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# “It Is Cheaper and Better to Teach a Young Indian Than to Fight an Old One”: Thaddeus Pound and the Logic of Assimilation

SCOTT LADERMAN

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Late in 1881, as third-term US congressman Thaddeus Coleman Pound was residing in Washington, D.C., the editorial writers at the *Chicago Tribune* opined on a not insubstantial problem then afflicting the nation. The “rapid development of the Pacific roads, North and South, as well as of other projected roads, is bringing white immigration into direct contact with the Indians,” the editorialists explained, “and they [i.e Indians] are in the way.” The dilemma was serious, as “railroads are bringing them as it were to our very doors, and in their present condition they are not welcome visitors to have round.” The resort to military force at times referred to as “extermination,” enlightened planners acknowledged at the time, was proving both a failure and an embarrassment; Indian peoples continued to resist the American onslaught, rendering the costs greater than the benefits, while the brutality of the US expansionist campaign was increasingly viewed as unfit for a self-professed civilized nation.<sup>1</sup> The *Tribune* noted perceptively that “in almost every case it is only the non-laboring tribes that go upon the war-path,” and thus counseled, among other policy prescriptions, the concentration of Indians on several reservations, “where they can be more easily handled,” the performance of compulsory work so as to avoid “mischief,” the allotment of tribal lands, the subjection of tribal members to local laws, the severance of Indians from traditional institutions, and the education of youth in non-Indian ways. Taken together, it was a prescription for resolving what the editorialists, Pound, and others casually referred to as the “Indian question,” and its constituent parts gradually merged as the reformist assimilation strategy of the following decades.<sup>2</sup>

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### POUND'S "HIGH MORAL CHARACTER" AND THE PRESUMED ILLOGIC OF ASSIMILATION

The legislative career of Thaddeus Pound provides an instructive case through which to examine the tactical shift in the US imperial project vis-à-vis Indian peoples in the late 1870s and early 1880s, as well as this shift's interpretation in American scholarship and, to a certain extent, American memory. There are three reasons I have chosen to focus on Pound in discussing these issues. First, unusual among congressional "reformers" of that time, the majority of whom were from the East, Pound represented Wisconsin, a state holding a considerable investment in federal Indian policy. Unlike most of his colleagues in states with substantial Indian populations, Pound early recognized the strategic wisdom of the reformist agenda, and thus came to embrace and sponsor several of its elements as a prominent member of the House Committee on Indian Affairs. By 1880, Pound was reportedly a leading candidate for the position of Secretary of the Interior in the administration of James Garfield, although for disputed reasons he failed to secure the post.<sup>3</sup>

To the reformers, continued warfare as a means of resolving the "Indian question" appeared increasingly ineffective and unbecoming, and an alteration in strategy was therefore required. An intensified focus on assimilation would thus replace "extermination"—both directed toward the identical goal of US territorial consolidation.<sup>4</sup> Captain Richard Pratt, the off-reservation boarding school movement's founder and leading practitioner, exemplified elite opinion when he intoned in a report authored by Pound that education, a major plank of the reformist agenda, would function as a "controlling influence over the Indians of the West," such that a federal investment in boarding schools would represent "an effectual guarantee of the good behavior" of those tribes whose lands the United States was committed to obtaining.<sup>5</sup>

Second, the recent attention afforded Pound—all of it by biographers and other scholars of his grandson, the great Modernist poet Ezra Pound—has either neglected or misunderstood his substantial contribution to US–American Indian relations. In *The American Ezra Pound*, Wendy Stallard Flory concluded that the nineteenth century legislator adopted a "humane attitude toward Indians" and "showed himself to be an honest and conscientious public servant."<sup>6</sup> Humphrey Carpenter wrote that "in Congress [Thaddeus Pound] demonstrated a high moral character, originating bills to promote female suffrage and the 'civilizing' of the Indians."<sup>7</sup> To Mary de Rachewiltz, Pound urged "fairness to the Indians," while James Wilhelm asserted that there was "much to praise" about his career in Congress, as he "constantly tried to help the poor Indians whom he and his fellows were rather mercilessly displacing on the frontier." A "glance at the *Congressional Record*," Wilhelm maintained, "will quickly assure the reader that Thaddeus did originate many bills to aid the Indians, as well as women, another disadvantaged group to whom he felt partial."<sup>8</sup>

The observations tell us much about how the assimilation campaign has been interpreted by non-specialists, to the limited extent it has been addressed at all. All of the scholars cited above fail to appreciate the composite nature of the policies Pound sponsored. While effusively employing

humanistic (yet blatantly racist) rhetoric in its promotion, the reformist agenda he pursued—most prominently in legislation covering education and allotment—partly represented, in its origins, a conscious federal policy of indigenous subjugation and dispossession, recognizing the “true solution” of the “vexed Indian problem” to be the transformation from armed conquest to the cultural eradication of Indian peoples. Put simply, its reception today as “humane” and “fair” overlooks the rational, expressed strategy of imperial consolidation it cloaked.

Third, and perhaps of greatest import for the relevant historical literature, Pound’s record illuminates the intent of federal reformers and the place of the assimilation program within the overall framework of United States imperialism. While the leading scholarship has generally noted the existence of a relationship between the era’s reformist legislation and American land acquisition, the connection has at times appeared somewhat ambiguous with respect to legislative intent. This has been particularly true with the issue of off-reservation boarding schools. With several notable exceptions, the literature has often portrayed federal policymakers as benevolent bunglers whose primary concern was the “civilization” of Indian youths.<sup>9</sup> And while most scholarship concerning allotment has either explicitly or implicitly acknowledged that the distribution of “surplus” lands was ultimately beneficial to American expansionist goals, those who originated the early severalty legislation of this period are frequently represented as “well-intentioned” individuals concerned primarily with the welfare of Indian peoples, however misguided their prescriptions may have been.<sup>10</sup>

For example, while conceding that the Dawes Act “achieved but one of the goals of the reformers”—that is, “swiftly mov[ing] Indian land into white ownership”—it “failed . . . spectacularly” in delivering its ostensible benefits to Indian people, leaving Robert Utley demanding that one must nevertheless “acknowledge the altruistic motives of [the legislation’s] framers and promoters,” as “the evidence of high-minded motivation is simply too overwhelming to be buried in a later generation’s guilt over the hardship and injustice inflicted on the Indians.” “The same is true of the civilization program,” Utley continued, for “the essentially humanitarian intent of the authors has to be credited.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in her enlightening analysis of the subordination of Southern Ute women as a result of federally sponsored land allotment, Katherine Osburn asserted that the Dawes Act “was designed to bring peace and social justice to the Indians through assimilation to a Euro-American model of civilization.”<sup>12</sup>

Typically, scholars have framed their evaluations of allotment around the alleged humanitarianism or idealism of reformist legislators and their desire to impart “civilization” upon the country’s Native subjects, consequently measuring the policy’s success or failure largely by that criterion; dispossession thus appears almost coincidental. For instance, in writing about the “failure of the reformers’ nineteenth-century dreams,” Frederick Hoxie observed that “[r]ather than transporting Indian homesteaders to self-reliance, [allotment] carried them swiftly to poverty and economic dependency,” for the citizenship envisioned by “men of goodwill” did not “prevent the Dawes Act from trans-

ferring 90 million acres of native-owned land to white ownership.”<sup>13</sup> Likewise, in his important text on the federal assimilation campaign, Hoxie wondered how nineteenth-century American leaders could “design and implement laws that were so obviously flawed and so clearly damaging to the people they were supposed to help,” suggesting that their actions were characterized by an inherent illogic. He appeared to concur with Old Lodge Skins, the Cheyenne elder in *Little Big Man*, that the reformers were “crazy,” and that they employed “wrongheaded analyses” in pursuit of their often well-intentioned but misguided quest for racial “uplift.”<sup>14</sup>

More recently, Melissa Meyer, in her highly regarded scholarship on the Ojibwe community at White Earth, also implied a sense of ignorance in federal policy, as she stated that “[n]either the language of the Treaty of 1867 nor the Nelson Act [of 1889] anticipated the wholesale loss of resources that was to follow in the early twentieth century.” And she maintained that allotment of the “White Earth land base under the Nelson Act did not transform the Anishinaabeg into market farmers as policy makers had hoped,” concluding that “[n]ational policies often fell far short of the rhetorical ideal when implemented at the local level.”<sup>15</sup> The present article argues that it would be misleading to view the early reformers’ legislative agenda as irrational, just as it would be wrong to consider the outcomes—in terms of US territorial acquisition and the neutralization of militant resistance—wholly unintended.

Using terms such as *humanitarians*, *philanthropists*, or *altruistic* to characterize reformist policymakers at that time, or referring to their actions as efforts to “save” Indian people, arguably has the effect of masking the United States’ self-interest that these legislators often explicitly acknowledged in their official pursuits. It is difficult, for example, to understand Francis Paul Prucha’s use of the word “humanitarians” to describe federal policymakers who, his sources reveal, in part pursued severalty legislation in order to “eventually open to settlement by white men the large tracts of land now belonging to the reservations.”<sup>16</sup> Prucha employed the term in the same paragraph in which he noted the existence of a minority report in the House Committee on Indian Affairs in 1880 that, he wrote, “charged that the main purpose of the [severalty] bill was not to help the Indians at all, but to get at the valuable Indian lands and open them up to white settlement”—which is precisely what happened.<sup>17</sup>

Along similar lines, variations on the discourse of “saving” Indians cloud the multifaceted intent of much reformist legislation. For instance, in probably the most comprehensive study of the schools established for Indian youths during Prucha’s time, David Wallace Adams stated: “Established for the sole purpose of severing the child’s cultural and psychological connection to his native heritage, this unique institution figured prominently in the federal government’s desire to find a solution to the ‘Indian problem,’ a method of saving Indians by destroying them.”<sup>18</sup> The sentiment was also expressed by Colin Calloway in his popular survey of American Indian history; he asserted that “[w]hile allotment tried to break up the reservations as obstacles to progress, education was seen as the key to making progress and saving the Indian.”<sup>19</sup>

It must be noted that these and other scholars writing about the era have

often recognized that the reformist campaign was not merely a simple story of “men of goodwill” working to “sav[e]” the Indians. Hoxie, for example, acknowledged that the federal assimilation movement was partly “fueled” by “a self-serving desire to dismantle the tribal domains” and that its architects’ “short term motivations” in some instances “may have been venal.”<sup>20</sup> Likewise, Adams presciently observed that, among others, “the case for education was . . . made on economic grounds,” one element of which was “that it was less expensive to educate Indians than to kill them.”<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, however, these lines of argument seem to receive only passing mention in many of the leading texts—when they are mentioned at all—and are frequently overshadowed by the authors’ larger examinations of the reformers’ earnest desire to civilize Indian people.

One result of this relative emphasis is that in some cases the complex motivations of the reformers have, indeed, been translated into a relatively simple narrative of good intentions with disastrously ironic consequences.<sup>22</sup> For example, in a rare treatment of the issue in the American mass media, public television’s *American Experience* began its 1992 documentary on the origins of the off-reservation boarding school campaign by stating in the program’s very first line that Washington’s efforts were grounded in “the best of intentions.” And the policy was crafted, according to series host and Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David McCullough in his introductory comments, by “people of goodwill.”<sup>23</sup> A similar story of uninterrogated humanitarianism—at least with respect to Thaddeus Pound and federal Indian policy—has emerged in the works of the Ezra Pound scholars cited above.

In subscribing to this notion of benevolent intent—one that persists today in discourses of “humanitarian intervention,” “globalization,” et cetera—dispossession and continued colonization emerge as an almost accidental byproduct of a nearly purely beneficent impulse. To a certain extent the literature has not sufficiently questioned whether the late-nineteenth century intensification of the assimilationist program represented not an appreciable change of heart on the part of many federal policymakers, as has frequently been implied, but rather a pragmatic tactical alteration in the US expansionist campaign after the costs of continued warfare were deemed unreasonably high. Under this scenario, the rhetoric of “civilization” and the “progress” it promised presumably accompanied federal Indian policy as a self-serving psychological salve for those individuals invested in the imperial enterprise.<sup>24</sup>

As a consequence, a chief objective of the reformist campaign of that era—and its location within the larger continuum of the American imperial project—has too often been overlooked. The ultimate goal of the reformist legislation of the late 1870s and early 1880s, according to the traditional view, was the assimilation of Indian people into the dominant American society, which was ultimately a failure.<sup>25</sup> Complicating that interpretation, this article posits that while this may have been one goal, it was useful to policymakers at the time only insofar as it provided an expedient means of attaining a concomitant American objective: the consolidation of Indian lands into the American imperium through severalty legislation and the neutralization of

Indian resistance through education. The distinction between the two—which of course cannot be entirely separated—is important.

The citations from these major works in the field suggest that policymakers were driven largely by a concern for the presumed “uplift” of Indian people, even if it perversely meant “destroying them” (echoing the infamous claim of an American officer in Vietnam following the destruction of Ben Tre that it was necessary “to destroy the village in order to save it”); it therefore seems to be assumed that the effects of the reformist agenda represent a policy failure, albeit one with frequently unanticipated benefits for non-Indians. But it is also possible, and in my opinion more persuasive, to adjudge late-nineteenth century federal assimilation policies a remarkable success—at least as measured by the expressed goals of a number of their original architects. Such an evaluation, however, requires the assignment of a more complex intent to federal policymakers. Scrutiny of Thaddeus Pound’s record is instructive in this regard, for it provides an illuminating window into the so-called “empire of innocence,” to borrow Patricia Nelson Limerick’s designation, as the reforms to which Pound in large part dedicated his political career—repeatedly accompanied by a lexicon of humanitarian beneficence—were critical to the “internal” manifestations of the US imperial project.<sup>26</sup>

#### POUND’S “NOBLE WORK”: EDUCATION AS A “CONTROLLING INFLUENCE” OVER THE “SAVAGES IN OUR LAND”

From early in his life, Thaddeus Pound advocated white settlement of the continent. Born to a Quaker family in Pennsylvania but having early moved to Wisconsin where his family was “determined to try [its] fortune in the Western land,” Pound was father to the first “white boy” reportedly born in the bustling town of Chippewa Falls.<sup>27</sup> Reminiscing in 1913 about his pioneering days in the region, he remarked that the “great Northwest, embracing the Mississippi valley, and territory traversed by the tributaries of the Father of Waters was then a wilderness. Forests of white pine upon the head waters of the Chippewa river was the magnet which alone drew the venturesome settler to Chippewa Falls and vicinity.”<sup>28</sup> In Wisconsin, Pound initially achieved success as a forester and railroad magnate, establishing a prominent lumber company that during its peak generated over \$1 million annually, as well as constructing several popular railroad lines in the Great Lakes region and founding a mineral water company (Chippewa Spring) that still exists today. In the end, however, “as a businessman Thaddeus was a failure on a rather grand scale,” according to James Wilhelm, as his ventures were ultimately taken over by the Weyerhaeuser interests.<sup>29</sup> By all accounts, it was as a politician that Pound “shone,” first at the state level, serving a few terms in the Wisconsin Assembly before assuming the lieutenant governorship in 1870; then, several years later, as a member of the United States House of Representatives.<sup>30</sup>

Having moved from the state affairs of Wisconsin to those of the national legislature in 1876, Pound quickly established himself within the reformist wing of American Indian policy, which advocated a focus on the “civilization”



of Native peoples in place of continued warfare. The congressman recognized both the moral and financial benefits of the strategic shift underway at that time. As Ezra Pound quoted his grandfather years later in *The Cantos*,

And [Thaddeus] said one thing: As it costs,  
As in any indian war it  
costs the government  
20,000 per head  
To kill off the red warriors, it might be more humane  
and even cheaper, to educate.<sup>31</sup>

For those involved in the consolidation of Native territories within the United States imperium, the move toward assimilation would thus satisfy considerations of cost-effectiveness then being raised, as well as any moral qualms that may have emerged as a result of the atrocities against Indian people on the frontier. After all, the reformers undoubtedly assured themselves, it would be in Native peoples' own interests that they be endowed with the benefits of Anglo-American civilization.

During a vote on a bill he originated proposing the nationwide establishment of industrial boarding schools for Indian youths, Pound articulated the far-reaching nature of the assimilationist program. He was "thoroughly convinced" that the education of "Indian youth, male and female, removed from parental and tribal influence and control," represented the "true policy for the Government to adopt," and that such a policy "vigorously prosecuted" would "very soon solve the vexed Indian problem." "Train up the youth of both sexes to habits of industry and personal independence on the plan so well inaugurated by Captain Pratt at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania," he stated before the House.

[D]issolve all tribal relations so far as they interfere with civil accountability; allot their lands in severalty, and encourage individuality of interest in labor and its results. In place of the distribution of food and raiment substitute farming and other industrial tools and implements; give them spades in place of powder, plows in place of guns, opportunity rather than hymns and prayers. Make every person amenable to law, and subject to local as well as national authority. Encourage citizenship, with all the responsibilities and privileges which it implies; break down as rapidly as practicable reservation lines; endow border communities with authority and means of defense; turn the face of the red man eastward, toward the rising instead of the setting sun.<sup>32</sup>

It is important to appreciate the breadth of the agenda, which closely paralleled the *Chicago Tribune* editorial quoted earlier. Allotment of tribal lands was to accompany education. In place of treaty obligations was to be instruction in farming and "other industrial tools and implements." "[Amenability] to law" was to supersede sovereignty. "Reservation lines" were to be "[broken] down" and "border communities" endowed with "authority and means of



defense.” The numerous assumptions implicit in the program go far in demonstrating the delusion under which government planners operated. Among these, it was considered wholly legitimate for the United States to unilaterally revise the terms of its treaties with Indian nations; this right did not, however, apply in the inverse. Also, Native peoples, many of whom had been farming in North America for centuries, had to be instructed in methods of agriculture. Similarly implicit to the legislative agenda was the notion that townspeople in communities adjoining tribal lands—by definition innocent—were being terrorized by irrational Native hostiles. This last notion, in particular, largely underlay popular conceptions of the “vexed Indian problem.” Pound’s role in promoting several of the proposed solutions to this concern in the House of Representatives was considerable.

The legislator from Wisconsin took a special interest in the fledgling educational experiments of Richard Pratt, with whom he corresponded, and he worked with the Carlisle head to “speedily put this system of training schools in full operation.”<sup>33</sup> While serving as a US representative in 1879, Pound was a member of the Committee on Indian Affairs and author of the Industrial Training School Act. Recognizing that it was both less expensive and, he presumed, less morally objectionable to promote assimilation in place of warfare—both driven by the desired acquisition of much of the continent—Thaddeus thus authored the bill toward this end. In essence, his proposal and its counterparts called for the creation and expansion of a compulsory boarding school system for Native youths that would serve to “civilize” the Indians through the inculcation of so-called American values and norms. Drawing on the 1878 experiment in Native education at the Hampton Institute as a model—Pound and Senator Alvin Saunders of Nebraska were the only two members of Congress present at the school’s 1879 closing exercises—he became a legislative champion of the early off-reservation boarding school movement in the House, and sought expansion of the system to “vacant posts” from Fort Bridger, Wyoming, and Forts Craig and Cumings, New Mexico, to Fort Marion, Florida, and Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.<sup>34</sup>

There was, elites recognized at the time, a fundamental purpose to the legislative initiative: It was believed that education would help neutralize the costly resistance of Native peoples to American expansion.<sup>35</sup> “The new idea is that it is cheaper and better to teach a young Indian than to fight an old one,” observed a *New York Times* editorial on “a new Indian policy” to replace the “Western theory.”<sup>36</sup> The sentiment was echoed four years later by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Hiram Price when he wrote in his annual report, “It is cheaper to give them education . . . than it is to fight them. . . .”<sup>37</sup> Several speakers at an 1879 fundraising meeting for the Hampton Institute hosted by the Chamber of Commerce in New York were rather explicit regarding policy prescriptions, arguing for education over “extermination” on largely pragmatic grounds.<sup>38</sup> Following a plea for support by General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, Hampton’s founder and first principal, the Reverend Doctor Henry W. Bellows concluded that the attempt “to exterminate the Indians was a failure.” According to Bellows, who was clearly mistaken in his initial assertion, there were “as many today as there were 250 years ago. The

extermination policy had cost numerous lives of white men and large sums of money, as well as our reputation as a civilized nation.” Professor Roswell Hitchcock concurred. “The policy of extermination had been tried for years, at an annual cost of \$13,000,000, and had failed,” he suggested, “while the slight attempts that had been made at education had produced the most glorious results.”<sup>39</sup>

While it became increasingly convenient for policymakers to assume a posture of detached humanitarianism and beneficence in discussing the education campaign—and there is little reason to doubt that most reformers internalized and sincerely believed in the altruistic rhetoric of the mission—the origins of the project as an extension of US imperial policy are relatively unambiguous. As noted earlier, Pound recognized that in any Indian war “it costs the government 20,000 per head to kill off the red warriors,” such that “it might be more humane and even cheaper to educate.”<sup>40</sup> During an exchange with Pound on the occasion of his legislation’s being debated by the membership of the House, Representative Nathaniel Deering of Iowa similarly remarked that by the 1880s there existed within the borders of the United States only “a few more [Indians] in number than the population of the district I have the honor to represent on this floor, and still this handful of savages, barbarous people, has kept this country in constant perplexity, turmoil, and savage warfare since the foundation of the government.” He thus celebrated that in devoting attention to Indian children through education, “the right way has been found at last.”<sup>41</sup> Henry Teller was perhaps most forthright, writing in his first annual report as Secretary of the Interior in 1882 that expenditures in education would make the Indian “if not a valuable citizen, at least one from whom danger need not be apprehended.”<sup>42</sup>

The media favorably acknowledged the purpose and development of the boarding school movement. According to the *New York Times*, “Capt. Pratt believed that if the various unoccupied military posts throughout the United States were utilized as training schools for the Indian youth, peace with the Indians would be assured, the great drawback to the rapid settlement of the frontier removed, and”—here the imperial project is subsumed within the discourse of humanitarianism—“incalculable blessings accrue to the scholars and, eventually, to the whole Indian race.” The article was headlined, “Civilizing Indian Youth; A Solution of the Frontier Problem Through Education.”<sup>43</sup> The “problem” on the frontier, of course, was the resistance that American settlers faced from the indigenous population they were attempting to supplant. Boarding school education was consequently viewed as a solution, a means of removing “the great drawback” to US territorial consolidation that had for years afflicted American expansionists.

Over a century later, more theoretical conceptualizations of the education of Indian people have been formulated. Jorge Noriega, for instance, argued that education has been a “mechanism by which colonialism has sought to render itself effectively permanent, creating the conditions by which the colonized could be made essentially *self*-colonizing, eternally subjugated in psychic and intellectual terms and thus eternally self-subordinating in economic and political terms.”<sup>44</sup> Or, as articulated by Ward Churchill,

“Hegemony over truth and knowledge replaces troops and guns finally as the relevant tool of colonization.”<sup>45</sup>

The official documents authored by Pound illustrate the imperial pragmatism of planners on the one hand with the widespread emergence of a discourse of beneficence on the other. With respect to the latter, Pound began an 1879 House report on Indian education by acknowledging a “disinclination or refusal to accept [the proposed off-reservation] facilities and compel the attendance of their children [at the boarding schools]” exhibited by “several tribes.” Compulsion would thus be required. But as compulsion for the sake of mere expansionism might appear antithetical to civilized governance, it was necessary to demonstrate that it was not only the government’s interests being served by the move toward an assimilationist agenda, but those of Native people as well. As in numerous campaigns of empire prior to that time, the perpetrators’ endowment of civilization on their barbaric subjects emerged as a guiding principle of federal policy, behind which, it must be remembered, imperial interests always lay. Pound could thus contend that “the needs of the Indian race” required “teaching them the ‘salvation of hard work,’” and that “the very considerable number of agents, teachers, missionaries, and others engaged in or interested in Indian educational work, who have visited and witnessed the methods of Hampton, join in commending it as just what the Indian needs.”<sup>46</sup>

But it was not only Native people who would benefit. It was clear, Pound asserted, “that the mutual interests and well-being of the Indians and the government, as well as the cause of civilization and humanity, alike demand[ed]” Indian children’s attendance at off-reservation boarding schools. Claiming that industrial education “as a means of civilizing and elevating the savage” had “ceased to be experimental”—Richard Pratt and Samuel Armstrong had by that time demonstrated as much—Pound maintained that the “measures and methods” he proposed would “prove economical, acceptable, and efficient, and, if thoroughly carried out and enforced, must eventuate in great and incalculable good to the Indians and to the government.”<sup>47</sup> In this manner the interests of the government and Native people became conjoined.

The paternalism displayed by Pound in rejecting the Indians’ “disinclination or refusal” to participate in the boarding school campaign may at first glance seem ironic given his expressed sentiments on another subject with which he dealt as a federal legislator: the proposed transfer of the Indian Bureau to the War Department, which he adamantly opposed. In a speech before the House in May 1878, Pound asked, “Have gentlemen who favor this change counted the cost? Have they ascertained or do they care whether it will be well received by or at all acceptable to the Indians? In my opinion, their wishes are entitled to consideration, and, so far as I am advised, they earnestly protest against it.”<sup>48</sup> There is, however, no irony in this seeming contradiction. With respect to Pound’s education bill, its reformist qualities were consistent with his preference for assimilation as the most expedient means of pursuing the imperial project. The transfer of Indian affairs to the War Department, however, was a “step downward and backward; toward barbarism, not civilization; extravagance, not economy.”<sup>49</sup> That is, restoring the supervi-

sion of Indian affairs to the military represented a reversion to armed suppression as national policy, which was increasingly proving uneconomical and embarrassing by the standards of “civilization.” While Pound maintained that a “national army” was necessary “to preserve peace throughout the land, protect our vast frontiers, repel invasion, and maintain our national defense,” the military should not dictate federal Indian policy.<sup>50</sup> The “wishes” of Indians were only “entitled to consideration,” in other words, so long as they were consistent with the reformers’ pragmatic vision of western expansion.

Pound was aware that the education movement promised multiple benefits, and he was quick to bring these to the attention of his colleagues. Economically, Indian youths would be trained to satisfy presumed domestic labor requirements, with farming, “the care of stock, mechanics, and other needful industries” an “important feature” for boys. Girls were to be instructed in cooking, cleaning, and other tasks considered appropriate for young females; many became servants and housekeepers to white families. Pound hoped “that in course of time many of the teachers, interpreters, farmers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and other employees required at the [Indian] agencies” would be supplied by “Indian youth educated for that purpose,” as many indeed did.<sup>51</sup>

Education’s greatest benefit, however, resided in its potential for defusing Native resistance on the frontier, as noted before. Recognizing the “striking proof” offered by the Hampton Institute in demonstrating the alleged amenability of Indian youths to the education movement, Pound queried:

Is it not wise economy to occupy these government buildings and premises for the objects contemplated, employ (in part) Army officers who are fitted, as teachers and otherwise, in connection with such schools, and to vigorously and adequately provide for and enforce the treaty stipulations recited; thereby not only discharging a solemn government obligation and duty, but speedily accomplishing the education, elevation, and civilization of all the savages in our land? It is believed that herein will be found the true solution of the Indian question, and, if adopted and duly executed, a generation will not pass before the use of a standing army to protect our frontiers from Indian raids, depredations, barbarities, and murders will no longer be required.

In view of its treaty obligations and of every consideration of sound public policy, the government can surely afford to enter upon and speedily consummate such a work. It cannot afford to longer neglect it.<sup>52</sup>

In other words, the relatively minor investment that boarding schools required offered “the true solution of the Indian question.” Whereas Native people continued to resist American settlement on their lands, causing a tremendous burden for American planners whose notions of democracy and republican virtue—not to mention simple greed—demanded continued expansion, education promised the Indians’ neutralization, such that “a

standing army to protect our frontiers from Indian raids, depredations, barbarities, and murders” would “no longer be required.”

Approximately one year later Pound lodged a second official report “citing a few pertinent facts of subsequent history.” Commenting on his impressions of the education campaign following a congressional visit to the Carlisle School that he organized with Richard Pratt several months earlier, he was pleased to report of the Indian youth: “Received in the rudest state of savagism, their progress is already most remarkable.” Pound was “highly gratified with the methods of education and training adopted, and the marvelous advancement already manifest, which fully attest [to] the feasibility and wisdom of such a policy.”<sup>53</sup> He approvingly cited a report submitted to the delegation by Captain Pratt, the former prison commandant turned educator, who at Hampton in 1878 had urged expansion of the education experiment by recruiting “some younger material, girls especially,” from “the Sioux . . . on the principle of taking the most pains with those who give the most trouble.”<sup>54</sup> Pratt offered a number of significant insights into the desirability of imparting an American education upon the “ignorant, pauper, peace-disturbing, life-destroying, impoverishing” youth.<sup>55</sup> As Frederick Hoxie described his motivations: “If his prisoners—some of the most recalcitrant Indians in the country—could be ‘tamed’ by his methods, then why not the entire race?”<sup>56</sup> The then-head of Carlisle was consequently quoted in Pound’s report:

The aim of the school is to give education in the common English branches adapted to the condition in life of the students; to inculcate habits of industry and thrift, and to impart to them such knowledge in common useful pursuits as will make them feel self-reliant and incite them to free themselves from the position of government paupers.

It is claimed for this school that it serves a double purpose—first, as an educator of those who are here, and, second, as an educating and controlling influence over the Indians of the West. It is plain that they will feel a lively interest in an institution which shelters and provides for their children. It is also plain that the fact of having here so many children of chiefs and headmen is an effectual guarantee of the good behavior of the tribes represented. . . .

Their personal influence on the Indians at home is very great, and is entirely on the side of friendship, good feelings, and progress. The tide of Indian sentiment has set toward education.<sup>57</sup>

“It [was] claimed,” Pratt stated, that education served an important function as “an educating and controlling influence over the Indians of the West.” If the next generation of Native warriors could be neutralized as youths, the thinking went, then the “frontier problem” would disappear and the Americans’ settlement of the continent could proceed undisturbed. It was this pragmatism that almost certainly allowed for the implementation of the assimilationist program.

CONSTRUCTING THE "WALL OF FIRE": "WE WANT THEIR LANDS,  
AND WE ARE BOUND TO HAVE THEM"

In addition to his extensive work on behalf of indigenous education, Thaddeus Pound also advocated the dispossession of Indian people of lands reserved to them by treaty. Allotment, as he noted in his earlier-cited testimony before the House in 1882, was viewed as a natural accompaniment to industrial education.<sup>58</sup> During the second session of the Forty-sixth Congress in 1880, Pound—until 1879 the president and co-owner of the Union Lumbering Company in Wisconsin—lodged a report accompanying a "bill for the relief of the Lac de Flambeau, Lac Court Oreilles, and Bad River Bands of Chippewa Indians, in the State of Wisconsin" causing "the Lac de Flambeau band to be removed to and consolidated with the Bad River and Lac Court Oreilles bands." "After such consolidation shall have been completed," Pound wrote, "allotments from the best agricultural lands in these reservations are to be selected and conveyed in severalty to [certain members of the tribe]."

Since some of these selections will contain valuable pine timber, varying in quantity and quality, and others none, in order to equalize the benefits as nearly as may be, the bill provides for an appraisement and sale at public auction of all the merchantable pine timber upon the lands allotted as foresaid, the same to be for cash, and to be removed within a period of three years from the date of such sale. It is further provided that all the unallotted lands remaining within these two reservations shall then be appraised and sold at public auction for cash, in tracts not exceeding 80 acres, and in like manner all the lands within the Lac de Flambeau reservation are to be sold.

The nett [*sic*] proceeds of all such sales, after deducting the expenses incurred in surveys, appraisements, sales, and removals, it is provided shall be invested in the four per centum bonds of the United States, for the benefit of all said Indians, the interest accruing thereupon to be annually distributed to the members of said bands for their support, education, and civilization. . . . This timber is now exposed to great hazard from trespass, fire, and wind, and is unavailable to the Indians for any purpose. The Indians are very poor, and unable to subsist without aid from the government, which they are annually receiving.<sup>59</sup>

As was typical of the discourse of assimilation, Pound concluded by reiterating the Committee on Indian Affairs's opinion "that the true interests of these Indians, their civilization, education, and physical independence, as well as economy and sound public policy on the part of the government," would best be served by the legislation. Pound was advocating, in other words, the removal of the Lac de Flambeau and the sale of "all the lands within" their reservation, as well as the sale of "all the unallotted lands remaining within" the reservations of the Bad River and Lac Court Oreilles bands.<sup>60</sup>



Here, as with education, it is important to consider the often unstated but presumably extant motivations attending the legislation. While considerable efforts were expended by policymakers to highlight the alleged benefits of the proposal to the Ojibwe people affected, the press was a bit more forthright. “Stripped of its verbiage,” the *New York Times* observed, “the bill is simply a scheme for putting all the timber on the three reservations into the market, and for selling about one-quarter of the land. The tract left for the Indians will be partly arable and partly covered with pine stumps.”

As the *Times* noted in the same article with respect to the similar pursuit of allotment in Indian Territory (Oklahoma), the policy had the effect of opening sovereign tribal lands “to settlement by whites in such a way that the whites would everywhere be in direct contact with the Indians. Under these circumstances, it could not be expected that the Indians would retain their property many years.” Simply stated, the article concluded, allotment would serve as “the wedge by which it is intended to force the opening of the [Indian] Territory to settlement, and, of course, to the railroad companies who are coveting the rich lands secured to the Indians by solemn treaties.”<sup>61</sup>

Evidently, the benefits of a checkerboard pattern of property ownership were not unknown to policymakers, as it was recognized that the settlers’ “direct contact with the Indians” would likely result in the dispossession of Native peoples’ lands.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, in accordance with the presumed moral and psychological requirements of the imperial project, Pound and his colleagues found it necessary to frame removal and allotment as allegedly beneficial to tribal members. As the higher calling of empire demanded such a prescription, Native interests were consequently defined as consistent with those of important American constituencies.

But not all federal policymakers were persuaded by this lofty rhetoric. Indeed, some explicitly rejected it as masking the “real aim” of severalty legislation: “getting at the valuable Indian lands and opening them up to white settlement.”<sup>63</sup> In May 1880, during the same session of Congress as the publication of Pound’s report, a published document articulating the “views of the minority” of the House Committee on Indian Affairs was extremely critical of allotment as federal policy and the alleged beneficence of its champions—among them Thaddeus Pound, who assented to the majority position. According to these dissenting legislators—their opposition was at times pragmatic, at times principled, and at times both—the “provisions for the apparent benefit of the Indian are but the pretext to get at his lands and occupy them.”<sup>64</sup> Their printed opinion provides a crucial reminder that not all policymakers viewed territorial allotment as grounded in the benign vision of well-intentioned reformers—individuals whom, it has been suggested elsewhere, were merely imposing a program rooted in the moral consensus that is implied to have characterized that era.

On logical grounds, the minority claimed that a comprehensive severalty bill being debated at that time was “formed solely upon a theory” with “no practical basis to stand upon.” They noted that “for many years it has been the hobby of speculative philanthropists that the true plan to civilize the Indian was to assign him lands in severalty”—communal landholdings, the reformers argued, inter-



ferred with civilization—and that since 1862 any Indian wishing to do so could receive a land allotment. But, the dissenters observed, “very few” had actually taken advantage of this opportunity. “[A]nd yet we are told, with great pertinacity, that the Indians are strongly in favor of that policy, and will adopt it if they get a chance. It is surpassing strange, if this be true, that so few have availed themselves of the privileges opened to them by the act of 1862.”<sup>65</sup>

The legislators also questioned why the bill—“being an experiment merely”—was not being instituted “on a small basis, say with any one tribe that offers a good opportunity for trying it fairly.” Instead, “without any previous satisfactory test of the policy, [it] proposes to enact a merely speculative theory into a law, and to apply the law to all the Indians, except a few civilized tribes, and to bring them all under its operation without reference to their present condition.” Moreover, they maintained that “the experiment it proposes *has* been partially tried, and has always resulted in failure”—in the case of the Catawbas, “a flat, miserable failure” in which “their lands fell a prey to the whites who surrounded them and steadily encroached upon them.”<sup>66</sup>

The minority envisioned a similar outcome with respect to the comprehensive severalty legislation then being debated. “When the Indian has got his allotments,” they wrote, “the rest of his land is to be put up to the highest bidder, and he is to be surrounded in his allotments with a wall of fire, a cordon of white settlements, which will gradually but surely hem him in, circumscribe him, and eventually crowd him out.” In a penetrating critique of the altruistic discourse employed by their House colleagues, the dissenting policymakers insisted:

If this were done in the name of Greed, it would be bad enough; but to do it in the name of Humanity, and under the cloak of an ardent desire to promote the Indian’s welfare by making him like ourselves, whether he will or not, is infinitely worse. Of all the attempts to encroach upon the Indian, this attempt to manufacture him into a white man by an act of Congress and the grace of the Secretary of the Interior is the baldest, the boldest, and the most unjustifiable.<sup>67</sup>

While still subscribing to dominant American notions of barbarousness and civilization, the dissenters nevertheless rejected both the moral and logical formulations of allotment’s proponents, claiming that “[w]hatever civilization has been reached by the Indian tribes has been attained under the tribal system, and not under the system proposed by this bill.” They cited the “creditable state of advancement under the tribal system” of the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles, as well as “the Sioux and Chippewas, and many smaller tribes.” Calling for an adherence to treaties entered into by the United States, the policymakers wrote: “Gradually, under that [tribal] system, they are working out their own deliverance, which will come in their own good time if we but leave them alone and perform our part of the many contracts we have made with them. But that we have never yet done, and it seems from this bill we will never yet do.” To these critics, the “main purpose” of the legislation was clear: “We want their lands, and we are

bound to have them. Let those take a part in despoiling them who will; for ourselves, we believe the entire policy of this bill to be wrong, ill-timed, and unstatesmanlike; and we put ourselves on record against it as about all that is now left for us to do, except to vote against the bill on its final passage."<sup>68</sup>

It is also worth noting the remarkable irony in Pound's and his colleagues' legislative arrangements during that period, as the subjects of their policies were required to invest in the perpetuation of the party exploiting their lands and resources; the funds obtained from timber sales in Wisconsin ("invested in the four per centum bonds of the United States") or surplus lands elsewhere were to be used for "their support, education, and civilization."<sup>69</sup> "True," the dissenting congressmen wrote, "the proceeds of the sale are to be invested for the Indians; but when the Indian is smothered out, as he will be under the operations of this bill, the investment will revert to the national Treasury, and the Indian, in the long run, will be none the better for it; for nothing can be surer than the eventual extermination of the Indian under the operation of this bill."<sup>70</sup> In other words, Native people were being made to subsidize their own eradication as members of distinct cultural entities. Despite only partial success on this account—for example, Wisconsin Ojibwe communities, although having suffered enormous land and resource losses, exist and are thriving culturally today—the project nevertheless registers as a remarkable formulation in the history of empire.

#### POUND'S AMERICAN INDIAN LEGISLATION AND THE QUESTION OF MORALITY

Those scholars who have written about Thaddeus Pound have placed his legislative record in a moralistic framework, designating him "humane," "fair," of "high moral character," and "constantly" trying to "help the poor Indians" being "mercilessly displac[ed] on the frontier." Likewise, the historical literature is replete with references to assimilation's legislative champions of his era as "humanitarians" and people of "goodwill." Like others acting in the service of empire, Pound undoubtedly internalized the beneficence of the "civilizing mission" and convinced himself of the righteousness of its execution. This should hardly come as a surprise. Similar to today's financial missionaries preaching "structural adjustment" to the "underdeveloped" nations of the world, planners throughout history have regularly described their actions in a language reflecting a philanthropic intent.<sup>71</sup> But given the authority of the above judgments made about Pound in the scholarly literature, it would be expedient to revisit the question of morality and consider the assimilationist project within its framework.

The most frequent objection one hears to adjudging the actions of historical figures under the standards of contemporary moral discourse is the inappropriateness of holding persons in the past to current notions of morality. There is some legitimacy to this argument. Nevertheless, a blanket acceptance of the dictum overlooks several crucial complicating factors. Putting aside those proponents of relativism who assume this posture due to their personal or professional stake in the dignity of the historical subject, frequently

overlooked is the past existence of dissent, as the expressed opposition of the victims is nearly always excluded as outside the universe of society's moral consensus. To put it another way, it is the notions of morality assumed by the perpetrators that must not be weighed by contemporary standards of decency. But such privileging of the perpetrators' moral consensus—whether genuine or facile—represents, I believe, a dangerous proposition.

For example, in analyzing Thaddeus Pound and the federal policy he championed vis-à-vis American Indians, the extant literature has largely focused on the beneficent rhetoric accompanying the reformist legislation of the era; in doing so, a number of authors have neglected the greater context of United States imperialism in which it emerged. It would not be surprising if, in fact, Pound shared in the judgment of biographer Humphrey Carpenter that his legislation was in part driven by the legislator's "high moral character."<sup>72</sup> The ultimate sincerity of Pound's conviction is to some extent immaterial, however. As Noam Chomsky observed in analyzing Cold War planners' embrace of the logic of "containment," it "is easy to persuade oneself of what it is convenient to believe," as "state managers readily accept the reality of the threats they concoct for quite different reasons."<sup>73</sup> Neutralizing this threat—whether alleged Soviet expansionism or the "frontier problem"—thus assumes the mantle of moral righteousness.<sup>74</sup>

The general thrust of the sentiment is applicable to Pound. Nevertheless, the record abounds with concessions of the assimilationist project's fundamental adherence to US imperial objectives; in this scenario, a lexicon of federal beneficence cloaked the evident perquisites accruing to the United States. That policymakers made it a point to acknowledge the benefits of the reformist agenda to the nation's expansionist ambitions seems indisputable, as this article has attempted to demonstrate. So why should their humanitarian oratory frame historical evaluations of the legislators' goals? Given what is known today about the devastating effects of various reformist policies—which are largely consistent with the self-serving objectives explicitly identified by policymakers at that time—why has a discourse of humanitarianism been privileged above others in adjudging the intent of reformers? What has happened to the critical evaluations of Indian people, dissenting members of Congress, or the *New York Times*?

Indian people responded to the policy shifts imposed upon them in multiple ways. With respect to the off-reservation boarding school movement, for instance, some parents decided to voluntarily enroll their children in the schools, not an irrational move given the extreme poverty inflicted upon tribal communities and the continuous incursions by non-Indians on tribal lands. Some also did so as converts to Christianity and believers in the "civilization" and individualism that the reformers represented. And yet others forcefully resisted. Once enrolled in the institutions, the experiences of students were mixed. Some, as Tsianina Lomawaima has documented, developed and continue to retain fond memories of their years at school.<sup>75</sup> Others despised the episode, resisting the assimilation process in countless creative ways.<sup>76</sup> None of this, however, should inappropriately influence our assessment of the policies' architects.

While Ezra Pound scholars have subscribed to a relatively simplistic formulation of Thaddeus Pound as a humane crusader for Indian people, it appears that the poet himself recognized the complexity of his grandfather's record. When presented by his father with various documents relating to his grandfather, Ezra concluded that "[a]bout [the] best phrase in [the pages he viewed of the family's Thaddeus Coleman Pound scrapbook] is 'as it costs the govt. about \$20,000 per head to exterminate the red warriors' etc. it wd. be cheaper to educate."<sup>77</sup> Perhaps it was the poet's sympathies for Italian imperialism in Africa that allowed him to easily recognize the composite nature of his grandfather's Congressional career.<sup>78</sup> Whatever the reason, he acknowledged an intent in the assimilationist project that many people today have yet to fully comprehend.

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### NOTES

1. The fact that various media or individuals periodically referred to the "extermination" of Indian peoples does not mean that the physical eradication of such peoples across the continent constituted federal policy in the 1870s and 1880s; it did not. While I agree with David Stannard, Ward Churchill, and others that the term *genocide* is in many cases applicable to the European and European-American treatment of the continent's indigenous population, I am more interested in this essay in the debate between proponents of armed conflict—many of whom employed the language of "extermination"—and those supporting what the editorialists at the *New York Times* referred to, "in terms of ascending sarcasm," as the "peace policy," the "Quaker policy," or the "Sunday-school policy." "Extermination," Editorial, *New York Times*, July 12, 1876; David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997).

2. "What to Do With Indians," Editorial, *Chicago Tribune*, November 18, 1881.

3. Alec Marsh, who claimed that "Thaddeus Pound was one of the more significant Republican politicians in the western United States between 1870 and 1900," wrote that Pound was "seriously considered" for the Cabinet post following James Garfield's 1880 election. The position failed to materialize, however, for reasons that are not entirely clear. His grandson, Ezra Pound, asserted in his *Indiscretions* that James Blaine, appointed the administration's Secretary of State, "declined 'to sit in the same cabinet with a man who was not living with his wife'"; in the 1860s Thaddeus Pound "seems to have taken up with another woman" who accompanied him to Washington, D.C., "despite the possibility of scandal," James Wilhelm wrote. Marsh speculated that the reason for Pound's failure to secure the position may have in fact been "more mundane": "[N]ewspaper articles in Thaddeus's scrapbook note that no one from what was

then ‘the Great Northwest’ had ever been offered a cabinet position—the northwestern states may not have been influential enough to have been worth a portfolio” (Alec Marsh, “Thaddeus Coleman Pound’s ‘Newspaper Scrapbook’ as a Source for *The Cantos*,” *Paideuma* 24, numbers 2–3 [Fall–Winter 1995]: 165, 167–168). James Wilhelm, *The American Roots of Ezra Pound* (New York: Garland, 1985), 23. Wilhelm claimed that when Blaine ran for the presidency on the Republican ticket in 1884, Pound “[a]t his own expense . . . published a broadside in Milwaukee that turned the entire state against Blaine and led to his crushing defeat” (Wilhelm, *American Roots*, 23). See also Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), 16.

4. Again, I am not suggesting here that the federal government had been engaged in a national policy of physically exterminating the continent’s indigenous population. The term *extermination* was certainly used by various elements advocating such eradication, but it also appeared at times to be used almost interchangeably as a reference to military force or the suppression of militant resistance. For one example of this ambiguous usage, see “A School for the Indians,” *New York Times*, January 23, 1879.

5. Pratt quoted in House Committee on Indian Affairs, *Industrial Training Schools for Indians*, 46th Cong., 2nd sess., 1880, H. Rept. 752, 3.

6. Wendy Stallard Flory, *The American Ezra Pound* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 21.

7. Carpenter, *Serious Character*, 16.

8. Mary de Rachewiltz, “T. C. P.’s Heritage,” *Helix* [Australia] 13–14 (1983): 5; Wilhelm, *American Roots*, 20–21.

9. Frequently overlooked in assessing the movement’s original objectives has been the second—and very crucial—element of the “double purpose” identified by Richard Pratt in justifying the Carlisle School’s existence: In addition to serving as an “educator” of its students, Pratt, as noted earlier, maintained that the school functioned as a “controlling influence over the Indians of the West.” To cite only one example of this neglect in the historical literature, Sally McBeth wrote, “The single major objective of the Indian educational system was, according to President Grant, ‘the civilization and the ultimate citizenship’ of the American Indian” (Sally J. McBeth, *Ethnic Identity and the Boarding School Experience of West-Central Oklahoma American Indians* [Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1983], 73). While Grant’s presidency preceded the opening of the Carlisle School, which served as a model for the institutions that followed, McBeth’s reference to Grant was clearly intended to apply to later education initiatives. For instance, she wrote that the “Indians were expected from the beginning to adopt the ways of Euro-American living and to become economically self-sufficient rural farmers in the American tradition. Civilizing and assimilating the Indians became the point of education as it became the policy basis of Indian administrators” (Ibid., 74).

10. The term *well-intentioned* appears in the foreword by Howard Lamar, Martin Ridge, and David Weber to Robert Utley’s text on the Indian frontier of the American West. They refer to the author’s “penetrating analysis of the well-intentioned reformers who had such a powerful impact on Indian policy,” and conclude that the reformers were “simply expressing their own cultural values when they set out to save the Indian by substituting their culture for his” (Howard R. Lamar, Martin Ridge, and

David J. Weber, foreword to Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846–1890* [Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984], xvi).

11. Utley, *Indian Frontier of the American West*, 269–270.

12. Katherine M.B. Osburn, “‘Dear Friend and Ex-Husband’: Marriage, Divorce, and Women’s Property Rights on the Southern Ute Reservation, 1887–1930,” in *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 1995), 159. A more comprehensive version of the subject of the article cited here is Katherine M. B. Osburn, *Southern Ute Women: Autonomy and Assimilation on the Reservation, 1887–1934* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).

13. Frederick E. Hoxie, “The Curious Story of Reformers and the American Indians,” in *Indians in American History: An Introduction*, ed. Frederick E. Hoxie (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1988), 219–221. In addressing the “curious story of reformers” in the 1880s and questioning “why . . . the Indians were of such concern to these genteel easterners,” Hoxie acknowledged that the subjects were “not eager for the reformers’ assistance,” unlike the many “freed slaves and greenhorn immigrants” of the period. He offered several reasons for the reformers’ persistent attention, but the incorporation of Indian lands into the American nation, which Indians had been resisting, did not figure among them (*Ibid.*, 206–207).

14. Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), vii–ix.

15. Melissa L. Meyer, “‘We Can Not Get a Living as We Used To’: Dispossession and the White Earth Anishinaabeg, 1889–1920,” *American Historical Review* 96, number 2 (April 1991): 381, 383. This essay is developed in Melissa L. Meyer, *The White Earth Tragedy: Ethnicity and Dispossession at a Minnesota Anishinaabe Reservation, 1889–1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

16. Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz quoted in Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, vol. II (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 664–665. Schurz, consistent with an oft-repeated sentiment of that era, claimed that the “large tracts of land” were “not used by the Indians” (*Ibid.*, 664). Prucha also quoted Senator Richard Coke on a severalty bill in 1880: “The bill is in many respects a departure from the ancient and established policy of the Government with reference to the Indian tribes. The advance of settlements in the West has been so rapid that it has been found inexpedient and impolitic, as leading to collisions between the whites and the Indians, to continue the system of locking or attempting to lock up large tracts of land within their exclusive occupancy. The whites cannot be restrained from intrusion upon these large reservations. The Indians will not use them except for hunting purposes and the whites will not permit them to remain unused. The bill simply recognizes the logic of events, which shows that it is impossible to preserve peace between the Indians and the whites with these immense bodies of land attempted to be locked up as Indian reservations” (*Ibid.*, 661–662). For an earlier articulation of this notion, see House Committee on Indian Affairs, *Lands to Indians in Severalty*, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., 1879, H. Rept. 165, 2–3.

17. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 665.

18. David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), x–xi.

19. Colin G. Calloway, *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1999), 358.



20. Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, vii, xii.

21. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 19–20. Particularly important along these lines is Adams's earlier article—which has occasionally been overlooked in the boarding school literature—addressing the need for Indians “to give up the land” as “the deep meaning of Indian education” (David Wallace Adams, “Fundamental Considerations: The Deep Meaning of Native American Schooling, 1880–1900,” *Harvard Educational Review* 58, number 1 [February 1988], 23).

22. This trope is hardly unique to the era under discussion; indeed, it is one of the objectives of this essay to suggest that discourses of humanitarianism have often been congruent with imperialist policymaking and its reception by analysts, such as in popular treatments of US foreign policy in the decades following World War II. One recent and illustrative example—and there are many—was an article in *Newsweek* during the twenty-fifth anniversary of the “fall of Saigon.” According to the authors, the “military commitment that began with a few advisers in the late 1950s to help save the Republic of South Vietnam from the communist North” was “at once a noble cause and a tragic waste that cost 58,000 American lives during more than a decade of fighting and more than 3 million Vietnamese over the course of 35 years of civil war.” While it was a conflict beset by “moral murkiness,” they wrote, it was prosecuted, to be sure, by “well-intentioned policymakers in Washington” (Evan Thomas with Ron Moreau and Andrew Mandel, “The Last Days of Saigon,” *Newsweek*, May 1, 2000, 36, 40). On twentieth-century US policymakers and their Orientalist perceptions of the Vietnamese as primitives in need of American reforms, see Mark Bradley, “Slouching toward Bethlehem: Culture, Diplomacy, and the Origins of the Cold War in Vietnam,” in *Cold War Constructions: The Political Culture of United States Imperialism, 1945–1966*, ed. Christian G. Appy (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 11–34; and Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919–1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

23. *In the White Man's Image* (Native American Public Broadcasting Consortium and the Nebraska Education Television Network for the *American Experience*, 1992).

24. David Wallace Adams alluded to as much when he wrote: “The fact remains, however, that when policymakers turned their attention to the Indian question, they invariably shifted to a frame of reference and a descriptive language tailor-made for the occasion—they shifted to the civilization-savagism model. Needless to say, to define the Indian's ‘otherness’ in terms of savagery was more than a little self-serving. To dismiss the Indian as a savage was surely a convenient means of legitimizing the history of Indian-White relations, a history that, if viewed objectively, might cast a shadow over the righteous pretensions of the American empire” (Adams, “Fundamental Considerations,” 12).

25. Hoxie provided what I believe is a representative articulation of this traditional view, even if his example dates to 1887: “From Senator Dawes to Reverend Ellinwood to Professor Thayer, these individuals [from the 1887 meeting at the Lake Mohonk Mountain House] saw citizenship, humanitarian treatment, and education as compatible tactics, separate efforts towards an overarching goal: the ‘elevation’ of the Indians and their eventual assimilation into the majority culture of the United States.” He added, “By achieving this goal, the reformers believed, they would be fulfilling their destiny as Americans, affirming their Christian faith, and demonstrating the power of their nation's political and educational institutions to dissolve racial and cultural barriers” (Hoxie, “The Curious Story of Reformers and the American Indians,” 218).



26. Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 35. Limerick wrote: “[F]ew [values] have more power than the idea of innocence. The dominant motive for moving West was improvement and opportunity, not injury to others. Few white Americans went West intending to ruin the natives and despoil the continent. Even when they were trespassers, westering Americans were hardly, in their own eyes, criminals; rather, they were pioneers. The ends abundantly justified the means; personal interest in the acquisition of property coincided with national interest in the acquisition of territory, and those interests overlapped in turn with the mission to extend the domain of Christian civilization. Innocence of intention placed the course of events in a bright and positive light; only over time would the shadows compete for our attention” (Ibid., 36).

Yet I think Limerick underestimated the conscious recognition by nineteenth-century reformist policymakers of what they were proposing. While acknowledging “the crucial fact that Indians possessed the land and that Euro-Americans wanted it,” Limerick nevertheless appeared too willing, in my opinion, to ascribe US actions to simple “optimism and good intentions” (Ibid., 190, 199). Although it is unclear exactly who or what she had in mind, she wrote of “Western history’s bulging case file of good intentions and ironic results, of a simple vision crashing into a complex reality” (Ibid., 202). Elsewhere, she maintained that “[i]nfluential scholars and policymakers gave up the push for assimilation and relegated Indians to the periphery of American life” by the early 1900s. At that time, the “attention of white Americans returned to Indian land and resources, and, in Hoxie’s words[,] ‘a campaign for equality and total assimilation had become a campaign to integrate native resources into the American economy’” (Ibid., 200). The implication appears to be that the origins of the assimilation campaign were not located in a “desire to integrate native resources into the American economy,” that this was instead a later development. I disagree, as will be made evident in this article.

Limerick has acknowledged that “what we called, for so long, ‘westward expansion,’ could also fit in the categories of colonialism and imperialism,” but this critical framework and its implications have not, to my knowledge, been sufficiently applied to the intent of reformist American planners in the late 1870s and early 1880s (Patricia Nelson Limerick, “Dilemmas in Forgiveness: William Appleman Williams and Western American History,” *Diplomatic History* 25, number 2 [Spring 2001], 294).

27. “Thaddeus C. Pound,” *Western Monthly* 3, number 16 (April 1870), 246; “First White Boy Born in Chippewa Falls Occupies Poet Yeat’s [*sic*] Flat in Italy,” *Daily Telegram* [Eau Claire, Wisconsin], April 29, 1931.

28. *Chippewa County, Wisconsin: Past and Present: A Record of Settlement, Organization, Progress and Achievement*, vol. I (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1913 [1914]), 410. Although Pound referred to the region as a “wilderness,” he did recognize the presence of its indigenous population, claiming: “Then the peaceful Chippewa tribe of Indians frequented Chippewa Falls to exchange their furs, rice and fancy handiwork for blankets, tobacco and other articles of food or raiment, sometimes demanding shunea (money) and not averse to skutewaboo (liquor), for which they had acquired a taste by association with the Christian white race. It must also be confessed that some of the fascinating dark maidens were won to wedlock by the lonely white man, the evidence of which relation may yet be noted in our present generation, but not to the discredit of the dark race” (Ibid., 411–412).

29. James J. Wilhelm, "Pound's Four Fascinating Grandparents," *Paideuma* 14, numbers 2–3 (Fall–Winter 1985): 379.

30. *Ibid.*, 379.

31. Ezra Pound, *The Cantos* (New York: New Directions, 1986), 101. Alec Marsh has written that quotation marks appeared around the lines in "the version of the canto printed in *The Dial* in February of 1928," and that the remarks derive from an undated *Chicago Tribune* article found in the "Thaddeus Coleman Pound Scrapbook" located at Brunnenburg, Italy (Marsh, "Thaddeus Coleman Pound's 'Newspaper Scrapbook,'" 171).

32. *Congressional Record*, 47th Cong., 1st sess., 1882, 6152.

33. Letter from Thaddeus C. Pound to Richard H. Pratt, January 11, 1880, Richard Henry Pratt Papers, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Incoming Letters, 250. Inexplicably, in expressing his conviction that "[p]ublic sentiment is fast being educated" in the direction of education, Pound wrote that "the day is not far distant when the Sword will be in the forefront of civilizing methods" (Letter from Thaddeus C. Pound to Richard H. Pratt, March 14, 1880, Pratt Papers, 250).

34. "The Indians at Hampton," *New York Times*, May 23, 1879; House Committee on Indian Affairs, *Industrial Training Schools for Indian Youths*, 46th Cong., 1st sess., 1880, H. Rept. 29, 3.

35. In 1882 the Secretary of War issued a report claiming that the United States had spent \$5,058,821 during the preceding decade in its wars against various tribal nations. However, the *New York Times* observed in an article sub-headlined "The Great Expense of Keeping the Indian Quiet," "One must decide from the report that the Indians are almost the only excuse the Government has for maintaining an army." As such, the "aggregate cost of all kinds of service by the United States army west of the Mississippi, in which part of the country there was no proper occupation for the soldiers but fighting or police duty on Indian account, was, for the last 10 years, \$205,474,759." With various other expenses (supplies, transportation, purchases of horses, et cetera) included, the figure increased to \$223,891,264 ("Affairs in Washington," *New York Times*, March 12, 1882). Two months later, the *Times* editorialized that the mere tens of thousands of dollars appropriated by Congress for Indian education "is by no means a large sum when the importance and magnitude of the work proposed is considered." The editorialists noted that the "education of Indian children at Hampton, Va., and Carlisle, Penn., although only offering a partial solution of the long-vexed Indian question, has been sufficiently successful in its results to warrant generous expenditures for similar purposes" (Editorial, *New York Times*, May 8, 1882).

36. Editorial, *New York Times*, March 10, 1881. "The Western theory, now largely adopted at the East, is that the rifle is the only instrumentality which can improve an Indian." The editorial also noted that "Capt. R. H. Pratt, of the United States Army, is entitled to the credit of the new departure. Being charged with the care of some Indians who were as unpromising subjects as captives taken on the war path well could be, it occurred to him that he would send them to school instead of to prison. In three years their habits were so changed that it was deemed safe to release them, and they have since given no trouble. In that case, at least, the primer and the hoe, for the warriors were taught to work, were better than the rifle" (*Ibid.*).

37. Price quoted in Clyde Ellis, *To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893–1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 7, 9. Ellis maintained that “[t]he process [of what Pratt referred to as ‘immersing the Indians in our civilization’] was benevolent by the standards of the day, it was less expensive than the dole (or combat), it fit nicely with the nation’s assumptions about its Christian duties, and, best of all, it seemed practical” (Ibid., 9).

38. The Hampton Institute—founded for the purpose of educating African-Americans, but in the late 1870s expanded to include American Indian students—was located in Hampton, Virginia. For additional information on Indian education at the school, see Donal F. Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton Institute, 1877–1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

39. “A School for the Indians,” *New York Times*.

40. See note 31.

41. *Congressional Record*, 6154.

42. Teller quoted in Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 58.

43. “Civilizing Indian Youth,” *New York Times*, March 16, 1880.

44. Jorge Noriega, “American Indian Education in the United States: Indoctrination for Subordination to Colonialism,” in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 374. Emphasis in original.

45. Ward Churchill, *From a Native Son: Selected Essays on Indigenism, 1985–1995* (Boston: South End Press, 1996), 310.

46. *Industrial Training Schools for Indian Youths*, 1, 3. Rhetorically, Pound did not limit his beliefs about “human industry” exclusively to Native people. In an address to the Northern Wisconsin Agricultural Society in September 1879, Pound requested that his audience “consider with me the question of *industry*, in its *broad* and *universal* sense, and its relations to personal and social advancement, *private* and *public* morals, *good order* and *good government*.” He maintained that “[*h*]uman industry underlies *human destiny*, and to promote it is the primary interest of society and government. Employment in some useful sphere is absolutely essential to the economy and well-being of every human soul.” Pound warned that there is “no safety in idleness for man and society. There is no salvation for the soul in the realms of idleness. Not to trench on the domain of religion, I make bold to assert that there is no grace so far reaching, no system of religion sufficiently potent to effect the salvation of a man or woman, when unaccompanied by employment of hand or head.” “Work must be made honorable and idleness a disgrace,” he contended. “Public opinion must condemn the unemployed, male or female.” Radical measures were indeed required, according to the legislator. “[Labor] must be popularized at the home fireside, the church, and in the social circle, whence public opinion gets its inspiration. It must be ennobled and made progressive through an industrial school system, where the brain and hand are trained for reciprocal service. It must be encouraged by just such competitive exhibitions as this, and protected by wise legislation, state and national” (“Address of Hon. Thad. C. Pound, Delivered at the Northern Wisconsin Agricultural Association, Held at Oshkosh, September 17, 1879,” Pamphlet 56-1734, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 2–4). Emphases in original. The date of the address is printed as September “17”; however, it has been crossed out and “18” has been handwritten over it. This is one of several changes or additions to the

document that appears to have been made by Thaddeus Pound, although the revisions' authorship is uncertain.

47. *Industrial Training Schools for Indian Youths*, 1–2.

48. "Transfer of Indian Bureau to War Department: Speech of Hon. Thaddeus C. Pound, of Wisconsin, in the House of Representatives, May 27, 1878," Pamphlet 52-820, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 4.

49. *Ibid.*, 3.

50. *Ibid.*, 7.

51. *Industrial Training Schools for Indian Youths*, 2. For a recent discussion of the role of Indian (and non-Indian) employees at one off-reservation school, see Scott Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School, 1898–1933* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), chap. 6.

52. *Industrial Training Schools for Indian Youths*, 3.

53. *Ibid.*, *Industrial Training Schools for Indians*, 1, 3.

54. Pratt quoted in Paulette Fairbanks Molin, "'Training the Hand, the Head, and the Heart': Indian Education at Hampton Institute," *Minnesota History* 51, number 3 (Fall 1988): 85.

55. Pratt quoted in Joint Session of Congress, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 24, 1881*, 47th Cong., 1st sess., 1881, Ex. Doc. 1, Part 5, 30.

56. Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 55.

57. *Industrial Training Schools for Indians*, 3. Francis Paul Prucha wrote that "the primary concern in all Indian education schemes" was "to make the Indian self-supporting—not only as a means of advancing the individual's manhood but, quite practically, to end the enormous governmental outlays needed to maintain large numbers of Indians who had lost their old means of subsistence and had not taken up any new ones" (Prucha, *The Great Father*, 689). Prucha, like Sally McBeth, neglected the second part of the "double purpose" identified by Pratt for his first off-reservation boarding school: to serve "as an educating and controlling influence over the Indians of the West." Although the language in his treatment is somewhat ambiguous, Prucha elsewhere appeared to acknowledge that Pratt's intentions may have been more complex, as he noted that the eighty-two children he recruited to attend Carlisle in 1879 were "in a sense hostages for the good behavior of their parents" (*Ibid.*, 696).

58. See note 32.

59. House Committee on Indian Affairs, *Certain Bands of Chippewa Indians in Wisconsin*, 46th Cong., 2nd sess., 1880, H. Rept. 175, 2.

60. *Ibid.*, 2. The policy pursued by Pound and his colleagues culminated in the passage of the General Allotment Act of 1887, "a mighty pulverizing engine" (Merrill E. Gates in 1900 and, more famously, Theodore Roosevelt in 1901) whose "primary effect was that Indian landholdings decreased from 138 million acres in 1887 to 48 million acres in 1934, a total loss of 90 million acres. Another effect was the 'checker-board' pattern of ownership by tribes, individual Indians, and non-Indians, causing serious jurisdiction and management problems, . . . [and] fundamentally alter[ing] life on those reservations where [allotment] was applied" (American Indian Lawyer Training Program, Inc., *Indian Tribes as Sovereign Governments: A Sourcebook On Federal-Tribal History, Law, and Policy* [Oakland, California: American Indian Resources Institute Press, 1988], 8–9). Of the remaining 48 million acres, "nearly 20 million were desert or semiarid and virtually useless for any kind of farming ventures" (Vine

Deloria, Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle, *American Indians, American Justice* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983], 10).

61. "The Indians in Congress," *New York Times*, April 5, 1880.

62. As noted earlier and also later in this section, there were legislators "who spoke out against allotment and who criticized the humanitarians' arguments," releasing a minority report in the House in 1880 opposing severalty legislation (Prucha, *The Great Father*, 665). One of the most vocal opponents of allotment was, ironically, Senator Henry M. Teller of Colorado. According to Donald Parman, "In the only floor debate on severalty legislation, Teller in 1881 denounced allotment and warned that 'in thirty years thereafter there will not be an Indian on the continent, or there will be very few at least, that will have any land.' He further warned that severalty was 'in the interest of the men who are clutching up this land, but not in the interest of the Indians at all. . . .' He accurately predicted 'that when thirty or forty years shall have passed and these Indians shall have parted with their title, they will curse the hand that was raised professedly in their defense to secure this kind of legislation. . .'" (Donald L. Parman, *Indians and the American West in the Twentieth Century* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994], 3). On Teller, see also Prucha, *The Great Father*, 665–666.

63. House Committee on Indian Affairs, *Lands in Severalty to Indians*, 46th Cong., 2nd sess., 1880, H. Rept. 1576, 10.

64. *Ibid.*, 10.

65. *Ibid.*, 7.

66. *Ibid.*, 7–8. Emphasis in original.

67. *Ibid.*, 10.

68. *Ibid.*, 10.

69. *Certain Bands of Chippewa Indians in Wisconsin*, 2.

70. *Lands in Severalty to Indians*, 10.

71. I am indebted to Professor Wilbert Ahern of the University of Minnesota, Morris, for drawing this analogy, which I find apt. In a recent and particularly forthright articulation of corporate globalization as a moral necessity, the head of the World Trade Organization, Mike Moore, undoubtedly spoke for many of the planet's new "humanitarians" when he told a group of journalists in Australia, "The [protestors] that stand outside and say they work in the interests of the poorest people . . . they make me want to vomit. Because the poorest people on our planet, they are the ones that need us the most" (Andrea Hopkins, "Seattle Protestors Make Me Sick, Says Trade Chief," *Independent* [London], February 6, 2001). Three months later, President George W. Bush invoked a similar moral basis for corporate globalization. "Open trade is not just an economic opportunity," Bush declared, "it is a moral imperative. Trade creates jobs for the unemployed. When we negotiate for open markets, we're providing new hope for the world's poor. And when we promote open trade, we are promoting political freedom" (Marc Lacey, "Bush Declares Freer Trade A Moral Issue," *New York Times*, May 8, 2001).

72. See note 7.

73. Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 182.

74. Writing about an earlier era—with the historical context thus somewhat different—Francis Jennings offered a particularly cogent articulation of this notion. "Persons and groups reaching for illicit power customarily assume attitudes of great

moral rectitude to divert attention from the abandonment of their own moral standards of behavior,” he wrote. “Deception of the multitude becomes necessary to sustain power, and deception of others rapidly progresses to deception of self” (Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* [New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975], vii).

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

76. There are a number of good sources on American Indian boarding schools. For several recent scholarly accounts drawing extensively on the experiences of students, see Brenda Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light*; and Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School*. For an examination of assimilation as US federal policy, including the employment of education in its furtherance, see Adams, *Education for Extinction*; and Hoxie, *A Final Promise*.

77. Pound quoted in Marsh, “Thaddeus Coleman Pound’s ‘Newspaper Scrapbook,’” 173. The same quote appears, with slight grammatical differences, in de Rachewiltz, “T. C. P.’s Heritage,” 2.

78. For more on Ezra Pound and Italian imperialism in Africa, see Tim Redman, *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).