rapid spread of our population and sway, with all their advantages and blessings to ourselves and to others, injury has been inflicted upon the barbarous and heathen people we have displaced, are we as a nation alone to be held up to reproach for such a result?” (CIA Report, 1848:385).

Increasingly, American policymakers saw Native Americans as facing a choice between civilization and extinction. Commissioner Luke Lea presented this choice quite starkly in his annual report of 1851, saying that the tribes whose lands bordered the Mississippi, if not relocated, would “in a few years...be forced to abandon their present possessions to an emigrating population, and be driven forth to perish on the plains.” He made a similar statement the following year, saying that “The embarrassments to which they [Native Americans] are subjected, in consequence of the onward pressure of the whites, are gradually teaching them the important lesson that they must ere long change their mode of life, or cease to live at all” (CIA Report, 1851:6 and 1852:3-4).

At the same time, the legal provisions for dealing with these problems were limited; the Trade and Intercourse Act of 1834 was increasingly seen as inadequate for dealing with the changed circumstances in the west, where policing the boundary between white and Indian was practically impossible (Prucha 1984:1:331). With conflict between “savage” and “civilized” societies in close proximity seen as tragic but unavoidable, and current laws providing little help in ameliorating the problems, the only possible solution was a new policy that would to keep the two societies separate while promoting the civilization of Native Americans by the most rapid means possible.

A specific example of the thinking here can be drawn from the report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1851. Referring to members of the Chippewa (Ojibwa) who had yet to move from the lands they had ceded in Wisconsin and Minnesota, commissioner Luke Lea stated his fear that they would “not only again molest our citizens, but be reduced to destitution and want.” He recommended that “efforts be made to

¹ These reports will be cited hereafter as “CIA Report, Year”

concentrate them within proper limits west of the Mississippi, where, with additional means beyond those already provided, arrangements could be made to introduce among them a system of education.” Lea further recommended that all of the Chippewa bands be combined onto a single reservation, where “as large a portion of their funds as practicable should be set apart and applied in such a manner as best to secure their comfort and most rapidly advance them in civilization and prosperity” (CIA Report 1851:4).

So, the policy of concentration was the means that policymakers settled on for achieving what the boundary policy had failed to (Weeks 2016:93). The first comprehensive statement of the concentration policy was made in the report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1848. In that report, Commissioner William Medill, despite the destructive effects on Native populations of white expansion, expressed optimism that the situation of the Native Americans could be transformed by a “wise and beneficent system of policy.” This policy was, as rapidly as it could be accomplished, to

colonize our Indian tribes, for some years, beyond the reach of our white population; confining each within a small district of country, so that, as the game decreases and becomes scarce, the adults will gradually be compelled to resort to agriculture and other kinds of labor to obtain a subsistence, in which aid may be afforded and facilities furnished them out of the means obtained by the sale of their former possessions (CIA Report, 1848: 386).

Although Congress in 1848 did not provide for the creation of the new reservations described by Medill, his statement in this report neatly encapsulates the main elements of the concentration policy as they would be advocated and implemented for the next three decades. Concrete measures were first taken in February of 1851, when an Indian Appropriation Act was passed which both reorganized the Indian Bureau, enlarging it in recognition of the increased responsibility of dealing with the tribes in newly-acquired western territories, and provided \$100,000 for “expenses of holding treaties with the wild tribes of the prairie,” and an additional \$25,000 for negotiating treaties with the tribes of California (U.S., *Stat.*, v. 9, p. 572). As Trennert notes, the “summer of 1851 accordingly brought to the Indian department the necessary implements for the commencement of a limited reservation system” (Trennert 1975: 59; see also Weeks 2016:95).

Implementation of the concentration policy began in earnest with a series of treaties negotiated early in the 1850s. The first of these was the Ft. Laramie treaty of 1851, which included several of the main Plains tribes: Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Crow, Assiniboine, Gros Ventre, Mandan, and Arikara (Treaty Concluded at Ft. Laramie, 1851; Prucha 1984: I:343). On May 26, 1851, Commissioner Luke Lea sent instructions to David D. Mitchell, a Superintendent in the Bureau and one of the negotiators of the treaty, that in any agreement “a fixed boundary for each tribe should be established” (in Trennert 1975:188). The treaty that resulted from the negotiations at Ft. Laramie fulfilled this requirement, specifying the boundaries of the territory of each tribe. The treaty also committed the United States to providing an annuity of \$50,000 per year for fifty years “for their maintenance and the improvement of their moral and social condition,” payable “in provisions, merchandise, domestic animals, and agricultural implements, in such proportion as may be deemed best adapted to their condition by the President of the United States” (Treaty Concluded at Ft. Laramie, 1851, Article 7). (This annuity was later reduced to ten years).²

The Ft. Laramie treaty was seen as a model that should be applied everywhere, not only in new agreements with tribes who had previously had no formal relations with the United States (as was the case at Ft. Laramie), but in replacement of earlier treaties as well. Thus Lea, in 1852, recommended that a large number of standing treaties with Native tribes be “swept away” and replaced with others, simpler and more consistent,

and all looking mainly to the concentration of the several tribes; to their permanent domiciliation [*sic*] within fixed and narrow limits; to the establishment of efficient laws for the protection of their persons and property; and to a more judicious administration of the means provided for their support and improvement (CIA Report, 1852:12).

And, indeed, later treaties would more or less follow the pattern established at Ft. Laramie in 1851. A similar treaty was negotiated with the Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache at Fort Atkinson in 1853, and Commissioner George Manypenny negotiated a series of nine

² As Trennert (1975:191) notes, this treaty did not in fact create the reservations to which these tribes would later be restricted; the boundaries it specified were vague, and the government at this time was not willing to use the military to enforce its provisions. Later treaties, in the years following the Civil War, would produce a more durable arrangement. However, the later treaties reflected the same thinking as those negotiated in the early 1850s, and the Ft. Laramie treaty is still important as the first concrete attempt to implement the concentration policy.

treaties in the 1854 with the so-called “border tribes” who lived along the Mississippi near Iowa and Missouri, including significant parts of the Indian Territory (Prucha 1984: I:346-7; Weeks 2016:100). In all of these treaties, the tribes agreed to relocate to a much smaller area—sometimes but not always within their existing territory—in exchange for payments, which could be made in goods, to assist them in their progress toward “civilization.” In the treaty they negotiated with the federal government in 1855, for example, the Utes agreed to relocate to a small reserve and to “cultivate the soil, and raise flocks and herds for a subsistence”; the United States agreed to support them with annuities for the next twenty-six years (in Prucha 1984:I:372). The treaties also provided for the eventual allotment in severalty of tribal lands, a point which I will return to in the following section.

In all, more than fifty concentration treaties were negotiated by 1856, bringing more than 4000 square miles of new territory under into the responsibility of the Indian Bureau, and designating reservations for many of the western tribes; Indian title to over 174 million acres of land was extinguished by these treaties (Weeks 2016:97). Other treaties in new territories such as Utah and New Mexico would be negotiated through the end of the 1860s (for instance, the Navajo treaty of Bosque Redondo in 1868) (Danziger 1974:6, 62).³ By 1880, as Prucha (1984:I:594) notes, “the pattern of the reservations was set, although some of them would be reduced again in size.” From that point on, then, federal Indian policy dealt with Native Americans located on relatively small, well-defined reservations.

There was rapid turnover in the administration of the Bureau of Indian Affairs from the end of the 1840s through the 1850s, but despite this “a strong and consistent reservation policy developed to which the commissioners, whatever their background, adhered” (Prucha 1984: I:323). Similarly, Weeks argues that “Although the federal bureaucracy disagreed about the best methods of pursuing and fulfilling the goals of the policy of Concentration, none disputed that the Indian Question must be solved by that policy” (Weeks 2016:153). Thus while the details of the system would change, as would the means by which policymakers sought to bring it into being, in general terms reservations

³ Treaties negotiated with tribes in California were never ratified, but the policy implemented there more or less reflected the ideas of the reservation system.

were a policy that everyone – except of course Native Americans themselves – could agree on as the best, and indeed only, way forward.

The reason for this consensus was that, as Trennert notes, the policy satisfied two requirements that everyone involved agreed were essential: Indians “must be concentrated in smaller areas to make way for the advancing whites, and they must be closely supervised and isolated by the government until they learned the white man's ways” (Trennert 1975: 29).

So, the first benefit of the policy is that it would provide security to migrants headed west. The original formulation of the concentration policy – again, in the 1848 report of the Commissioner William Medill – envisioned the creation of two large “colonies for the Indian tribes... one north, at the head waters of the Mississippi, and the other south, on the western border of Missouri and Arkansas, the southern limit of which is the Red River” (CIA Report, 1848:388). While the geography of this arrangement would shift, this general notion would be advocated for many years. The underlying idea was to open up a path or channel for safe migration in between these two great reserves, one in the existing Indian Territory (mainly present-day Oklahoma), the latter “north of the lines of travel,” usually somewhere in the Dakotas (Prucha 1984: I:340). For instance, Commissioner Lea, in 1851, noted that while “there has been ample outlet at the southwest...another of a more northern latitude is required, leading towards our remote western possessions.” Along with the removal of “a few tribes” to one of these locations, this would “enable to Government...to throw open a wide extent of country for the spread of our population westward” (CIA Report, 1851:6). In particular, this would open up routes for the construction of railroads to the west (in which some prominent government supporters, such as Stephen Douglas, had investments) (Trennert 1975:32). As late as 1858, Commissioner George W. Manypenny continued to advocate for the creation of two large Indian “colonies,” one in the north and one in the south, with a clear path for white migration between them (Prucha 1984: I:326).

Later officials would come to accept that the goal of only two large reservations was impractical, but they continued to try to combine multiple tribes onto shared reservations whenever possible. The idea behind this was not only to minimize the amount of land occupied by Indians; it was also to dissolve tribal relations and identity. As an 1868 report

had it, “The object of greatest solicitude should be to break down the prejudices of tribe among the Indians; to plot out the boundary which divide them into distinct nations...” (in Prucha 1984:I:492). The following year, the report of the Board of Indian Commissioners argued that

The policy of collecting the Indian tribes upon small reservations contiguous to each other, and within the limits of a large reservation...seems to be the best that can be devised. Many tribes may this be collected in the present Indian territory. The larger the number that can be thus concentrated the better the success of the plan... (In Prucha 1984:I:562).

These officials hoped to advance Indian assimilation into American society by making tribal distinctions or divisions irrelevant, and they tried to achieve this in part by treating them as if they already were.

Not surprisingly, the implementation of the concentration policy was complicated, uneven, and never went entirely as policymakers envisioned. At the same time, the treaties negotiated in the 1850s and 1860s utterly transformed the positions of white and Native in the American west, both practically and legally. In the following section, I will look more closely at the second perceived benefit of the concentration policy—its facilitation of Indian “civilization”⁴—and show how the way in which this goal was conceived and pursued reflect the imperatives of “government,” in Foucault’s sense of that word.

IV. Concentration and Civilization

As I have already suggested, the idea of the reservation system was developed in an atmosphere of crisis, when the rapid westward expansion of white Americans was destroying the previous “barrier” policy, as well as decimating the Indians themselves. Increasingly, again, policymakers saw Indians as faced with a choice between “civilization”

⁴ Danziger (1974:201) argues that, of the two objectives I have mentioned, the program of civilization “ranked a clear second” to that of clearing land for white use settlement. While it is difficult to argue with the point that there were far more actors and interests clamoring for access to these lands, I think it is important to see that the two goals were inextricably linked in the minds of policymakers. The “civilization” of Native Americans was seen as the best way to clear land for white use, as it would not only physically remove them but nullify their claim to any special status or connection to that land. “Civilized” Indians would simply be Americans of Native descent; they would have no more special claim to American territory than, say, Americans of Irish descent had to lands in Ireland.

and extinction; the policy of concentrating Native Americans onto reservations must be viewed as a response to this crisis, a way to prompt them toward the better of these two options.⁵

Indeed, the reservation system was explicitly represented “as an alternative to the extinction of the Indians” (Prucha 1984: 1:317). Commissioner Luke Lea, in 1851, was clear in his conviction that concentration and was essential, saying that “any plan for the civilization of our Indians will, in my judgment, be fatally defective, if it do not provide, in the most effective manner, first, for their concentration; secondly, for their domestication; and, thirdly, for their ultimate incorporation into the great body of our citizen population.” John M. Washington, governor of New Mexico beginning in 1848, put the matter more starkly, saying, in a letter from 1849, that “the period has arrived when they must restrain themselves with prescribed limits and cultivate the earth for an honest livelihood, or be destroyed” (in Trennert 1975: 113). Commissioner Alfred Greenwood would echo this sentiment a decade later, in his report of 1859, saying that

They have also been brought to realize that a stern necessity is impending over them; that they cannot pursue their former mode of life, but must entirely change their habits, and, in fixed localities, look to the cultivation of the soil and the raising of stock for their future support. There is no alternative to providing for them in this manner but to exterminate them, which the dictates of justice and humanity alike forbid (in Prucha 1984: 1:352).

According to Charles Mix — Commissioner of Indian Affairs for a brief period in 1858, but chief clerk of the Bureau for 18 years and a significant stabilizing force on policy through these years — it was previous Indian policies, rather than the character of Indians themselves, that had prevented “civilization” from progressing. As Prucha puts it, “By frequent changes in location and the holding of large bodies of land in common, the Indians were kept unsettled and failed to acquire experience in private property, and their large annuities fostered habits of indolence and profligacy...” (Prucha 1984: 1:325). What was required, then, was stability, and the creation of a situation in which the Indians would

⁵ This should not be taken to imply that policymakers saw “civilization” as the lesser of two evils; it was, for them, a positive good for all concerned.

have no choice but agricultural labor for securing sustenance. These themes would appear repeatedly in the reports of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs throughout this period.

This point reflects the fact that while the general idea of reservations—lands set aside or “reserved” for a particular group of Native Americans—was very old, it had new aspects in this period. Under the concentration policy, the boundaries were typically much more precisely defined, and the areas were generally small—deliberately small enough to make any way of life *other* than farming impracticable. But perhaps the greatest differences had to do with the administration of the reservations themselves. In the previous era, characterized by the policy of removal,

the tribes were not restricted from coming and going as they pleased, agents and teachers were few and ineffective, and no provisions were made for restricting and integrating the native tribes already on the prairies. Only in a few selected places were more restrictive reservations attempted, and these proved failures as long as the Indians had any choice in the matter (Trennert 1975: 3).

Under the concentration policy, in contrast, tribes were to be subject to much greater oversight and control, and they would, in general, be *confined* within reservation boundaries, allowed to leave only under certain, specific circumstances. The reservation boundaries, in fact, would eventually mark the jurisdictional division between military and civilian authorities. In the later 1860s, Native Americans on the reservations were to be overseen and managed by the civilian officials of the Bureau of Indian Affairs; once they left the reservation, however, they fell under military authority (Weeks 2016:199). Commissioner Francis A. Walker, in 1872, stated that the aim of the reservation policy was “that the Indians should be made as comfortable on, and as uncomfortable off, their reservations as it was in the power of the government to make them,” and saw the use of military power as an effective means of achieving this (in Prucha 1984:I:535).

Confinement was seen as necessary for achieving both of the primary goals of the concentration policy: if Native Americans were allowed to “wander” in areas of white settlement, conflicts would eventually follow, and if they could not be reliably located and restricted in their access to resources, it would be impossible to effectively implement the civilization program (Danziger 1974:149). In his report for 1850, for example, Lea noted that

to prevent the constant raids on white settlement by the tribes of the Southwest, they should be “placed in situations where a proper vigilance and control can be exercised over them” (CIA Report, 1850:11).

“Fixing” the location of the tribes, then, was an essential attraction of the concentration policy, and one which clearly illustrates the desire for increased legibility that drove its development. From very early on in American history, Native tribes were consistently described as though they were entirely nomadic—even those, like the Cherokee, whose social and political systems were based around substantial permanent towns. Indeed, this supposed lack of stable ties to any particular place was used as one of the primary arguments for disregarding Native claims to land. In his first annual Message to Congress, Andrew Jackson exemplified this view, saying

But it seems to me visionary to suppose that in this state of things claims can be allowed on tracts of country on which they have neither dwelt nor made improvements, merely because they have seen them from the mountain or passed them in the chase (Jackson, Message to Congress, 1829).

The language of “the chase” became a trope that officials used constantly as a shorthand description of the Indian way of life and all of the problems it presented. Thus in 1850, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs described “the love of the chase” as a “formidable obstacle” to Indian civilization. The same official, in 1852, approved the progress made by tribes at the Osage River agency in part by noting that they had “generally abandoned the chase as a means of subsistence,” but in 1853 he noted with disapproval that “The Sacs and Foxes are a wild, roving race, depending almost entirely on the chase for subsistence” (CIA Reports, 1850:3; 1852:7; 1853:8). Later, following the Civil War, Secretary of the Interior James Harlan argued that “It is for the interest of both races, and chiefly for the welfare of the Indian, that he should abandon his wandering life and settle upon lands reserved to his exclusive use” (In Prucha 1984: I:433). However, as General William Tecumseh Sherman wrote in 1868, “To labor with their own hands, or even to remain in one place, militates with all the hereditary pride of the Indian, and *force* must be used to accomplish the result” (in Prucha 1984:I:551; emphasis in original).

More practically, Native groups who could not be reliably located, or tied to specific pieces of land, were highly illegible to government officials. Particularly when combined with traditional naming systems and ideas of the family unit, Indian mobility made it difficult if not impossible to identify any particular individual reliably, and so, e.g., to charge them with crimes, collect debts or taxes owed, distribute payments, and so on. As the Commissioner of Indian Affairs wrote in 1840, “Permanency of location, as a general rule, is the parent of all that is valuable in civilized life.” With education and other measures to encourage their civilization, he argued, Native Americans would develop a “distaste for the rambling life, and an attachment to the fireside, with its crowning accompaniment, religion, which is the only security for progression in all the others” (CIA Report, 1840:232, 242). The reservation system, which not only fixed the boundaries of tribal lands much more precisely but also effectively confined Native Americans within those boundaries, did much, at least in theory, to ameliorate these problems.⁶

Through the treaties in which tribes agreed to their concentration on reservations, US officials also “sought to provide the means for transforming the life of the Indians, for the negotiations were used to gain the acquiescence, at least nominal, of the Indians to an agricultural existence and ‘moral improvement and education’” (Prucha 1984: 1:318; also 342). They would be kept from the influence of “unlicensed traders and other intruders,” while at the same time an Agent of the Indian Bureau, “assisted by a small staff of physicians, teachers, blacksmiths, farmers, clerks and interpreters,” was supposed to “transform his ‘uncivilized’ charges into acculturated frontier farmers” (Danziger 1974:5). In some treaties, such as the 1868 treaty signed at Ft. Laramie,⁷ the government agreed that if the specified reservations did not contain at least 160 acres of arable land for each person, additional lands adjacent to the reservation could be set aside (Prucha 1984:I:493).

⁶ Although the rhetorical opposition of a nomadic lifestyle to civilization would continue to appear in the statements of policymakers for decades; for instance, in his report for 1871, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs spoke of the great progress that was being made by Native Americans who were “abandoning their roving habits” and “establishing themselves upon reservations, where they can be properly cared for and civilized” (CIA Report 1871:1).

⁷ Not to be confused with the earlier Ft. Laramie treaty of 1851, discussed earlier, which was negotiated with many of the same tribes and pursued the same policy goals.

That agriculture should be a prominent part of both the concentration treaties and the public discourse around them is not surprising; perhaps no idea in U.S. Indian Policy through the nineteenth century was so consistent as the conviction that Native Americans should be made into farmers. Policymakers' belief in the civilizing effects of labor in general, and agricultural labor in particular, verged on the religious. This conviction had many influences, but among other things it drew on Thomas Jefferson's famous vision the U.S. as a nation of self-sufficient "yeoman farmers" and small tradesmen, all owning property of their own and making their living from the products of their labor (Reynolds 2008:9). Andrew Jackson, similarly, noted in his first message to Congress that

The agricultural interest of our country is so essentially connected with every other and so superior in importance to them all that it is scarcely necessary to invite to it your particular attention. It is principally as manufactures and commerce tend to increase the value of agricultural productions and to extend their application to the wants and comforts of society that they deserve the fostering care of Government (Jackson, Message to Congress, 1829).

So, the promotion of farming among Native Americans was essential to their integration into white American society, as well as the American economic system.

Indeed, the claim that Native Americans did not engage seriously in farming (a claim that, as Perdue [1999:115-116] notes, was simply false for most Native groups) was one of the primary justifications for ignoring or forcibly extinguishing their rights to land, from the very beginning of white settlement. Thus John Winthrop claimed that "New England Indians 'inclose noe land, neither have any settled habytation, nor any tame Cattle to improve the Land by, and soe have noe other but a Naturall Right to those Countries,'" while Samuel Purchas argued in the early 1600s that "God intended Virginia to be cultivated...and not left to 'that unmanned wild Countrey, which they [Indians] range rather than inhabit" (Usner 1999:203).

The latter quotation also highlights the link between agriculture and the "fixing" of Indians' location on the land; once they had begun to farm it, Native Americans would be

invested in particular plots of land, and so would begin to *want* the stability that white policymakers sought to impose upon them.⁸

One benefit of the reservation system was that concentration would allow the government to increase the pressure on Native Americans to begin farming as their primary means of subsistence. Commissioner Lea, in his 1850 report, succinctly described the basic idea of the policy:

There should be assigned to each tribe, for a permanent home, a country adapted to agriculture, of limited extent and well-defined boundaries, within which all, with occasional exceptions, should be compelled constantly to remain until such time as their general improvement and good conduct may supersede the necessity of such restrictions...

This accomplished, they would effectively have been “placed in positions where they can be controlled, and finally compelled, by stern necessity, to resort to agricultural labor or starve.” (CIA Report, 1850:4). Concentration treaties almost universally provided money for the promotion of agriculture, paying for farm implements, seed, or the salaries of farmers who could teach their skills to Native Americans.

Official reports thus often measured the progress of Native groups toward “civilization” in terms of the degree to which they had taken to farming. In his report of 1851, for instance, Commissioner Lea expressed hope that the Winnebago would “ere long, become a thrifty and contented people” because they had “assisted in the ploughing, planting, and harvesting” of crops on their reservation, and “displayed not only willingness, but anxiety, to work.” Similarly, the tribes of the Osage River agency were congratulated for having “generally abandoned the chase as a means of subsistence” and engaged in agricultural pursuits.” (CIA Report, 1851:7). The following year, he described the Indians remaining in Michigan as “generally doing well,” noting that “Their agricultural efforts have been crowned with their proper reward,” while the tribes of the Nemaha agency had similarly “secured rich returns for their filed industry, and they are all worthy of commendatory notice for their general good conduct.” The Navajos in the New Mexico territory,

⁸ There is a palpable irony in the idea that Native Americans were insufficiently attached to the lands they occupied, as measured by the same white officials who advocated moving them away from places to which they were deeply connected and into places which they found strange and inhospitable.

meanwhile, had ceased to be “hostile and mischievous,” and had “recently manifested a disposition to abandon their predatory habits and to seek support in the cultivation of the soil” (CIA Report, 1852:5-6, 9).

Agriculture, then, was seen as a general solution to a number of specific problems. As (ostensibly) nomadic hunter-gatherers who wandered over the land without setting down roots, taking game as they needed it and avoiding other labor, Indians were highly illegible to white policymakers. They did not earn or spend money, did not sell goods on the market, and did not invest in or “improve” the land; they did not think in terms of individual interests, but were subsumed into their “tribal relations.” As this way of life was foreclosed, moreover, they became increasingly reliant on government support for their subsistence—a situation that discouraged making the effort to change. Making Native Americans into farmers would help to address all of these problems: it would tie them to specific pieces of land; encourage them to invest in and improve those lands, and thereby prompt them to see their individual interests as distinct from those of the tribe; require them to purchase seed, stock, and other goods, thus bringing them into the market; and make them economically self-sufficient.

The emphasis on farming as a means of civilization clearly reflects the governmental imperatives that underlay Indian policy in general. White policymakers believed that traditional Native American cultures did not promote the “spirit of enterprise” that would drive them to value labor for its own sake, and so strove to create conditions in which they would be *forced* to work. However, the governmental imperatives of the state also required that this labor take a form that could be measured, assessed, compared, and adjusted for maximum efficiency. Even if policymakers had recognized the amount of labor that individuals in all Native cultures were in fact performing, the virtual impossibility of specifying, in quantitative terms, the contribution of any given individual, as well as the lack (often) of a marketable surplus, would have led them to consider that labor invalid.⁹ In contrast, commercially-oriented agriculture on privately-owned land suited these

⁹ We might think in comparison of the devaluing of the care work and household labor typically done by women.

requirements, as did the practice of a trade or even wage labor, much better than traditional, subsistence forms of production.

However, the effort to promote farming among Native Americans often collided with white policymakers' lack of understanding of Native societies. Officials constantly described Native American men as "lazy" and unwilling to work because of their reluctance to engage in agricultural labor. Thus George Manypenny's 1853 report said of the Indians of the Kansas [*sic*] agency that "These people are not inclined to till the soil. The males will not work. The females make some patches of corn with the hoe; but these Indians rely principally on their annuities, the chase, and theft, for support" (CIA Report, 1853:8). As Weeks (2016:222) notes, for many tribes, farming was "women's work," and officials who tried to force men to engage in such labor were challenging social norms which they did not perceive or understand. Then, too, the fact that much of agricultural labor was performed by women prompted observers to declare that Native women were effectively slaves, forced by lazy Indian men to perform labor that was not properly their responsibility. Officials thereby used the policy of promoting farming not only to enforce a Eurocentric division of labor, but also to discount existing agricultural labor in Native societies through a condemnation of Indian gender relations (Perdue 1999:105).

A persistent obstacle to the adoption of an agricultural way of life was that many of the tribes had other means than farming for their support, and so lacked sufficient inducement to change. For example, Indian Commissioner Luke Lea, in his annual report for 1850, decried the state of the Chippewa, which he ascribed to the fact that "they own a vast extent of territory...over which they will be scattered, following the case and indulging in their vagrant habits, until the wild products of the country, on which they depend for a subsistence, are exhausted, and they are brought to a state of destitution and want" (CIA Report, 1850:4-5).

In particular, annuities to which many tribes were entitled by the terms of treaties that had signed, including concentration treaties if paid directly in cash, were "looked upon as a substitute for work, and the Indians became increasingly dependent on what amounted to a dole" (Prucha 1984: I:333). This would only encourage what policymakers saw as the Indians' "impatience of regular labor, exhibited in unsteadiness of application"

(CIA Report, 1852:4). Commissioner Lea, again, ended his report of 1851 with a general statement that “the debasing influence of the annuity system” had been an obstacle to efforts to “arouse the spirit of enterprise” in Native Americans. The following year, bemoaned the condition of the Pottawatomie, for whom “little or no improvement is manifest in their modes of living,” and blamed this situation on the fact that “They depend mainly for support...on their large annuity.” In the same report, again, he noted that all of the tribes of the Osage River agency were “flourishing,” except for the Miamies, for whom the “effect of the large annuities that have been paid to them has been to check all industry and thrift, and to tempt them to general idleness and dissipation.” (CIA Reports, 1851:12; 1852:7). In 1853, he again noted of the Pottawatomie that “They have a large money annuity, the corrupting effects of which are clearly visible (CIA Report, 1853:7).

These statements point to the way that the creation of reservations interlocked with other policies to enhance the capacity of the federal government to control Native Americans. For instance, once confined to small reservations and excluded from traditional hunting areas, tribes would become dependent on the annuity payments guaranteed in treaties; they could then “be threatened with loss of annuity funds for any violation of their treaty,” including leaving the reservation (Trennert 1975:182). Paying those annuities in goods rather than money, in turn, would assure that they were used only in ways approved by the government,¹⁰ and in particular ways that facilitated the transition to an agricultural lifestyle.

It is worth noting that a decline in the availability of traditional means of subsistence game, especially buffalo was one of the main factors that would force the large tribes of the Great Plains, in particular, to come to a settlement with the government in the first place (Weeks 2016:155; 226-228). Officials were well aware of this, and well before the slaughter of the buffalo had reached its climax. Commissioner Lea, in 1852, noted approvingly that a majority of Indian tribes were “substantially improving their condition,” and expressed hope that “notwithstanding their sufferings, in many cases, have doubtless

¹⁰ In particular, that the funds would not be used for the purchase of alcohol—a constant concern among policymakers throughout this period.

been severe, perhaps the wisdom they have acquired has not been purchased too dearly,” since “it has been the work of hunger, disease, and death to arouse in the survivors a perception of the only conditions upon which human life and comfort can be sustained on earth” (CIA Report, 1852:4). As the wholesale slaughter of the buffalo herds by white hunters was accelerating, Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano wrote, in 1872, that “The buffalo are disappearing rapidly, but not faster than I desire. I regard the destruction of such game...as destroying their hunting habits, coercing them on reservations, and compelling them to begin to adopt the habits of civilization” (in Prucha 1984:I:561).

Among the steps often recommended following the establishment of the reservations was allotment of land in severalty—that is, the division of collectively owned tribal lands into family plots, which would become the private property of individuals or heads of households (Prucha 1984: I:327). While the national allotment of Indian lands was not pursued until 1887, when the General Allotment Act was passed by Congress,¹¹ the idea was advocated for decades before this. As far back as 1838, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs argued that “Unless some system is marked out by which there shall be a separate allotment of land to each individual...you will look in vain for any general casting off of savagism. Common property and civilization cannot coexist” (in Otis 1973:x). Similarly, in 1840 another Commissioner wrote that it was foolhardy to imagine that “a mass of wild and savage men” could be integrated “in a body” with a “civilized community.” To be part of such a society, the “mass” would have to be broken up, and this could only be accomplished through the dissolution of communal land ownership: “The only terms upon which they could remain...would be as owners by purchase, and tillers and cultivators of the soil” (CIA Report 1841:232). The 1869 report of the Board of Indian Commissioners continued to argue that “on the reservations Indians should be given land in severalty, and tribal relations should be discouraged” (Prucha 1984:I:510). Support for this measure would grow steadily through the 1870s and 1880s, until the passage of the Allotment Act in 1887.

Allotment of land would work hand in glove with the promotion of agriculture to give individual Native Americans something of their own—personal, individual property, in

¹¹ See French 2015 for a more complete analysis of this Act in terms of governmentality.

which they had invested time and energy, and from which they alone derived benefit – and so an interest distinct and separate from that of the tribe as a whole. This in turn would create an incentive for them to maintain what they had, and seek to increase it. Allotment and private property would thus spark the “spirit of enterprise” whose absence was blamed for Native Americans’ lack of progress

Accordingly, allotment featured in many of the concentration treaties; if they did not actually impose it, they provided for the possibility. For instance, the treaty of Bosque Redondo, negotiated with the Navajo in 1868, provided that

If any individual belonging to said tribe [the Navajo], or legally incorporated with it, shall desire to commence farming, he shall have the privilege to select, in the presence and with the assistance of the agent then in charge, a tract of land within said reservation, not exceeding one hundred and sixty acres in extent, which tract, when so selected, certified, and recorded in the "land-book" as herein described, shall cease to be held in common, but the same may be occupied and held in the exclusive possession of the person selecting it, and of his family, so long as he or they may continue to cultivate it (Treaty with the Navajo, 1868: Article 5).

The essential point in this passage for my purposes is that the selected tract would “cease to be held in common,” that is, by the tribe as a whole, but would become the exclusive possession (though not yet technically private property) of the individual head of household. Property, and in particular property in which one had invested labor, was seen in this period as an absolutely essential element in the civilization program; the common ownership of land by tribal members was thought to be one of the primary obstacles to their civilization. Though it is much later than the period I am considering here, it is worth quoting an 1884 statement by Senator Henry Dawes, (for whom the General Allotment Act, or Dawes Act, was named) because it clearly summarizes the thinking behind this policy:

If he be one who hitherto has been permitted to grow as a wild beast grows, without education, and thrown upon his instincts for his support, a savage, take him, though grown up and matured in body and mind, take him by the hand and set him upon his feet, and teach him to stand alone first, then to walk, then to dig, then to plant, then to hoe, then to gather, and then to *keep*. When he begins to understand that he has something that is his exclusively to enjoy, he begins to understand that it is necessary for him to preserve and keep it, and it is not a great while before he learns that to keep it he must *keep the peace*; and so on, step by step, the individual is separated from the mass, set up upon the soil, made a citizen, and instead of a charge he is a positive good, a contribution to the wealth and strength and power of the nation (Dawes 29-30).

Another example is found in the treaties with the Santee Sioux of Minnesota, from 1851 and 1858. These agreements allowed for the allotment of 80-acre plots to heads of households. As explained by Thomas J. Galbraith, agent to the Santee at the time,

The theory, in substance, was to break up the community system among the Sioux; weaken and destroy their tribal relations; individualize them by giving each [head of household] a separate home and having them subsist by industry the sweat of their brows; till the soil; make labor honorable and idleness dishonorable; or, as it was expressed in short, '*make white men of them*'... (in Weeks 2016:128; emphasis in original. Brackets are Weeks's).

This statement neatly summarizes the interrelation of several different elements of the civilization program, which had to go together; this was accomplished much more easily on clearly-defined reservations.

The idea of allotment was also of a piece with the general aim of reducing both Indian lands and government assistance to them to the point where farming would be their only viable means of survival. Once living “by the chase” was no longer an option, Indians would accept an agricultural lifestyle; giving individuals a personal financial interest in their own private plots would induce them to maximize their agricultural output.

Again, the changes that were expected to follow from the establishment of the reservations contributed, first and foremost, to increasing the legibility of Indian tribes to government officials, but they also facilitated the development of more disciplinary measures later on. Education, in particular, was always seen as an essential ingredient in the assimilation formula. This idea was certainly much older than the concentration policy; from the colonial period, white settlers and policymakers had seen formal schooling as one of the most effective means not only of providing Native Americans with the practical knowledge that would allow them to function in white society, but also of changing their customs and habits to be more in line with the norms of that society. As Margaret Szasz puts it, “A number of colonial Euroamericans and Indians deemed Indian schooling as the ultimate tool for achieving cultural change among Indian people” (Szasz 2007:4).

Early efforts at educating Native Americans were mostly a project of religious or missionary groups, who defined civilization first of all in terms of conversion to Christianity.

To live a genuinely Christian life was almost synonymous with being civilized; at the same time, Native peoples' "pagan" beliefs made their civilization impossible (as well as placing their souls in peril). This meant, however, that early efforts at Native education were sporadic and inconsistent, since missionary groups were generally short of both funding and personnel to carry out such programs; in any case, few people of any race received much formal schooling in colonial America (Szasz 2007:31-2).

Though government support for education of Native Americans began in 1819 with the passage of the Indian Civilization Act, these efforts were still managed primarily by religious organizations, who in effect became government contractors, administering programs funded partly with public money (DeJong 1993:57). The dominance of missionary groups in Indian education continued until after the Civil War (see, e.g., Coleman 1993:38). At that time, as I have already described, the expansion of white settlement brought new pressures to bear on Native societies and their lands in the west, bringing a new urgency to the effort to "civilize" Native peoples. Thus federal education programs and the reservation system were in a sense cognate policies, arising together and for more or less the same reasons.¹²

Federal education programs for Native Americans would grow over several decades, reaching their height (or, perhaps, nadir) with the creation of the off-reservation boarding schools, beginning with the foundation of the Carlisle Indian School in 1879.¹³ Between 1877 and 1900, federal appropriations for Indian schools rose from \$20,000 to \$2,936,000; in the same period, the number of Native children enrolled in school went from 3,598 to 21,568 (Adams 1995:26-7). The main point for my purposes here is that concentration of Native groups on well-defined reservations was widely seen as a prerequisite for making the education programs work. Already in 1840, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, T. Hartly Crawford, noted that stable settlement within a definite territory was a prerequisite, for "In no other than this settled condition can schools flourish, which are the keys that open the

¹² The central role of religious groups did not change right away; under the so-called "Peace Policy" of the Grant administration, the administration of Indian reservations in general, and education in particular, were placed largely in the hands of such groups (See, e.g., Prucha 1984:1:482; 512-519).

¹³ For more on the history of education policy in general, and the off-reservation boarding schools in particular, as well as education as a governmental project, see French 2017.

gate to heaven and God.” Commissioner Lea, in 1852, argued that “impatience of labor, exhibited in unsteadiness of application, is the radical defect of the Indian character,” and so it was “but a dictate of common sense to address ourselves first and mainly to its correction. This effected, a foundation is laid upon which our best hopes for the reclamation of the savage may be safely built.” Concentration would facilitate this. In his report of 1850, Commissioner Lea noted that schools for the Indians at the time were too few and far between to have a general effect, but that more, smaller schools — made possible by reducing the size of Indian lands and increasing the density of the population on them — would allow “the benefits of a practical education” to be “more widely diffused” (CIA Reports, 1840:233; 1850:8-9; 1852:4).

Furthermore, this educational program was always focused on manual labor, and agricultural labor in particular. As Commissioner William Medill (1845-1849), wrote in his 1845 annual report:

Experience has clearly demonstrated the superiority of schools conducted on the manual labor system...It is known that strong prejudices exist among many of the tribes against schools, and it is only by actual observation, by demonstrating the advantages of learning, that the Indian can be made to feel its importance. This can only be done by combining with letters such studies as call forth the energies of the body, and inspire a taste for the arts of civilized life... (in Reyhner and Eder 2004:46).

Commissioner William Dole would echo these sentiments nearly two decades later, in a letter of 1862, saying that “The best schools are the labor schools and *the more labor the better*. Book learning is useless to an Indian if he has not the habits of industry with it” (in Prucha 1984: I:465). There were a few different arguments for this focus. The first was that, as we have seen, Native Americans — and Native *men* in particular — were stereotyped as lazy or inconsistent workers, which had prevented their advancement toward “civilization” in the past; inculcating the habits of work was therefore vital to promote their development in the future. Second, again, was the perceived importance of agriculture itself as a civilizing force. Third, developing skills in a trade of some kind would help make Native Americans financially self-sufficient, thus relieving the federal government of the burden of providing

for them. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Francis A. Walker (1871-1873) stated the official view very clearly in his annual report for 1872:

Unused to manual labor and physically disqualified for it by the habits of the chase, unprovided with tools and implements, without forethought and without self-control, singularly susceptible to evil influences, with strong animal appetites and no intellectual tastes or aspirations to hold those appetites in check, it would be to assume more than would be taken for granted of any white race under the same conditions to expect that the wild Indian will become industrious and frugal except through a severe course of industrial instruction and exercise under restraint (CIA Report, 1872).

It was the concentration of tribes on reservations that would provide the “restraint” the Commissioner mentioned.

More generally, Indian schools run by the federal government and the off-reservation boarding schools in particular were clearly disciplinary institutions, in Foucault’s sense. They made use of military discipline, requiring students to wear uniforms, assemble for a roll call before morning classes, and perform formation-marching drills with mock rifles (see, e.g., Trennert 1988: 48; Riney 1999: 140). In the classroom, teachers “enforced extraordinary control over children’s movements, such as requiring them to sit perfectly still and not look anywhere but at their desks or at the front of the room” (Riney 1999:78). There were complex schedules of bells, sirens, or whistles that told students where they were supposed to be and what they were supposed to be doing, which students had to memorize or face harsh punishment (Coleman 1993:86; Trennert 1988:117; Reyhner and Eder 2004:163; Lomawaima 1994:13). For example, the school day of students at the Rapid City Indian School stretched from 5:30 AM to 9:00 PM, and was divided up by a complex system of both bells and steam whistles. “No new student could hope to understand Rapid City’s complex schedule without considerable practice and coaching” (Riney 1999:117). Finally, again, all of the schools emphasized the importance of work, not only by teaching specific manual skills to which half of students’ time was devoted in many schools (Trennert 1988:6) but having students do much of the work of maintenance and upkeep of the schools themselves, as well as, in the off-reservation boarding schools, sending students to work and even live in white homes as domestic servants (see, e.g., Trennert

1988:46 for a description of the place of manual labor in the curriculum of the Phoenix Indian School).

As I have already noted, federal education policies developed over a long period, and were at their most intense a couple of decades after the policy of concentration had mostly achieved its goals. However, concentration was an essential step in implementing those policies, precisely because of the way in which it increased the legibility and manageability of Native groups. Once they were restricted to a relatively specific, fixed location, measures like censuses; registers of marriages, births, and deaths; registration of land usage in a “land-book”; imposition of Eurocentric naming system; and so on, could all be more easily implemented. Such measures made it possible to know how many Indian children there were, how many of them were enrolled in school, what grade level they had attained, and so on. As I suggested in section II, above, in addition to the requirement of a legible population that can be readily monitored and assessed, government, in Foucault’s sense, requires *individuals* who are also legible — whose behavior adheres as closely as possible to certain norms, and who will respond predictably to governmental interventions. When individuals do not fit these parameters, disciplinary techniques must be used to transform them so that they do. Education in federal Indian schools was disciplinary in this sense, and it was made possible, in turn, by the increased legibility of Native populations achieved through the policy of concentration.

V. Conclusion

What I hope to have shown in the preceding section, in particular, is the way in which the various elements of federal Indian policy — the promotion of agriculture, the emphasis on labor, the allotment of land, and education — were in fact planks in a unified platform, each depending to some extent on the others. To promote labor, traditional means of subsistence (as well as direct financial support) should be foreclosed; this would also leave individual Native Americans with no choice but to engage in farming as their economic strategy. The allotment of tribal land would give these individuals an added incentive — the possibility of private gain — to invest time and energy in a particular plot of land; this would

in turn bind them more tightly to a fixed location, putting an end to their “rambling life.” Once they were linked to a fixed, stable location, children could be enrolled in schools which would discipline them to adopt the habits of white society and internalize its norms.

The policy of concentration on reservations, it was believed, would make all of these aims substantially easier to achieve. It would limit the mobility of Native groups, making them easier to locate and control. It would reduce alternative possibilities for subsistence, thereby encouraging them to take up farming as well as making them more dependent on government support if they did not, giving federal officials additional leverage. It facilitated the allotment of land, by restricting the area to be divided and, again, simplifying the reliable identification of individuals and clarifying their family relationships. Finally, it made possible a much clearer picture of the number of Native children who would need to be enrolled in schools, as well as keeping track of their progress.

Concentration, then could be seen as the central node in a network of federal Indian policies aimed at increasing the legibility of Native populations – the essential link that would bring them together and allow them to become mutually reinforcing, rather than isolated efforts. Concentration created a sort of vertical integration of Indian policies, allowing them to become much more pervasive, comprehensive, and effective. The so-called “assimilation era” began in the 1870s as the attention of the federal government returned to “the Indian question” after the Civil War. This intensification of efforts at “civilizing” Native Americans, given urgency by the continuing rapid expansion of white settlement, was made possible, to a large extent, by the establishment of the reservation system.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

“An Act to supply Deficiencies in the Appropriations for the Service of the Fiscal Year ending the thirtieth of June, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-one.” United States Statutes at Large, volume 9, Ch. 12, pp. 572. At <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/31st-congress/session-2/c31s2ch12.pdf>

Bureau of Indian Affairs. Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Multiple years. At <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/History/History-idx?type=browse&scope=HISTORY.COMMREP>

Jackson, Andrew. First Annual Message to Congress, 1829. At <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/first-annual-message-3>

Treaty Concluded at Fort Laramie, 1851. At <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/History.IT1851unnumbered>

Treaty with the Navaho, 1868. At <https://americanindian.si.edu/static/nationtonation/pdf/Navajo-Treaty-1868.pdf>

Secondary Sources:

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

Berkhofer, Robert F., Jr. *the White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978.

Burchell, Graham, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds. *the Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Coleman, Michael C. *American Indian Children at School, 1850-1930*. Jackson, Mississippi; University Press of Mississippi, 1994.

Danziger, Edmund Jefferson, Jr. *Indians and Bureaucrats: Administering the Reservation Policy During the Civil War*. Urbana, Chicago, and London; University of Illinois Press, 1974.

Dawes, Henry L. “Solving the Indian Problem.” In Prucha, Francis Paul, ed. *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the “Friends of the Indian” 1880-1900*. Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 1973.

Dean, Mitchell. *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999.

DeJong, David H. *Promises of the Past: A History of Indian Education in the United States*. Golden, CO; North American Press, 1993.

Dippie, Brian W. *The Vanishing American : White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*. 1st ed. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982.

- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1977.
- Foucault, Michel. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College De France, 1977-1978*. Trans. Graham Burchell. Ed. Michel Senellart. Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College De France, 1978-1979*. Trans. Graham Burchell. Ed. Michel Senellart. Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- French, John Mark. "A Mighty Pulverizing Engine': Governmentality and the Dawes Act." Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 2015.
- French, John Mark. "Sovereignty Reconstituted: Governmentality and the Indian Reorganization Act." Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, San Diego, CA, March 2016.
- French, John Mark. "Building Citizens: Governmentality and Indian Education." Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Vancouver, BC, April 2017
- Fritz, Henry E. *The Movement for Indian Assimilation, 1860-1890*. Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963.
- Hoxie, Frederick E., Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds. *Native Americans and the Early Republic*. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999.
- Hoxie, Frederick E. *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*. Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 2001.
- Lomawaima, K. Tsiniia. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Norman, Oklahoma; University of Oklahoma Press, 1994.
- Maddox, Lucy. *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Marienstras, Elise. "The Common Man's Indian: The Image of the Indian as a Promoter of National Identity in the Early National Era." *Native Americans and the Early Republic*. Ed. Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999. 261-296.
- Mitchell, Timothy. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Technopolitics, Modernity*. Berkeley; University of California Press, 2002.
- Otis, D.S. *The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Land*. Norman; University of Oklahoma Press, 1973.
- Pearce, Roy Harvey. *Savagism and Civilization; a Study of the Indian and the American Mind*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967; 1965.
- Prucha, Francis Paul. *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790-1834*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.

- Prucha, Francis Paul, ed. *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian" 1880-1900*. Cambridge, MA; Harvard University Press, 1973.
- Prucha, Francis Paul. *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*. Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
- Perdue, Theda. "Native Women and the Early Republic: Old World Perceptions, New World Realities." In *Native Americans and the Early Republic*. Ed. Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999. 85-85-122.
- Reynolds, David S. *Waking Giant : America in the Age of Jackson*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Harper, 2008.
- Reyhner, Jon and Jeanne Eder. *American Indian Education: A History*. Norman, OK; Oklahoma University Press, 2004.
- Riney, Scott. *The Rapid City Indian School, 1898-1933*. Norman, Oklahoma; University of Oklahoma Press, 1999.
- Rose-Redwood, Reuben. "Indexing the Great Ledger of the Community: Urban House Numbering, City Directories, and the Production of Spatial Legibility." *Journal of Historical Geography*. 2008 (34):286-310.
- Satz, Ronald N. *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976; 1975.
- Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Scott, James C., John Tehranian, and Jeremy Mathias. "The Production of Legal Identities Proper to States: The Case of the Permanent Family Surname." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 44: 01 (January 2002): 4-44.
- Szasz, Margaret Connell. *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783*. Lincoln, NE, and London; University of Nebraska Press, 2007.
- Trennert, Robert A., Jr. *Alternative to Extinction: Federal Indian Policy and the Beginnings of the Reservation System, 1846-51*. Philadelphia; Temple University Press, 1975.
- Trennert, Robert A. *The Phoenix Indian School: Forced Assimilation in Arizona, 1891-1935*. Norman, OK and London; Oklahoma University Press, 1988.
- Usner, Daniel H. "Iroquois Livelihood and Jeffersonian Agrarianism: Reaching Beyond the Models and Metaphors." *Native Americans and the Early Republic*. Ed. Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999. 200-225.
- Wallace, Anthony F. C. *the Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.

Washburn, Wilcomb E. *The Assault on Indian Tribalism: The General Allotment Act (Dawes Act) of 1887*. Philadelphia, New York, and Toronto; J.B. Lippincott Company, 1975.

Weeks, Phillip. *“Farewell My Nation”: American Indians and the United States in the Nineteenth Century.*” Third ed. Chichester, UK and Malden, MA; John Wiley and Sons, 2016.