Journal of American Studies, 33 (1999), 2, 323–341. Printed in the United Kingdom
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Nineteenth-Century Indian Education: Universalism Versus Evolutionism

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From long experience and wide observation I have come to have little patience with the science of ethnology that consigns a man, or race of men, to generations of slow development.
Richard Henry Pratt, *Proceedings of the National Education Association*, 1895, 763

These people, who are with us and with whom we share a common fate, are a thousand years behind us in moral and mental development. Substantially the two races, {Negro and Indian} are in the same condition, and the question as to what education is best for them, and how such education is to be put within their reach, is pressing itself closely upon all thinking men and women.
Samuel Chapman Armstrong, *Proceedings of the Department of Superintendence*, *Circulars of Information*, No. 3, Bureau of Education, 1883, 139.

In the final two decades of the nineteenth century, Americans built an extensive system of Indian schools, largely financed by Congress and increasingly controlled from Washington. These schools were principally residential, boarding institutions. Their goal was to indoctrinate Indian children in white ways: to eradicate native tribal cultures. This campaign to transform native children into American citizens appeared to represent a clear declaration of faith in the equality and educability of the Indian. Today, its aggressive and misguided nature is recognized and the long-term consequences for all the tribes are beginning to be understood.[1] But, while scholars acknowledge the blinkered ethnocentricism of Indian policy, they have not questioned that its goal was rapid Indian assimilation. Historians argue over the impact of pseudo-scientific racist

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[1] Joel Spring, *The Cultural Transformation of a native American Family, 1763–1995* (Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996); for Canada see J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002187589900612X Published online by Cambridge University Press

ideas on the formulation of Indian policy; disagreements focus on the pre-Civil War period and the early twentieth century.[2] However, it is generally accepted that, in the late nineteenth century, Indian affairs were dominated by a group of Christian reformers and their universalist, Christian ideals. These self-styled "Friends of the Indian" worked for legislative reforms to bring individual land ownership and citizenship to all adult Indians and schooling to their children. Their reform programme, historians have consistently argued, was driven by a single overriding assumption: Indians, once having discarded their savage lifestyle, were capable of joining American society as the white man's equal.[3]

There is a plausible but misleading argument that up to the turn of the century reformers were whole-heartedly assimilationist. According to this view, after 1900 the reformers' universalist ideology was eclipsed by the rapid ascendance of scientific racism, which threw doubt on the possibility of transforming tribesmen into full American citizens and instead relegated them to the fringes of American society.[4] This hinged interpretation of Indian education, whereby the late nineteenth century is regarded as optimistically assimilationist and the early twentieth as more pessimistic in its judgement of Indian capability, has been incorporated

[2] Reginald Horsman, *Race and manifest Destiny: the Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); Horsman, "Scientific Racism and the American Indian in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *American Quarterly*, **27** (May 1975), 152–168; Francis Paul Prucha, *Indian Policy in the United States: Historical Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), Ch. 12; Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middleton, Conn.: Weslyan University Press). For analyses of racial ideas see, Thomas Gossett, *Race: the History of an Idea in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963 & 1997), esp. Ch. 10; William Scanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Towards Race in America, 1815–1859* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1960).

[3] For the reformers see: Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father*, Vol. II part 6 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865–1900* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976); Robert H. Keller, Jr., *American Protestanism and United States Indian Policy 1869–1882* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Christine Bolt, *American Indian Policy and American Reform*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1987. For schools see: David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Robert Trennert, *The Phoenix Indian School: Forced Assimilation in Arizona, 1891–1935* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Michael C. Coleman, *American Indian Children at School, 1850–1930* (Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 1993).

[4] Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983). Even Prucha, the staunchest advocate of the potency of Christian reform, agrees that in the twentieth century the reformers' influence began to wane – Prucha, "The Decline of the Christian Reformers," Ch. 16 in, *Indian Policy in the United States*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002187589900612X Published online by Cambridge University Press

into recent scholarship of Indian schooling.[5] But, in fact, there was not such a total disjuncture between an assimilationist and arguably optimistic nineteenth century, followed by a racially minded and essentially pessimistic twentieth. The "Friends of the Indian" seemed to share a common vision and to speak with a single voice, but they were not as steadfast in their beliefs as their rhetoric suggests. Despite their upbeat language, they did not all hold the same assumptions about Indian capacity and the place the educated Indian would find in American society. We can see this very clearly by carefully comparing the two schools which pioneered the cause of Indian education: Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, in Virginia, and Carlisle Indian Industrial School, in Pennsylvania. The philosophies and practices of these two schools shared much in common, but the schools also displayed significant disagreements which were vitally important at the time and which continue to animate the issue of cultural difference and assimilation today.

Paradoxically, Hampton and Carlisle first opened their doors to Native Americans just a few years after Custer and the Seventh Cavalry had been wiped out by the combined forces of the Sioux and Cheyenne; a time when schools and Indians were not immediately associated in the public mind. These two institutions welcomed their role as living showcases; they often did speak with the single voice described above. But the archives reveal significant differences in their educational practice and in the presuppositions on which, implicitly or explicitly, the practice was based. What is at issue is a contest between two different sets of ideas and attitudes, both central to western thought, and both powerfully influential on American society and culture. One of these is universalism, which in this context derives from an Enlightenment ideal. It is the Enlightenment claim for universal human capacities that feeds into the familiar egalitarianism of the Constitution.[6] Although this was an eighteenth-century concept, it was still potent in nineteenth-century debate. It is, however, accompanied in the nineteenth century by a distinctively different sets of ideas: those surrounding the concept of evolutionary development and the application of this biological theory to social development.[7]

[5] Clyde Ellis, *To Change them Forever*, *Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School*, *1893–1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

[6] Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment: an evaluation of its assumptions*, *attitudes and values* (London: Penguin, 1990); Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[7] Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought*, *1860–1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); J. D. Y.

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II

The fortunes of Hampton and Carlisle were intimately bound up with their respective founders, Samuel Chapman Armstrong and Richard Henry Pratt. Armstrong, the son of a Hawaian missionary, earned his American citizenship by three years of armed service commanding the Ninth Regiment of United States Colored Troops during the Civil War. Promoted to General at the age of twenty-six, he went on to found the Hampton institute in 1868, to educate the freedmen of the South. Hampton is thus best known as a school for blacks rather than Indians. It was the alma mater of Booker T. Washington, founder of the Tuskegee Institute, who popularized the educational philosophy he learnt at Hampton.[8] The first seventeen Indians arrived at Hampton ten years after its founding. They had been imprisoned war leaders, brought east under the command of a young officer, Captain Pratt, who made himself their self-styled teacher. At Fort Marion, St. Augustine, Florida, he used these warriors to develop a simple set of rules for educating Indians and then elaborated a code which he adhered to tenaciously for the rest of his life.[9] His approach was uncomplicated and upbeat. "Having been the worst, because the most active of their people," if treated properly, Pratt insisted, they "were capable for the same reason of becoming the best." At Fort Marion he removed their chains, appointed Indian guards, and set them to work. With the help of two New England ladies, he organized classes to give them a rudimentary education. Every step Pratt took to "civilize" the prisoners was guided by his belief that they were essentially no different from whites, showing in this the heritage of Enlightenment optimism described above.

After three years, when the War Department released the prisoners, the majority returned home. But Pratt wanted as many as possible to stay in the East, to continue his educational experiment. He sent out an appeal to agricultural colleges. At Hampton, Armstrong was already convinced he had developed a sound programme for schooling the ex-slaves; he agreed

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Peel, ed., *Herbert Spencer on Social Evolution: Selected Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972); George W. Stocking Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1969).

[8] For an excellent study of Washington and the founding of Tuskegee as well as an analysis of his relationship with Armstrong see, Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: the Making of a Black Leader, 1856–1901* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

[9] Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867–1904* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964).

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to take seventeen of Pratt's newly freed prisoners. When Pratt personally took the Indians up the coast by boat from Florida to Virginia, these two army men met for the first time. Over the following year they would talk "much about the future of these young men and the need for them to become Americanized."[10] Both agreed that the best answer to the age-old "Indian problem" lay in education. They quickly judged that Hampton's first Indian pupils were doing well, so Pratt went out West to recruit fifty more boys and girls for Hampton, directly from the reservations.

Hampton was Armstrong's brain-child. But although Pratt lacked the polish and charisma of the General, he was not without ideas and ambitions of his own; he began arguing against the wisdom of educating Indians with blacks and launched a campaign to take over the disused barracks in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, as an Indian school. Pratt's scheme was well timed. Officials in Washington were anxious to find a way to pacify the western tribes which were impeding western settlement and preoccupying the army. Pratt did not find it hard to enlist first the support of Carl Schurz, Secretary of the Interior, then the co-operation of the War Department and Congress. Just one year after the "Indian Program" started at Hampton, he founded the Carlisle Indian School.

The two institutions developed a pattern of schooling rooted in a general view of what was needed to convert wild Indians into American citizens. At both Hampton and Carlisle, work was of the essence. The division of the day into two halves, one for study and the other for practical work, served a triple function: the children learnt their lessons, were taught a trade and simultaneously provided most of the goods and services necessary to run the schools. The manual labour and farming programmes thus served a pedagogical purpose, and also supplied shoes, clothes, bread, cereals, fruit and vegetables as well as meat for the table. Discipline at both Hampton and Carlisle was important, being regarded as the necessary antidote to tribal indigence. The army background of both founders lent a military atmosphere to these schools. Children at Hampton and Carlisle wore uniforms; they marched and drilled; they lined up for inspection; they responded obediently to the bells that ruled and punctuated their daily lives. This regime was considered not only essential to the smooth running of the institutions, but a vital discipline for civilizing young savages.

These were total institutions, geared at every point to eradicating Indianness. Whether the task was to be accomplished in a few years, as

[10] Ibid., 190, 192.

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Pratt believed, or would take the several generations Armstrong thought necessary, their goal was the transformation of a people and it was dramatized in the "before" and "after" photographs the schools issued as propaganda. These carefully doctored pictures were printed in pairs. The first showed dirty, unkempt, slovenly tribesmen, wearing long hair, blankets and mocasins. The second presented the same group, dramatically transformed into scrubbed, brushed, uniformed individuals with short, parted hair, clean pressed clothes, polished boots and open faces.[11] The broad goal of Hampton and Carlisle, depicted in these photographs, was identical. This and their many shared characteristics worked to obscure their vital difference: their racial philosophy.

Hampton and Carlisle were perceived, by Americans concerned with Indian affairs, as twin, flagship institutions and were often referred to in the same breath. They were the "eastern schools," sharing purpose and public profile, with intertwined origins and histories. Their founders at first worked closely together. Their determination to prove the Indian could find a place in American society gave them a common cause and they easily and naturally joined forces against anyone who thought otherwise: criticism of either institution was seen as an attack on the whole campaign to educate Indians.[12] "The problem to me," explained Pratt, "seems not how it is done, but to get it done at all."[13] As public support and Congressional appropriations for Indian education grew, the question of *how* it should be done became more pressing. Gradually the race question, which Pratt claimed was the reason he had left Hampton to found Carlisle, became an issue of contention.

III

At first, Armstrong had been uncertain about mixing the two races at Hampton, believing their strengths and weaknesses were very different. However, he quickly became convinced that their schooling could be conducted at the same institution to the advantage of both. Frequently comparing the needs and capacities of the two races, he openly admired

[11] Lonna M. Malmsheimer, "'Imitation White Man': Images of Transformation at the Carlisle Indian School," *Studies in Visual Communication*, **11**: 4 (Fall 1985), 54–74.

[12] When Colonel Richard Irving Dodge published *Our Wild Indians*, in 1882, arguing for the inherently warrior nature of the Indian, Armstrong suggested they should write a joint rebuttal. Armstrong to Pratt, 10 Feb. 1883, Hampton Institute Archives (hereafter HIA).

[13] Pratt, *Battlefield*, 265.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002187589900612X Published online by Cambridge University Press

certain qualities he attributed to the Indian. He wrote to Pratt about his respect for a particular chief. "White Eagle is a grand man," he confided, "the negro race can produce nothing like his type."[14] It is clear that Armstrong did not share Pratt's belief in universal human capacities, but dwelt instead on the different aptitudes of racial "types."

For Pratt, the concept of racial "types" was anathema. At Carlisle he insisted on a set of principles rooted in a fundamentally different attitude to the Indian. As a young army officer, commanding both black soldiers and Indian scouts, he quickly decided that the apparent differences between the races were the product of environmental factors not innate variance.[15] His reasoning was simple, and its roots lay deep in America's eighteenth-century traditions. Observing how a clutch of wild-turkey eggs, which he carried home and placed under a barnyard hen, hatched and became "in all respects" just as amenable as the best domesticated members of the turkey tribe, he concluded that an analogy could be drawn with the Indian tribes, all of whom needed only "the environment and kind treatment of domestic civilized life to become a very part of it."[16] Although Pratt was not a profoundly religious man, he believed deeply in the "unity of the human race." "When we come to talk of the brotherhood of man, and the fatherhood of God, there is no exception," he informed a meeting in 1906. "We are told that directly and we have got to practise it, and when we practise it, we will meet with success, and the further we get from that, the poorer will be our success."[17] Christian rhetoric thus re-enforces Pratt's universalism, but, as we will see, Armstrong could also appeal to Christian values in support of a very different position.

For Pratt, the situations of Indians and immigrants were comparable: both needed to be absorbed into American society to achieve full participation. He once facetiously informed the eminent Carl Schurz, "You yourself sir, are one of the very best examples of what we ought to do for the Indians... The Indians need the chances of participation you have had and they will just as easily become useful citizens. They can only

[14] Armstrong to Pratt, 5 Nov. 1880, Pratt MSS, Yale University (hereafter Pratt MSS). For a comparison of the teaching of the two races at Hampton see, David Wallace Adams, Education in Hues: Red and Black at Hampton Institute, 1868–1893," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, **76** (Spring 1977), 159–76.

[15] Pratt, *Battlefield*, 24.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Richard Henry Pratt, *The Indian Industrial School: Its Origins, Purposes and Difficulties Surmounted*, Hamilton Library Association, Carlisle, Penn., 1908; Pratt, "Address before the Second Presbyterian Church," September 1906, Pratt MSS.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002187589900612X Published online by Cambridge University Press

reach this prosperous condition through living among our people."[18] Pratt adopted as the Carlisle slogan, "To civilize the Indian place him in the midst of civilization; to keep him civilized make him stay," and worked against everything that marked out the Indian as different or separate. Organizing Carlisle around the assumption that, "The Indian is a man like other men. He has no innate or inherent qualities that condemn him to separation from other men or to generations of slow development,"[19] Pratt fought any suggestion that Americanizing the Indian would be a long and arduous process. He resisted the social evolutionary ideas of his day, insisting, "my deductions are from practical and not theoretical knowledge."[20]

Where Pratt was a universalist, Armstrong was an evolutionist. For him, education was necessary, but it was not sufficient alone:

> The Indians are grown up children; we are a thousand years ahead of them in the line of progress. Progress is measured by development. Education is not development, but is a means of it. Savages have good memories; they acquire but do not comprehend; they devour but do not digest knowledge. They have no conception of mental discipline.[21]

The Indians would have to be guided step by step up the evolutionary ladder, from hunter to herder to farmer. Armstrong was particularly pleased when Hampton was given a grazing farm, for he thought it would give the Indian boys experience in caring for stock. "They will thus be fitted for what is the first step in the civilization of the wild tribes; raising cattle and horses."[22] He did not envisage that the Indian could rapidly become indistinguishable from his white neighbour; quite the reverse. For Armstrong, the process of Indian elevation would be a lengthy one. He remained convinced that the Indian, for "generations at least, and even when absorbed into American life, will need practical and Christian education."[23] And Armstrong, unlike Pratt, did not anticipate the children of his students readily taking up places in American public schools. He hoped to make them hardworking and worthy citizens who would live happy and content near the bottom of the social scale. For Armstrong, it was not exclusion from American society which accounted for the Indians' backward state, but a lack of character and a surfeit of

[18] Pratt, *Battlefield*, 215. Schurz had come to the USA following the failed German revolution of 1848.
[19] Pratt, *The Indian Industrial School*, 42.
[20] *Eadle Keatoh Toh*, August 1883, Pratt MSS.
[21] Samuel Chapman Armstrong, *Indian Education at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute* (Hampton, Va.: George and Nesbitt and Co. Printers, 1881), 4.
[22] *Report of the Principal of Hampton* (hereafter *Report*), 1879, HIA.
[23] Helen Ludlow, *Ten Years Work for Indians, 1878–88*, HIA.

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freedom, resulting from their early stage of development. Hard work, proper training and Christian values would, over time, remedy these deficencies.

IV

Hampton and Carlisle were both pioneers of the new manual or industrial training movement. This shared role sheds light on their different racial philosophies.[24] At both institutions, Indians were taught practical skills and the basics of a trade, but this superficial curricula similarity disguised their divergent educational goals. Pratt regarded manual training as a necessary short-term measure. Writing to Senator Dawes of Massachusetts he argued:

> Education and industrial training for youth, *for all Indian youth* will, in a very short period, end Indian wars and, in a not very long period, end appropriations to feed and clothe them. I don't believe anything else will.[25]

Pratt saw no shame or degradation in manual work. Training in practical skills was part of his vision of how to make the Indian economically self-supporting. "Equal ability can always take care of equal rights," was Pratt's maxim and was fundamental to the work of Carlisle. Manual training was vital, not because it was training commensurate with the Indian's ability, but simply and practically because it would give the Indian a "first start": a means of earning a living in America.[26] But this practical argument about self-sufficiency could also mask a demand for racial separation and discrimination, when it was linked to a philosophy that categorized Indians as inherently inferior.

Although manual training in the United States began as an educational procedure deemed suitable for all children, at Hampton, Armstrong furnished it with a moral and ideological purpose. "Experience," he wrote, "has strengthened my conviction of labor as a moral force." Manual work would, he believed, facilitate the Indians' (as well as the "negro's") rise to civilization. "The idea of work is not in their brains or blood," he wrote in 1879, shortly after the first Indians arrived at Hampton, "they don't see the point of it or its relation to life."[27] Determined that the Hampton Institute could combat this situation,

[24] For a good profile of this movement, see Marvin Lazerson and W. Norton Grubb, *American Education and Vocationalism: A Documentary History, 1870–1970* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1974).

[25] Richard Henry Pratt to Senator Daves, 7 April 1880, in Pratt, *Battlefield*, 62.

[26] Richard Henry Pratt, *American Indian Chained and Unchained, being an address before the Pennsylvania Commandery*, 23 Oct. 1912, 16.

[27] *Report*, 1888; *Report*, 1879, HIA.

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Armstrong delighted in quoting the words of Secretary of the Interior, Henry Teller:

> The Indian question will never be settled until you make the Indian blister his hands. No people ever emerged from barbarism that did not emerge through labor.[28]

Armstrong made Hampton the first model for the manual training of blacks, then Indians. As a result, manual training rapidly became associated with schooling for second-class citizenship. For Armstrong, this was the foundation of a carefully thought-out educational programme.

A deeply religious man, Armstrong had grown up as the son of a missionary, in Hawaii, and his firm views about the education of the non-white races were strongly influenced by this experience. His reflections on the history of Hawaii hold the key to much of his subsequent racial thinking:

> It meant something to the Hampton school, and perhaps to the ex-slaves of America, that from 1820–1860, the distinctively missionary period, there was worked out in the Hawaiian Islands, the problems of emancipation, enfranchisement and Christian civilization of a dark-skinned Polynesian people in many respects like the Negro race.[29]

On the island there had been two schools. In one, "mathematics and the higher branches were taught," in the other, Armstrong remembered, a more practical curriculum was followed. He judged that the second approach had turned out "less brilliant but more solid men," able both to build their own home and earn a living.[30] For Armstrong, the problems of emancipation, enfranchisement and Christian civilization went together, but for him a gradual development must precede the integrated "brotherhood" championed by Pratt.

Concerned that Carlisle's programme offered only a rudimentary education, Pratt always strongly supported any Indian student who was keen to continue his or her education amongst whites. He wanted no limits placed on Carlisle students' educational prospects, so "every means was used to forward pupils into our general school system."[31] For him, Carlisle and similar schools were only a temporary measure to educate the last generation of Indian children. After that, Indians, just like immigrants, would enter the mainstream of American life. Armstrong, however, was

[28] Edith Armstrong Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong* (New York: Doubleday, 1904), 214.

[29] Samuel Chapman Armstrong, *Twenty-Two Years Work for the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute* (Hampton Press, 1891), 1–6.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Pratt, *American Indians Chained*, 13.

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more worried that the academic syllabus at Hampton might embrace too much, rather than offer too little. Working on the assumption that the "despised races" were suffering not only from ignorance but also, more importantly, from "deficient character," he was constantly vigilant lest the training of the mind should outstrip the training of the heart. Armstrong insisted that "over education and lack of personal training are dangers with the weaker races," and discouraged Hampton students from continuing their education, urging them instead to return to their own people.[32] He was convinced that they would be unable to compete with whites in the intellectual field because "a well balanced mind is attained only after generations of improvement."[33]

The differences between Hampton and Carlisle gradually became undeniable and problematic. "Schools can be made the most powerful instruments to continue the Indians and Indian tribes, or they can be made the most powerful instruments to speedily break up tribal slavery and bring about the freedom and American citizenship of the individual Indian," Pratt told a meeting of Protestant ministers in 1891; his words reflect his concern that the Indian schools did not all appear to be operating with the same ideological assumptions.[34] Having committed Carlisle to a policy of rapid assimilation in the belief that Indians could take their place as equals in American society, he wanted Americans to have living proof that this was indeed possible and Indians to have "the same opportunities and training … that the other youth of the national family enjoy."[35] Pratt wanted to bring Indians into direct competition with Americans and show they could win. This was his major motivation for creating the famous Carlisle football team. When he agreed to the students' request for a team, he made two conditions: firstly, that the Indians would "never under any circumstances, slug," for then people would say "they are savages and you can't get it out of them"; secondly, that in the course of three or four years they would "whip the biggest football team in the country."[36] He was demanding that the Indians quite literally, beat the Americans at their own game. Having committed himself to building a Carlisle team, he made sure that the school employed a reputable coach, so his two conditions were eventually fulfilled and the Carlisle team became nationally known. In every field and at every level Pratt wanted Indians to compete with whites, and win. It is perhaps no

[32] *Southern Workman*, October 1881.
[33] Samuel Chapman Armstrong, *Indian Education*, 4.
[34] Pratt, "Address to a Meeting of Protestant Ministers in Baltimore," 1891, Pratt MSS.
[35] Pratt, *The Indian Industrial School*, 6.
[36] Pratt, *Battlefield*, 318.

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surprise that the American Olympic gold medalist, Jim Thorpe, was a product of Carlisle. Pratt was utterly opposed to what he called "race schools." In his terms they were certain to fail "through ignoring the individual as a unit and binding him in masses to race destiny."[37]

"Race destiny", however, was inevitable in Armstrong's gradualist, evolutionary approach. There could be no short-cut to Americanization in the manner that Pratt suggested. Armstrong disagreed with Pratt's insistence that "Indian graduates should be encouraged to settle among white people, with whom Indians must eventually live if they are to remain upon the face of the earth."[38] The tribesmen would not rapidly be absorbed into mainstream America, so Hampton's principle task was to train an Indian leadership. "Let us … choose the best youth who offer," suggested Armstrong, "and send them back (for they will go) to help lift up their people."[39] Armstrong's metaphor is significant; the Indians could not escape their painful progress "up" the ladder of development. His conviction that this process of advancement could only be a slow one, and that total assimilation was not imminent, caused him to nurture the Indian's racial identity and organize the schooling programme of Hampton to accommodate it.[40]

V

In terms of assimilation, then, Pratt seems more "tolerant" (as we might put it) than Armstrong; but in their attitudes to tribal cultures the position is reversed. Pratt's "brotherhood of man," in its universalism, was not receptive to difference. "There must be no holding onto Indianism in this transformation" he insisted. He described ethnologists as "the most insidious and active enemies of Carlisle's purpose" and all reference to Indian cultures was barred from the Carlisle syllabus.[41] In his early years as Indian jailor at Fort Marion, he had encouraged his charges to make and sell drawings based on memories of their past life, but he rapidly came to view all reference to tribal traditions as antithetical to the civilizing process. Armstrong, believing as he did in gradual development, included a section entitled "Folklore" in Hampton's Indian publication, *Talks and Thoughts*. Here, pupils were encouraged to write about their different tribal traditions. He also encouraged his Indian students to

[37] Pratt, *American Indians Chained*, 4.
[38] *Proceedings of the National Education Association*, 1884, 40.
[39] *Report*, 1887, HIA.
[40] Donal F. Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton, 1877–1923* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995).
[41] Pratt, *Battlefield*, 271.

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practise and improve their native arts and sell their work to white visitors. "The Indian has the only American art," Armstrong reflected, "I believe it to be a duty to preserve, and in a wise and natural way to develop [it]."[42]

Armstrong's attitude to the reservation was consistent with his view of tribal culture. Properly managed, its segregated environment would, he suggested, "afford the best conditions to prepare the red race for citizenship." He built a "model reservation" at Hampton, where neat little cottages and monogamous Indian couples provided an example of how Indians could and should live.[43] By giving them practice at reservation living in ideal conditions, the staff at Hampton were attempting to make their students resistant to the "retrograde forces" they would experience when they returned home. "The crucial test of our work," declared Armstrong, shortly before the first Indians graduated, "will be on their return to their people, where the surrounding current of influences will be as adverse as it has been favorable here."[44] Pratt, predictably, was highly critical of reservations and encouraged his pupils not to return. This was unrealistic, but quite consistent with his hostility to any form of Indian segregation and his universalist philosophy.

VI

Armstrong and Pratt made no secret of their different racial philosophies and openly voiced their disagreements. In 1884, when four, new, Indian off-reservation schools were opened (bringing the total to six), Indian education gained national prominence and the National Education Association organized its first-ever special session on the subject. A decade later, the issues raised by attempts to include Indians in the U.S. population would be discussed alongside the schooling of blacks and immigrants. But already, in 1884, the schools' links to a broad American purpose were acknowledged by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs; he commended their work for having "reached the outside world or 'become as a city set upon a hill.'" These schools, he insisted, had helped create and nurture the public sentiment which was allowing the work of Indian education to expand so the Indian could find his place within American society. When Armstrong strode onto the platform, however, he was quick to disavow this connection between his school and Carlisle. "There are two views of the course to be pursued by Indians educated away from the reservation," Armstrong apprised participants, "one being represented by the Carlisle and the other by the Hampton School."

[42] *Report*, 1879, HIA. [43] *Report*, 1888, HIA. [44] *Report*, 1888, HIA.

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Armstrong's ideas were greeted with enthusiasm; many "Friends of the Indian" were open in their support.[45]

Doubts about the Carlisle view of rapid assimilation always surfaced whenever there was a major set-back in the Indian's perceived progress. In 1890, on reservations across the West, tribe after tribe was hit by an atavistic movement that looked to the resurgence of Indian people and a return of the buffalo. Hopeless and starving Indians listened to the prophesies of an Indian Messiah and danced for days at a time in a vain attempt to assist this revival, while Americans looked on aghast. Delegates at the Lake Mohonk Conference, meeting some months after the Ghost Dance movement had led to the tragic massacre at Wounded Knee, were chilled by what they interpreted as a sign of the yawning and impassable gulf between Indians and Americans: savagery and civilization. Merrill Gates, President of both Lake Mohonk and Amherst College, offered a judgement which no one present disputed:

> I believe that the Dakota disaster shows that we shall not need to have taught us again the lesson of the difference between savagery and civilization. As we watched the progress of the disasters that began these disorders, as the reports of eye-witnesses came to us… we saw that for one brought up in the atmosphere of Christian civilization to enter the consciousness of the savage at such a time is almost as impossible as it is for us to get behind the great, blue limpid eyes of the ox as he chews his cud in the pasture, and know how the world looks to him.[46]

All trace of belief in a universal family of man is absent here. When confronted with an unacceptable aspect of native culture, the "Friends of the Indian" could only understand it by emphasizing the yawning gap between themselves and Indians and by relegating the latter to a position closer to beast than man. At moments like this, few quarrelled with Armstrong's judgement of the generations needed to elevate Indians.

Carlisle became the biggest and most celebrated of the Indian schools and Pratt probably the most renowned Indian educator, but the larger story was quite different. The racial philosophy of Hampton slowly gained ground, and it was not Carlisle but the Hampton Institute which was to leave its indelible imprint on the Indian school system of the twentieth century. By 1899, it was clear Pratt was out of step. He felt alienated from other Indian educators and so no longer attended their annual school conventions. He wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs informing him, "I am tired of contending with my brother superintendents of the

[45] *Proceedings of the Superintendence of the NEA*, "Circulars of Information of the Bureau of Education," No. 4, 1884, 312, 301.
[46] *Proceedings of the Lake Mohonk Conference*, 1891, 8.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002187589900612X Published online by Cambridge University Press

agency and the other non-reservation schools near the Indians. They have opposing views and purposes in part begotten of their environment and which I think are encouraged from your office, and they are largely banded against Carlisle. There are so many of them and so few of me that they carry the day."[47] Pratt found his work at Carlisle increasingly marginalized. His constant attacks on the Indian school system and his superiors eventually led to his forced retirement in 1904. But he went down fighting; until his dying day, aged 83, he continued, undisturbed by self-doubt, to make speeches and write letters advocating his own uncompromising ideas about Indian education.

Carlisle, the monument to his life's work, was more mutable than its founder. Changes in the curriculum and the ethos of the school crept in imperceptably, but, when Angel de Cora was appointed in 1906, it was clear that this was no longer Pratt's institution. De Cora was part Winnebago and part French and a graduate of Hampton. After leaving Hampton, she had studied art at Smith College and Drexel Institute. When invited to Carlisle, she made a condition of her appointment that she would not "be expected to teach in the white man's way, but shall be given complete liberty to develop the art of my own race." For decades, Carlisle pupils had been taught the formal rules of western painting and drawing. De Cora confessed that "when I first introduced the subject – Indian Art – to the Carlisle students, I experienced the discouraging sensation that I was addressing members of an alien race."[48] De Cora, like many prominent Indian intellectuals of the time, did not subscribe to a universalist doctrine.[49] Her nine years work as a teacher at Carlisle was just one among many clear signs of the demise of Pratt's ideas.

Hampton, too, was not without its critics and enemies. Censure focused on the poor health of the children, Hampton's distance from the reservations and, habitually, the biracial make-up of its pupils. After Armstrong's stroke in 1891 and premature death two years later, the "Indian Program" at Hampton lacked the sense of purpose which his magnetic personality had always lent it. But, for many at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Hampton had become the prime, model institution. An indication of this came when its curriculum was used as the foundation for the *Course of Study for Indian Schools* which was drawn up by the

[47] Pratt, *Battlefield*, 291.
[48] Linda F. Witmer, *The Indian Industrial School, Carlisle Pennsylvania, 1879–1918* (Carlisle, Pa.: Cumberland County Historical Society, 1993), 78.
[49] Hazel Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements* (Syracuse University Press, 1971), 61–62.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002187589900612X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Superintendent of Indian Schools, Estelle Reel, and published for the first time in 1901.[50]

This new course of study, which was sent to all Indian schools, was committed to teaching the Indian to achieve "a knowledge of the English language" and "the ability to become self-supporting as speedily as possible."[51] These were broad and familiar goals on which all Indian educators could agree. But Estelle Reel had gone further; she planned to introduce a common curriculum, based on the racial ideas and educational philosophy of Hampton. "I shall appreciate your opinion more than I can say," she wrote to Hollis Burke Frissell, Armstrong's successor, when sending him a draft copy, "as most of the ideas embodied in the *Course* were obtained from Hampton."[52] Not only did Reel reiterate Armstrong's firm belief that the needs of the young Indian were not the same as those of the white child, she openly endorsed the philosophy of Hampton. "The teacher of Indian children," she explained, "must have a general understanding and thorough sympathy with the peculiar circumstances of Indian life, using the articles of the Hampton creed and making her school a school of labor, of love, of life."[53]

This new course of study was not geared to launch the Indian into competition and integration with Americans, but rather to help him live an independent life among his own people. In his lessons, therefore, he would be taught "the history of his forefathers," so that he could continue to identify with his own race. The Indian's awareness of his own position on the scale of civilization and his need to advance would be stimulated by the teachers' endeavours "to arouse in the pupils an interest in the upward struggles of their people in the past, and a determination to do their part towards the progress of their race in the future." Reel was thus openly endorsing Armstrong's social evolutionary ideas and the need for separate racial destinies.[54] The publication of the *Course of Study for Indian Schools* marked not only the pedagogical unification of the Indian School system, but also the practical conclusion of the covert debate about Indian capability. The programmes of both the pioneer, eastern boarding schools had contributed to this new course of study, but the universalism of Pratt and Carlisle were absent; it was the evolutionary philosophy of Armstrong and Hampton which had triumphed.

[50] Estelle Reel, *Course of Study for Indian Schools of the United States* (Washington D.C.: G.P.O., 1901). [51] Ibid., 5. [52] Reel to Frissell, 20 Nov. 1901, HIA.
[53] Reel, *Course*, 210. [54] Ibid., 143–44, 6.

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VII

Delegates at the Seventh Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian cheered Commissioner Thomas Jefferson Morgan, in 1889, when he presented his plans for a government system of Indian schools which would "enable [Indians] to compete successfully with the white man on his own ground." Indian reformers' commitment to Indian education meant they readily supported this systematizing of the schools. To everyone present, it also seemed right and proper that Carlisle and Hampton should stand at the top of the system; the eastern schools' shared history meant reformers invariably yoked them together (a pattern which has been repeated by historians). Yet our comparison of Carlisle and Hampton reveals these were not twin institutions: their founders were operating with quite different sets of presuppositions. Late nineteenth-century discourse of Indian reform was not unified, but rather split into opposed positions, which were embodied in the two pioneer schools. At Carlisle, Pratt's universalist rhetoric was informed by egalitarian ideals, rooted in the Enlightenment; at Hampton, Armstrong's racial evolutionist discourse cast doubt on Indian potential for equal citizenship, and communicated a deep and long-standing conviction in the race's inborn inferiority. The two schools were engaged in a covert debate about the Indian's ascribed place in American society. Hampton's prominent pioneering role in Indian education confirms that evolutionism did not abruptly replace assimilationist doctrines at the turn of the century: it informed discussion of Indian schooling from the start.

Discussion of Indian schooling amongst whites never heeded or included the Indian voice. As we have seen, schemes to embrace Indians within United States society were framed by white concepts and offered on white terms. Indians were to be co-opted into American society, just as their children had been co-opted into white schools. In this, their situation was unlike that of any other group. When African Americans and immigrant groups actively contested the definition of citizenship and processes of Americanization projected on them by school programmes, they did so from *within* American society. Indians were economic and political outsiders, being neither workers nor for the most part (until 1924) citizens. They had not chosen the United States; it had engulfed them. Divided by over 500 tribal affiliations, when they resolved to resist or contest American school programmes their actions were invariably local and tribal; their voices were inaudible beyond the boundaries of their separate reservations.

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The tribal foundation of Indian societies had been ridden over by boarding-schools like Carlisle and Hampton.[55] Here, Lakota children mixed with Apache, Cheyenne marched with Comanche, Kiowa studied beside Shawnee. In the process, the tribal identity of some was realigned.[56] By the early twentieth century, boarding-school attendance had become a shared component of Indian experience. Although the majority of pupils returned to their reservations, the schools had created a group of English speaking Indians whose identity was no longer exclusively tribal. Many were keen to define a new place for the Indian within the society of the United States. In 1911, they joined forces to found a national organization: the Society of the American Indian. Perhaps unsurprisingly, eleven of the eighteen founder members had connections with Hampton and Carlisle. So, too, did the majority of delegates at the Society's first conference, where the most striking feature was that almost all discussion revolved around the fundamental question which had exercised Pratt and Armstrong: the inherent equality or inequality of races.[57] Neither Pratt nor Armstrong could have endorsed the conference agenda or its resolutions, but both clearly exhibited the influence of the two men:

> The thinking Indian, therefore, asks that he be treated as an *American* and that a just opportunity be given whereby the race as a whole may develop and demonstrate its capacity for enlightenment and progress … as an American people in America.[58]

Armstrong would have scoffed at the idea of "the thinking Indian"; Pratt would have blanched at the rejection of universalism. But, nevertheless, here the American identity advocated by Pratt is bonded to the racial identity upheld by Armstrong. Four years before Horace Kallen made his classic case for cultural pluralism, the Society of the American Indian was making a similar demand: assimilation without loss of Indian identity.[59]

Neither of the eastern Indian schools survived: the last Indian left Hampton in 1923, after Congress stopped funding the "Indian Program"; the Indian School ceased to exist when the American military repossessed the Carlisle barracks, at the start of World War I. Hampton and Carlisle

[55] The reservation policy had succeeded in breaking many of the traditional links between tribes.

[56] In K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light: the Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1994), we are shown how boarding school, particularly for younger children, could also intensify tribal identity.

[57] Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity*, 31–78.

[58] *First Proceedings of the Society of the American Indian*, 3–5, quoted in Hertzberg, 78.

[59] Horace M. Kallen, "Democracy versus the Melting Pot," *The Nation* (Feb. 18 & 25, 1915).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002187589900612X Published online by Cambridge University Press

had served their pioneer purpose. However, their legacy lived on, in the network of Indian schools, and in the thousands of students whose experience and definition of what it meant to be Indian had been transformed for ever. The dialogue between their different attitudes towards becoming Indian also survives them.

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