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**Compromising and Accommodating Dominant Gendered
Ideologies: The Effectiveness of Using Nineteenth-century Indian
Boarding school Autobiographies as Tools of Protest**

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Abstract

Gendered ideals dominant in nineteenth-century America have been significantly different from gendered ideals in Native American communities. In using their Indian boarding school autobiographies as tools of protest, these Native writers had to compromise and accommodate these gendered ideals dominant in American society. This thesis analyzes how Zitkála-Šá, Luther Standing Bear and Charles Eastman have used the gendered ideals concerning the public and domestic sphere, emotion and reason in writing, and ideas about individuality and analyzes how this has affected the effectiveness of using their autobiographies as tools of protest for their people.

Keywords

Indian boarding school autobiographies, gendered ideologies, Zitkála-Šá, Luther Standing Bear, Charles Eastman, tools of protest.

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Introduction

1.1 Gender, Autobiography, and Native American Protest

In the struggle with dominant American society, Native American boarding school autobiographies have played an early and significant part in Native American protest culture. The first boarding schools autobiographies were written during the late nineteenth century when the American federal government funded Native American boarding schools. These schools were often far removed from the tribes' homelands and Native American students were stripped of their Native American identity and forced to adapt and assimilate into the dominant American culture.¹ The autobiographies of former students were a direct reaction to this violent assimilation process.

Traditionally seen as a form of self-expression and a celebration of individualism, autobiography functions and is motivated differently within oppressed minority groups. The motivation for members of an oppressed group to write an autobiography is to create an alternative self which counteracts the imposed and inferior image of the self that exists within dominant society.² In doing so, autobiographies by writers from minority groups do not solely function as an individual triumph of the self, but as historian Craig Werner stated, aim "to write themselves into being and their community into freedom."³ This is why autobiography has been an important tool of activism for oppressed minority groups.

However, in order to become an authorized voice within dominant society, writers from oppressed minority groups are constrained by thematic and narrative conventions created within dominant society. This means that these writers have to alter their autobiography in terms of language, style, and format, in order to become accepted by dominant society.⁴ Racial, class, and religious ideals that are prevalent in dominant society have created a constraining framework which determines the way in which the writers outside dominant society can write their autobiographies.

¹ Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Kearney: University of Nebraska Press, 2001): 3.

² Susan Stanford Friedman, "Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice" in *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998): 76.

³ Craig Werner, "On the Ends of Afro-American 'Modernist' Autobiography." *Black American Literature Forum* 24 (1990): 204.

⁴ Caren Kaplan, "Resisting Autobiography: Outlaw-Genres and Transnational Feminist Subjects," in *De/Colonizing the Subject* eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992): 120.

Gendered ideals prevalent in dominant society constitute another important constraining factor for autobiographical writers of minority groups. Academic attention has been paid to how ideals of femininity and masculinity within dominant American society can be traced back into the autobiographical slave narratives. Gendered ideals of family and the home, sentimentalism and reason, and individuality and community that have been present within nineteenth-century American society, have been reflected within these male and female autobiographical works, showing that gender has been an important component in the ways oppressed minority groups write their life stories and use them as tools of activism.⁵

However, no academic attention has been given to the role gendered ideals of dominant American society have played in Native American autobiographies which, like the slave narratives for the black freedom struggle, have functioned as an important tool of activism during the nineteenth century. In order to gain a better understanding of the opportunities and constraints on how Native Americans in the nineteenth-century could write and use their autobiography as a tool of activism, the role and constraints of the construction of gender in dominant white American culture in the early writings of former Indian Boarding school members will be investigated in this thesis.

Zitkála-Šá, a member of the Dakota tribe, has been one of the most prominent Native American writers who used her Indian boarding school autobiography called *American Indian Stories* (1921) as a tool of activism in the late nineteenth century. Her traumatic experience as a student at the Quaker Missionary School for Indians in Indiana formed her as an activist for Native rights. During her lifetime, Zitkála-Šá was active on behalf of improved education, healthcare, resource conservation, and cultural preservation and the investigation of the government's treatment and abuse of Native Americans.⁶ She was well aware that language and writing could be a very powerful tool of activism. Her poetic and sentimental style of writing reached a wide (female) white audience and was well received.

Luther Standing Bear, who like Zitkála-Šá was part of the Dakota tribe, has been another prominent activist of Native American rights during the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Through his career as an actor in Wild West shows and Hollywood productions, Luther Standing Bear came to understand that the portrayals of Native Americans were not meant to be representations of Native American cultures but were

⁵ Nellie Y. McKay, "The Narrative Self: Race, Politics and Culture in Black American Women's Autobiography," in *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998): 97.

⁶ Roseanne Hoefel, "Zitkála-Šá: A Biography." The Online Archive of Nineteenth-Century U.S. Women's Writings. ed. Glynis Carr, Online. Internet, Posted, Winter 1999.

reflections of white Americans' ideas on how Native Americans acted and what their place was in American history.⁷ His Indian boarding school autobiography *My People the Sioux* (1928), was an attempt to challenge this perception of Native American culture. He dared to write about events in history from a Native American perspective in order to change the already existing perceptions of savage, cruel and uneducated Native Americans.⁸ His autobiographies were tools of activism that had to show how the mistreatment of Native Americans by American society.

Another male writer who used his autobiography to protest the position of his people was Charles Eastman, who is also known by his Native name Ohiseya. As a Santee Sioux, Eastman had to deal with the different lifestyle that was assigned to him after his education at an Indian boarding school. Eastman describes his experience from his Native childhood to his work as the first Native physician at a Native American reservation in his autobiography *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* (1916). Often criticized for being too assimilated to speak for the Native American community, Eastman has used his autobiography as a tool of protest to better the position of his people.

Gender roles within different Native American tribes and bands have not been well documented, but it is known that Native Americans viewed men and women's position differently than that was prevalent in American society.⁹ After all, Native American tribes are often gynocratic, which means that women occupy high administrative positions within their tribe or band.¹⁰ This does not mean that men's positions are inferior to women's positions. Instead, there is a social order marked by equality and cooperation.¹¹ Writers of Indian boarding school autobiographies, such as Zitkála-Šá and Luther Standing Bear, and Charles Eastman had to work with the differences between the gendered ideals of their Native American culture and the general American target audience.

1.2 Thesis Question and Methodology

In order to understand the role and constraints of the gendered constructions of American society in the way Zitkála-Šá, Luther Standing Bear, and Charles Eastman have used their autobiographical writings as tools of activism, the question that will be asked in this thesis is: *In what ways have the gendered ideals prevalent in the late nineteenth-century U.S. society*

⁷ Ryan E. Burt, " 'Sioux Yells' in the Dawes era: Lakota 'Indian Play,' the Wild West and the Literatures of Luther Standing Bear," *American Quarterly* 62 (2010): 617.

⁸ Ibidem: 633.

⁹ Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986): 211.

¹⁰ Ibidem: 207.

¹¹ Ibidem: 14.

concerning the public and domestic sphere, emotion and reason in writing, and ideas about individuality, been reflected in Zitkála-Šá's, Luther Standing Bear's, and Charles Eastman's autobiographical works, and what role did these gendered ideals play in terms of the effectiveness of using the autobiographies as tools of protest?

This thesis will bring something new to the study of Native American autobiography by linking these specific case-studies, which are a significant examples of Native American literary protest culture, to gendered ideologies in nineteenth-century apparent in the U.S., the influence that dominant American gendered ideas have played in the authors' ability to use their autobiographies as tools for activism will become clear. The theories from both perspectives will be used to analyze the influence of gendered ideas prevalent in U.S society on the possibilities and constraints of using their autobiographies to protest the inferior position of Native Americans in the U.S.

The thesis will analyze what role gender has in the use of Indian boarding school autobiographies as tools of activism by looking at the concepts of family, emotion in writing, and ideas about individuality and community. Although there are other concepts that could be used to analyze the role of gender and its role in the autobiographies of Native American students at the Indian boarding schools, these particular concepts have been chosen because they are present in other literary protest movements in nineteenth-century America, such as the African American literary movement. This thesis will only focus on these three particular gendered ideals. In order to get a broader answer to the main question, further research is needed on other gendered ideas prevalent ideas in U.S society, such as marriage, sexuality, and education. Though this thesis will solely focus on gender, it goes without saying that the possibilities and restrictions of Native American writers has not only been affected by gender. In order to get a broader idea about agency and the Native American literary protest culture, there is more research needed on ideas of class, race, and religion. Such research, however, would go beyond the scope of this thesis.

Additionally, these autobiographies are not representative of the entire Native American literary protest culture, but this thesis will compare and contrast the autobiographies of Zitkála-Šá, Luther Standing Bear, and Charles Eastman to show a shared and partly overlapping pattern of the influence of gendered ideas from the dominant U.S. society in using their autobiographies as tools of activism. This thesis does not give an overview of the Native American literary protest culture and the influence of gender. Instead, the goal is to uncover the degree to which the three authors' possibilities have been affected by gendered ideas in U.S. society. The thesis focuses on these three authors, because they all wrote their

autobiographies in the second half of the 19th century, and were all part of the violent assimilation process in the Indian boarding schools which was a key moment in Native American literary protest culture. Although the three autobiographies have various approaches to the subject, they all protest against the treatment of Native Americans in the nineteenth-century in America.

The three autobiographies of these Indian boarding school students are historical documents of a key moment in the Native American literary protest culture because they were one of the first authors that used the English language as a tool for activism, without the help of a translator. The three authors speak from their different tribal and boarding school experiences. Yet, they make a claim for the entire Native American community and the federal government's policies. These early autobiographies are important in understanding the Native American literary protest movement and the relationship with the dominant American culture in the present. The fact that Luther Standing Bear and Charles Eastman write from a male and Zitkála-Šá from a female perspective gives the chance to compare the female and male gender roles that were ascribed to them and how this influenced the theme and tones of the autobiographies.

This thesis is embedded in the studies of Native American literary protest culture, gender, and autobiography. The aims of this research are to give insight in an important part of the Native American literary protest culture, namely autobiographies, and the way gendered ideas prevalent in U.S society have influenced the ways in which their authors could use their writings in English as tools of activism. This thesis will implicitly argue for the use of autobiographies as historical documents as it shows how autobiographies can reveal the cultural and social structures which determined how Native Americans, and other minority groups for that matter, could use their autobiographies as tools for activism.

1.3 Chapter Outline

This research is divided into four chapters that will help to answer the main question. The first two chapters are more theoretical which will lay ground for the analysis of the three Indian boarding school autobiographies. The first chapter will be a study on the ideological function of American autobiography and how this has shaped the forms and themes that are conventional in the genre of autobiography. The chapter will further look into the way Native Americans have transformed this genre to use it as a tool for activism.

The second chapter will look at how gendered ideals of nineteenth-century America influenced the literary framework which determined the form and content of male and female autobiography in that time period. In order to do so, this chapter will discuss the three

gendered ideals of the domestic and the public sphere, sentimentalism and reason, and individualism and community. By outlining these gendered ideals and its implications in nineteenth-century American society, this chapter will provide an understanding of the possibilities and restrictions for Native American authors to use Indian boarding school autobiographies as tools of activism.

The third chapter will combine the findings of the first and second chapter together and see how this works in practice in Zitkála-Šá's *American Indian Stories*. The analysis will look at how the gendered ideals that are discussed in chapter 2, are reflected within Zitkála-Šá's autobiography and how this operates within the autobiography's possibility to function as a tool of protest. The same method will be followed in chapter four, which will focus on the male Native American boarding school autobiographies of Luther Standing Bear and Charles Eastman. It will be interesting to compare the two analyses in terms of gendered ideals used. Together, as will be shown in the concluding chapter, these four chapters will answer the question of how these gendered ideals in U.S society have been reflected within the autobiographical works of these three prominent Native writers and what role these gendered ideals play in terms of the effectiveness of using the autobiographies as tools of protest.

Chapter 1: The Ideals and Function of American Autobiography

As the Latin word *auto*, which translates as the English word for self, already implies, the literary genre of autobiography is a celebration of the self in writing. After all, the genre of autobiography is a product of the age of enlightenment. In this time period, subjects were seen as free agents, who exercised self-determination over meaning, personal destiny, and desire.¹² Autobiographies have often been read as narratives of agency, in which authors tell of their individual destinies and express their true selves.¹³

The genre of autobiography has been of great importance in American society. According to American literary scholar Rachael McLennan, the concern with identity in autobiography has an important place in the American culture, which cherishes individualism and which is pre-occupied with identity formation.¹⁴ American literary critic Jay Parini adds: “Autobiography could easily be called the essential American genre, a form of writing closely allied to our national self-consciousness.”¹⁵ However, McLennan also states that by viewing the genre only within its conventional form and function, the autobiographies of minority groups and their function have been overlooked.¹⁶

This chapter will look into the genre of autobiography and its underlying ideologies and functions as a literary form in American society. This chapter will not limit itself to looking at the historical and conventional function of the genre of autobiography in dominant American society. In addition, it will look at how the genre of autobiography has been transformed into a tool of protest by minority groups, in this case, Native Americans, in fighting their minority position in dominant American society. This chapter will delve deeper into the reason why the genre of autobiography has been chosen as a tool of activism for Native Americans and how they used their personal accounts in order to protest the subordinate position of the greater Native American community in American society.

1.1 Ideologies and Form in Autobiography

French philosopher George Gusdorf, often referred to as the founder of autobiography studies, wrote in his essay “Conditions and Limits of Autobiography” that autobiography is a product of the ideology of individualism that blossomed in the nineteenth century. He argues that

¹² Sidonie Smith, *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1993): 8.

¹³ Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010): 54.

¹⁴ Rachael McLennan, *American Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2013): 28.

¹⁵ Jay Parini, *The Norton Book of American Autobiography* (London: W.W Norton, 1999): 11.

¹⁶ McLennan: 32.

individualism is one of the preconditions in the writing of autobiographies and that the writer must be an island unto himself before autobiography is possible.¹⁷ “Autobiography is not possible in a cultural landscape where the consciousness of self does not properly speaking exist.”¹⁸ Gusdorf believes that autobiography cannot exist within cultures where an individual “does not oppose himself to all others and where he does not feel himself to exist outside of others.”¹⁹ The creation of selfhood separated from others is according to Gusdorf a necessity in autobiography.

This idea of a unique and independent self that has been translated into the literary form of autobiography, is congruent with the political ideal of democracy.²⁰ The genre of autobiography, therefore, thrives in cultures where this political ideal has been prominently present. In the eighteenth century when the U.S. gained its independence and based its political foundation on the system of democracy, the genre of autobiography became important in reflecting the political ideals of individualism and democracy and reinforcing a national identity in the newly found nation of the U.S. The complementary relationship between the genre of autobiography and the ideologies of U.S. identity has been summarized by historian Thomas Dorothy: “Autobiography is not a peculiarly American literary form, but it does seem to be a form peculiarly suited to the American self-image: individualistic and optimistic.”²¹

The genre of autobiography thus had a political function in American society. It has been an important tool to represent and reinforce the ideal of individualism. The ideology of individualism as a feature of the American identity is contradictory according to McLennan: “To assume an externally given identity surely undercuts the uniqueness and individuality perceived to be an integral feature of American identity.”²² Adding to this contradiction, literary scholar G. Thomas Couser argues that individuals’ life stories were not equally valued. Success stories of white, often political or public male figures, marked by a strong development in life which resulted in a rich outcome, as for example in the autobiographies of Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, became the conventional form and function of American autobiography. This standard, or normative mode of autobiography, however, ignored the

¹⁷ Georges Gusdorf, “Conditions and Limits of Autobiography.” Trans. James Olney, in Olney, *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980): 29.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*: 30.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*: 29.

²⁰ G. Thomas Couser, *Altered Egos: Authority in American Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989): 13.

²¹ Thomas Dorothy, “American Autobiography and Ideology,” in *The American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Albert E. Stone (Englewood Cliffs: Pearson Education, 1994): 15.

²² McLennan: 29.

inaccessibility of the conventional ideals of autobiography to minority groups within the larger population of the U.S., whose stories were not the conventional stories of progress and success.²³

1.2 Challenging Existing Ideologies in Minority Autobiographies

Couser's publication *Altered Egos: Authority in American Autobiography* is concerned with the political ideologies that have shaped the writing of American autobiography. He problematizes the fact that the conventional function and form of autobiography has kept the dominant ideologies of American society in order, thus making it almost impossible for minority groups to challenge their inferior position through the genre of autobiography. "The emergence of minority autobiography may signal the contact of particular individuals with mainstream culture, or even a subtle form of cultural imperialism, rather than a development of generic preconditions in minority cultures."²⁴ To support this conviction, he gives the example of the autobiographical genre of the slave narrative, in which former slaves had to negotiate and collaborate with other white writers and editors, so that the autobiography again reinforced hegemonic paradigms in dominant American society.

However, Couser does not pay attention to how minority groups can use the conventional form of autobiography to change the conventional function of autobiography. In recent decades, the genre of autobiography and its possibilities and restrictions have been part of intense academic debate. Thus, focusing on women's lives, American studies scholar Donna Sommer has contemplated to what extent autobiography is an instrument to force people's consciousness into individualism and hence reduces the opportunity of the potential of collective resistance. "Or is it a medium of resistance and counter-discourse, the legitimate space for producing that excess which throws doubt on the coherence and power of an exclusive historiography?"²⁵

Throughout the years, numerous authors have used their life stories for the purpose of reform. These autobiographies are a part of what Barbara Harlow calls "resistance literature," the form of literature which is formed through a geopolitical situation, and that combats the dominant institutions who keep the existing power construction within society intact.²⁶ Resistance literature is born in political conflicts between the dominant, white, male culture

²³ Couser: 20.

²⁴ Ibidem: 20.

²⁵ Doris Sommer, "Not Just a Personal Story: Women's Testimonies and the Plural Self," in *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography*, eds. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988): 111.

²⁶ Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987): 120.

and the minority, often female indigenous resistance movements.²⁷ These minority groups' intentions as manifested in their autobiographical writing differ from the traditional autobiography in dominant society, in which individualism and self-expression were the main goals.²⁸ Instead, autobiographies of minority groups are tied to the struggle for cultural survival and are less concerned with the celebration of individualism and self-representation and more with the struggle of the community.²⁹

Gloria Jean Watkins, better known by her pen name bell hooks, has written in her essay "Writing Autobiography" about the experience of writing an autobiography as an individual who is part of a minority group holding an inferior position in a dominant society, the African-American community. She argues that the genre of autobiography can counter some of the damaging effects of white cultural domination and help to preserve and transmit the experiences of black southern life in America.³⁰ Representing the experiences of minority groups that are excluded from the dominant society through autobiography is a way of trying to survive personally and culturally in a dominant and oppressive culture.³¹ But in order to be authorized by this dominant culture to tell their story as a part of an inferior minority group, authors likewise were constrained by the narrative conventions that were created by the dominant culture. This meant that they had to alter their language and narrative format to the extent that the dominant culture would be able to accept their autobiography.

Writers who were part of a minority groups could create what Homi Bhabha's theory on hybrid identities shows, a third space in which the writer can break the boundaries of both the colonized and the colonizer's culture.³² According to Bhabha, this third space, in which influences from both cultures exist, makes it possible to challenge the dominant power through juxtaposing the cultural ideals of the oppressed culture with ideals of the dominant culture. In doing so, the third space can reduce the power of dominant society and diminish the inferior status of minority groups within society.³³

1.3 Autobiography and Native American Culture

In traditional Native American culture, stories were passed on through the oral tradition and the written word, apart from some cave carvings and drawings, was rarely or never practiced.

²⁷ Caren Kaplan, "Resisting Autobiography: Outlaw-Genres and Transnational Feminist Subjects," in *De/Colonizing the Subject* eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992): 120.

²⁸ Ibidem: 130.

²⁹ Ibidem: 131.

³⁰ Ibidem: 130.

³¹ Ibidem: 130.

³² Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994): 38.

³³ Bhabha: 34.

The importance of writing an autobiography in order to write themselves into existence in American culture placed Native Americans at a disadvantage. Literature scholar Arnold Krupat ironically reflects: “The Indian himself did not paint things as they ‘really were’; the Indian could not write. His part was to pose—and disappear.”³⁴ The representation of Native Americans in the written word depended solely on the perception of the white writers, which made writing another tool to silence the Native American population in their fight for Native American rights in the U.S.

Because of the inaccessibility of the genre of autobiography, it has been a challenge for Native Americans to use it as a tool of protest against their oppressors. The conventions of the genre of autobiography have clashed with Native American ideals as well, according to Krupat. First of all, the ideal of celebrating the individual has been highly unusual in Native American culture, where the importance of the individual is subordinate to the wellbeing of the community.³⁵ The personal accomplishments of individual tribe members were always viewed within the context of how the accomplishment enhanced a communal situation instead of the enrichment of the self.

In traditional Native American literature, this different view on the importance of the community and the subordinate status of the self becomes visible. According to Native American Studies scholar Paula Gunn Allen, the purpose of Native American literature is never simply pure self-expression.³⁶ Instead, Gunn Allen argues: “To a large extent ceremonial literature serves to redirect private emotion and integrate the energy generated by emotion within a cosmic framework.”³⁷ The overall intention of Native American literature as described by Gunn Allen and the conventional ideals of the genre of autobiography seem to be far removed, which makes the emergence of Native American autobiography in the nineteenth century seemingly contradictory.

The importance of progression and the idea of linearity in history, which are fundamental ideals in the genre of autobiography, are another set of ideals that have been insignificant in traditional Native American culture. According to historian James Wilson, “Events have to be seen not in chronological relation to each other, but in terms of a complex, coherent understanding of the world, rooted in the origin story, in which time, space, spiritual

³⁴ Arnold Krupat, *For Those Who Come After: A Study of Native American Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989): 38.

³⁵ *Ibidem*: 29.

³⁶ Gunn Allen: 55.

³⁷ *Ibidem*: 55.

entities, and living beings all interact.”³⁸ So instead of looking at history as a line that started in the past and stops in the now, in traditional Native American culture every movement in time is related to another movement. There is not a clear distinction between past and present, because the two are intertwined.³⁹ This worldview, which is in sharp contrast with the Western idea of time, space, and history, is not just a record of what has happened before; instead, it gives a direction on how to live life.⁴⁰

The absence of progression and of a clear distinction between the past, present, and future is also clearly visible in Native American literature. Traditional Native American stories do not work within the western framework of cause and effect that leads to a progressive line, which is essential in western storytelling and in particular in the genre of autobiography. Instead, the stories in traditional Native American culture often depict the essential sense of harmony and unity of the universe.⁴¹ By using the genre of autobiography, it seems that Native American writers removed themselves from this worldview and adapted the linear and individualist of the western worldview in their writing.

1.4 Native American Boarding School Autobiographies

The removal of indigenous pupils from their traditional Native American culture is what dominant American society hoped to achieve by adapting a policy of forceful assimilation. A part of the Dawes Act of 1887, which was primarily focused on the dividing of land between families instead of tribes in general, was the founding of Indian boarding schools.⁴² These schools were often far removed from the tribes and Native American students were stripped of their Native American identity and forced to adapt to and assimilate into the dominant American culture.⁴³ These schools forced Native American students to use the English language and forbade them to use their native tongue. They also were not allowed to wear traditional Native American clothes and their long hair was cut after they entered the schools. Native spirituality and religious practices were suppressed. The pupils were educated in acting ‘civilized’, through classes in which they learned how to dance, sing, eat and speak like a ‘civilized’ person.⁴⁴ This violent assimilation process has often been illustrated by a famous speech of one of the founders of one of these boarding schools, Captain Richard Pratt, in

³⁸ James Wilson, *The Earth Shall Weep: A History of Native America* (New York: Grove Press, 1998): 8.

³⁹ Gunn Allen: 56.

⁴⁰ Wilson: 8.

⁴¹ Gunn Allen: 75.

⁴² Hoxie: 5.

⁴³ *Ibidem*: 70.

⁴⁴ K. Tsianina Lomawaima, “Domesticity in the Federal Indian Schools: The power of Authority over Mind and Body,” *American Ethnologist* 20 (1993): 227-228.

which he states: “Kill the Indian, save the man.”⁴⁵

However, the effectiveness of this violent assimilation process in these Indian boarding schools in erasing the Native American culture is debatable. Did forcing the Native American students to communicate in English and to teach them how to write in the language of their oppressor result in losing touch with their Native American heritage? Native American Studies scholar Malea Powell suggests the contrary. In her essay “Rhetoric of Survivance: How American Indians Use Writing” she states that the 19th century was a key moment in Native American protest culture, because this was the first period when Native Americans started using writing in the white man’s language, instead of using their oral tradition, in order to protest against their inferior position in the dominant white American culture.⁴⁶

The general strategy to exterminate Native American culture by removal and forced assimilation was the starting point for Native Americans to imagine new tools for survival and resist the violent assimilation strategies of the federal government.⁴⁷ In the Indian boarding schools, Native Americans were confronted with being forced into using the white dominant culture’s language. As Maureen Konkle states in her article “Indian Literacy, U.S Colonialism and Literary Criticism,” these students accordingly used this newly learned language as a weapon to resist the treatment against their people by the dominant culture.⁴⁸

The emergence of Indian boarding school autobiographies as a distinct genre marks a moment in which Native Americans were representing themselves in writings, instead of white people doing this for them. The education at the Indian boarding school provided the Native students with a new tool to protest their position and represent their Native American culture. However, as mentioned before, the challenge in using autobiography has not only been the act of writing itself. The genre of autobiography contains conventional forms and ideals of dominant American society that were unfamiliar to Native American culture. Krupat argues that when two cultures like the Native American and dominant American culture clash, there is always a “the reciprocal relationship between two cultures in contact.”⁴⁹ However, always being the minority group in this relationship makes it logical that Native Americans

⁴⁵ Richard H. Pratt, “Kill the Indian, Save the Man” (1892), in *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the “Friends of the Indian” 1880–1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973): 260-271.

⁴⁶ Scott Richard Lyon, “Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?” *College Composition and Communication* 51 (2001): 401.

⁴⁷ Lyon: 402-403.

⁴⁸ Maureen Konkle, “Indian Literacy, U. S. Colonialism, and Literary Criticism,” *American Literature* 69 (1997): 477.

⁴⁹ Krupat: 33.

must inevitably use the tools of their oppressors in order to challenge their subordinate position.

Adaptation of American ideals and forms in autobiography, then, was necessary for the writers of Indian boarding school autobiographies who wanted to use their writings as tools of protest. The way writers of Indian boarding school autobiographies had to compromise between the conflicting Native American ideals and the ideals of dominant American society has shaped the form and content of their autobiographies. The question remains in what way the ideals of dominant American society have shaped the content of the Indian boarding school autobiographies and how these concessions may have influenced the effectiveness of using their autobiography as a tool of protest.

Chapter 2: Shaping Gendered Identities in Autobiography: The Possibilities and Limitations of Autobiography as a Tool of Activism

The previous chapter has shown how the function and form of American autobiography are based on ideals in dominant American society and how this can be restrictive to those who are excluded from dominant American society. The ideal of expressing and celebrating the ‘true’ self in autobiography is debatable because not every individual has the freedom to express this ‘true’ self. Autobiographies are not simply free acts of will and individual autonomy. Instead, writers of autobiography have to work within frameworks of ideals, predetermined and normalized through dominant western society.

According to French philosopher Louis Althusser, the power of coercive state institutions shapes people’s behavior, beliefs, and identities.⁵⁰ These forces are hidden and, according to Althusser, subjects within such systems accordingly have a false consciousness that makes them believe that they have agency, while in reality they do not.⁵¹ American historian Joan Wallach Scott adds: “The discursive regimes determine who can tell their stories, what kind of stories they can tell and the forms these stories will take. People tell stories of their lives through the cultural scripts available to them, and they are governed by cultural strictures of self-presentation in public.”⁵² Individuals that might have set out to resist and subvert the dominant culture are denied agency because they are inescapably determined by their historical and cultural context, which inevitably supports and reproduces the dominant power structure.⁵³ According to these theorists, the self in autobiography is constructed by hidden dominant social, cultural, and institutional structures, located in a historical context.

One of those dominant structures is the idea of gender and how people within that gender structure should act. After all, the female subject and her ideas about selfhood are mediated by the identity the dominant male culture imposes on her.⁵⁴ American scholar Sidonie Smith argues in her publication *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women’s*

⁵⁰ Doris Sommer, “Not Just a Personal Story: Women’s Testimonies and the Plural Self,” in *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women’s Autobiography*, eds. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenk (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988): 55.

⁵¹ Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*: 55.

⁵² Ibidem: 56.

⁵³ Michelle Burnham, “Loopholes of Resistance: Harriet Jacobs Slave Narrative and the Critique of Agency in Foucault,” *Arizona Quarterly* 2 (1993): 60.

⁵⁴ Valérie Baisnée, *Gendered Resistance: The Autobiographies of Simone de Beauvoir, Maya Angelou, Janet Frame and Marguerite Duras* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997): 9.

Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century that women were ascribed a different kind of selfhood than male subjects.⁵⁵ Discourses of embodiment mark women's selfhood, in which she is constrained to the social roles that are linked to her based on a pre-determined biological destiny to be part of the private instead of the public sphere.⁵⁶ In fact, the dominant patriarchal culture has made autonomy the core of a woman's essence, making her paradoxically nonessential.⁵⁷

This chapter will look at how gendered ideals of nineteenth-century America influenced the literary framework which determined the form and content of male and female autobiography in that time period. In order to do so, this chapter will discuss the three gendered ideals of the domestic and the public sphere, sentimentalism and reason, and individualism and community, which were the most important gendered ideals apparent in nineteenth-century America. By outlining these gendered ideals and its implications in nineteenth-century American society, this chapter will provide an understanding of the possibilities and restrictions for Native American authors to use Indian boarding school autobiographies as tools of activism.

2.1: Gendered identities in Autobiography

In various philosophical discourses that dominated in the nineteenth century, women were seen as creatures that were farther removed from logic, self-consciousness, and reason than men, which justified their subordinate role in society.⁵⁸ Women, accordingly, could only use a certain discourse that fit in with the social roles and traits ascribed to them.⁵⁹ Women had to act according to their cultural rules of female propriety, which included the languages of sentiment, of piety, and of true womanhood.⁶⁰ Historian Barbara Welter argues in her article "The Cult of True Womanhood 1820-1860" that American women's magazines describe the "true" American woman as pious, pure, submissive, and domestic.⁶¹ Women judged themselves and were judged by these standards, forming an idea of American womanhood.⁶²

According to American historian Anthony Rotundo, not only women but also men were ascribed certain traits in order for them to fit into the ideal of manhood.⁶³ Ideas of true

⁵⁵ Smith: 11.

⁵⁶ Ibidem: 12-13.

⁵⁷ Ibidem: 12.

⁵⁸ Ibidem: 14.

⁵⁹ Ibidem: 16.

⁶⁰ Ibidem: 16.

⁶¹ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 52.

⁶² Beth Macklay Doriani "Black Womanhood in Nineteenth-Century America: Subversion and Self-Construction in Two Women's Autobiographies," *American Quarterly* 43 (1999): 204.

⁶³ Anthony Rotundo, "Body and Soul: Changing Ideals of American Middle-Class Manhood, 1770-1920," *Journal of Social History* 16 (1983): 25.

American manhood were very important for the creation of an American identity.⁶⁴ In the nineteenth century, certain ideals of, for example, individuality and ideas of the self-made man who worked hard for his individual improvement, were seen as traits of the ideal American man.⁶⁵ By ascribing certain traits to men and women and rating the male traits as more desirable than female traits, a dominant male society was born.⁶⁶ One of the most important traits that has been given to manhood was the possession of reason. The importance of reason originated from the enlightenment and the possession of reason was only attributed to men. Because autobiographies were products of reason, women were seen to be unfit as writers of autobiographies.⁶⁷ All in all, the ideas and traits of “true” American manhood and womanhood have shaped literary conventions and constrictions in the ways in which women could construct and write their autobiographies. But did their subordinate position in a male-dominated society mean that they had no agency in writing their autobiographies at all?

Making them appear as natural and “God-given,” ideologies of gender in a patriarchal culture script identities.⁶⁸ However, these hegemonic discourses can always be tested. The structures created by the dominant cultures are not fixed and still vulnerable to non-hegemonic discourses.⁶⁹ As gender scholar Judith Butler argues, dominant structures of gender can be challenged from within. Women are often not aware of the fact that they perform a gender, but when they do, they can create a space to slowly change constructions of gender.⁷⁰ Even though subjects are constrained to certain rules, they can open a space of agency within the constrained systems.⁷¹

Historian Joan W. Scott argues that female autobiographies are tools to create such spaces of agency within the gendered constraints that are laid upon the female authors by the dominant, male society.⁷² By entering male spaces that contradicted and conflicted with their assigned female space, women tried to reform their inferior position in the dominant, male culture.⁷³ Nonetheless, autobiography has been a male-dominated literary genre in which women tried to change their position by writing down their life experience in autobiographies.

⁶⁴ Thomas A. Foster, *New Man: Manliness in Early America* (New York: New York University Press, 2011): 2.

⁶⁵ Rotundo: 25.

⁶⁶ Foster: 2.

⁶⁷ Smith: 15.

⁶⁸ Ibidem: 21.

⁶⁹ Ibidem: 21.

⁷⁰ Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40 (1988): 522.

⁷¹ Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life*: 57.

⁷² Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Women, Autobiography, Theory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998): 23.

⁷³ Ibidem: 23.

How to reform the dominant culture through writing is complex, because the female author has to deal with the dominant culture as a reader and publisher, which puts considerable restraints on the agency of the female subject. By writing autobiographies, women struggle with the inherited autobiographical narratives constitutive of the official gendered histories of the subject.⁷⁴ In Scott's words, "The wrong words in the wrong mouths articulated in the wrong places would confuse social relationships and provided subjectivities."⁷⁵ Even though women would like "to confuse and reform social relationships and provided subjectivities" that were created by the dominant, male society, they also had to deal with audiences and publishers that could easily reject their stories if conventions of female writing concerning, themes, forms, and language were broken in the autobiographies.

Autobiographies of ethnic minority groups that deal with the constraints of gender are even more complex. Women of ethnic minorities had a far more complex struggle for selfhood than either white women or black men.⁷⁶ These women had to deal with the double constraints of being in the inferior position of a woman and a member of an ethnic minority group. Because they spoke to a white audience, these women were forced into using a rhetoric that would be accepted by the dominant white audience.⁷⁷ In her article "The Narrative Self: Race, Politics, and Culture in Black American Women's Autobiography," Nellie Y. McKay, for instance, argues that certain elements in the autobiographies of African-American women differed from the writing of male African-American autobiographies. By comparing African-American male and female autobiographies from the same time period and region, McKay shows that the gendered ideals prevalent in U.S. society concerning the separate spheres, emotion in writing, and ideas about individuality influenced the agency of female African-American writers of autobiographies.⁷⁸

2.2: Domestic and Public Settings in Autobiography

These gendered ideals that have been mentioned in McKay's analysis were significantly apparent and reinforced the binary of what was presumed female and male in nineteenth-century U.S. and the restraining structure these ideals created for men and women to write their autobiography. Looking closer into these gendered ideals will give insight on which themes, settings, and tone male and female writers of autobiography had to consider in writing their life story.

⁷⁴ Smith: 23.

⁷⁵ Ibidem: 16.

⁷⁶ Ibidem: 37.

⁷⁷ McKay: 97.

⁷⁸ Ibidem: 97-99.

Writing autobiography means expanding a private story into the public domain, which was already a controversial act for women in nineteenth-century America, who were placed in the domestic sphere. As American literature scholar Beth Maclay- Doriani puts it: “The domestic ideal placed the woman in the home sequestered away from the marketplace and political arena, the woman finding her greatest happiness in domestic relations - the warmth and love of human attachments.”⁷⁹ Women were seen as delicate, but passive souls, who were not able to survive in the harsh public sphere.⁸⁰ As such, their emotional and unreasonable nature threatened the nation’s ideal of running the nation with reason. That is why women should stay out of public affairs and focus on their jobs in their home. Stepping out of the domestic sphere and into the public sphere could result in disapproval from family, friends, and the church.⁸¹

This unconventional and undesirable transition between the two separate spheres had to be justified by the female writers of their autobiographies. In her publication *Composing Selves: Southern Women and Autobiography*, literary scholar Peggy Whitman Prenshaw focuses on the compromises female autobiography writers had to make in the American south during the nineteenth century, in order to write about certain political issues, for example slavery, race, and emancipation. One of these compromises that Prenshaw has found in the rhetoric of the female autobiographies is the domestic setting of the autobiographical accounts. In her research on autobiographies of women in the southern states of the U.S. during the nineteenth century, she found that the female writers would only address political issues as something that influenced domestic issues like the home or family, but that these issues were never brought up in a wider regional or even nationwide perspective.⁸² By incorporating the domestic setting within a political issue like for instance slavery, women created a space where they could speak out on national political issues but were forced to do so from the narrow perspective of the domestic sphere.

The position of the female inside the domestic sphere was emphasized through the constant repetition of mentioning their role within the family.⁸³ Their perspective was intrinsically linked with what happened in the household and could not be seen as inseparable from their position as daughter, wife, or sister. This is emphasized through titles of the

⁷⁹ Beth Maclay Doriani, “Black Womanhood in Nineteenth-Century America: Subversion and Self-Construction in Two Women’s Autobiographies,” *American Quarterly* 43 (1991): 205.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*: 173.

⁸¹ Peggy Whitman Prenshaw, *Composing Selves: Southern Women and Autobiography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011): 2.

⁸² *Ibidem*: 41.

⁸³ Prenshaw: 41.

autobiographical accounts of these female writers in the nineteenth century in, for example, *A Slaveholder's Daughter* by Belle Kearney. The emphasis in this autobiography on the subject's role as a daughter, not as an autonomous individual, shows how domestic settings and their familial role could mask the fact that their work of self-expression was an entrance into political debates for women in the forbidden public sphere.⁸⁴

In male autobiographies, the setting of the domestic sphere is often of a secondary importance. Accepted and expected in the public sphere, male writers of autobiography did not have to emphasize their role within a familial setting. However, it is important to note that male writers who were placed outside the domestic sphere, also had to compromise the setting of their story. Their autobiographical story should take place outside the realm of family and the home. Their story of success had to take place in the public domain where they were not influenced and defined by relatives.

2.3: Sentimentalism and Reason in Autobiography

Not only the themes and setting of autobiography in nineteenth-century America were prescribed by dominant male society. Also, the tone in which women could address certain issues in their literary works was determined by the American ideologies of womanhood. One of the most important reasons for excluding women from the public sphere was the prevalent idea of their emotional character that contrasted with men's rational character. Women's inability to rationalize certain political matters because of their emotional character was supposed to be reflected within female literary works through a sentimental approach to themes and topics.

Sentimentalism in literature uses emotion instead of rationality in order to explain certain actions. The use of the most common emotions of love and fear became a subtle political tool in the genre of autobiography, to manipulate the reader's emotions about certain matters in society.⁸⁵ As historian Dana Nelson argues, women needed to put sentimentalism in their writings to create an authorized position.⁸⁶

In contrast to women, men did not need to use the strategy of sentimentalism in their writing to address certain issues in American society. Rationalism was one of the most valued

⁸⁴ Dana Nelson, "Sympathy as Strategy in Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*," in *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Shirley Samuels (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992): 192.

⁸⁵ Kevin Pelletier, *Apocalyptic Sentimentalism: Love and Fear in U.S. Antebellum Literature* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015): 3.

⁸⁶ Nelson: 192

principles of the public sphere in American society.⁸⁷ The trait of reason, which was ascribed to men's character, was the approach to discuss matters in American society. The idea that sentimentality was feminine, a contradiction to reason, and thus harmful to the public sphere, made that it was uncommon for men to use emotion in writing.⁸⁸

In autobiographical accounts, the gendered ideals of sentimentalism and reason were common strategies for using these works as tools of activism. This is highly visible in nineteenth-century slave narratives. Historian Michelle Burnham argues in her publication *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature 1682- 1861*, that female writers of African-American autobiography copied the way American female writers used sentimental language to their advantage in order to address a political issue. Sentimental language was one of the most important strategies of these female writers to let the American readers sympathize with their inferior position in American society.⁸⁹

Male African-American autobiography writers in nineteenth-century America could not use the literary strategy of sentimentalism in their writings to become an authorized voice.⁹⁰ Men in American society saw a danger in using sentimental language because it disrupted the ideal of making public decisions with reason and without emotion.⁹¹ Instead, men of African-American origin had to use the ideal of reason as a strategy to become an authorized voice.⁹² As women tried to mimic ideals of American womanhood, men tried to imitate the ideals of American manhood in their writings in order to claim their African-American identity as a part of America's national identity.⁹³

2.4 Individualism and community in Autobiography

As discussed in the first chapter, the ideology of individualism has formed the base for the genre of the western autobiography. However, the ideology of individualism has only been reserved for men. According to psychologist Nancy Chodorow, men are more likely to create an identity that is more separate in contrast to the creation of female identities where women are more likely to create an identity that is connected to others.⁹⁴ The creation of selfhood in

⁸⁷ Glenn Hendler, *Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-century American Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 113.

⁸⁸ Ibidem: 113.

⁸⁹ Ibidem: 126.

⁹⁰ Ibidem: 151.

⁹¹ Ibidem: 151.

⁹² Ibidem: 151

⁹³ Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (Hanover: University of New England Press, 1997): 125.

⁹⁴ Nancy Chodorow, *Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978): 167.

women is often in relationship with a role that is connected to her family.⁹⁵ She often identifies herself as a mother, daughter or wife, which are all identities that have been shaped through familial relationships.⁹⁶ The masculine sense of self is defined in denial of relationships with others.⁹⁷ Although men do have relationships with others, they tend to identify themselves separately from these bonds.

The autobiographical model of unique and separate selfhood is problematic according to gender scholar Susan Stanford Friedman. She states that the self and self-creation are different for women because women are not in the privileged position to create selfhood in isolation.⁹⁸ She adds that there is no such thing as a separate individual that has been a precondition to autobiography according to Gusdorf. Just as women, men are defined by the cultural categories that are ascribed to them.⁹⁹ “A white man has the luxury of forgetting his skin color and sex. He can think of himself as an individual.” Women, on the other hand, are reminded of their sex at every turn and don’t have the luxury to see themselves as individuals.¹⁰⁰

However, women have used their group identity in order to change their inferior position in society. By representing the self not as an isolated individual, but as an individual within a community, women could represent an identity forgotten by history.¹⁰¹ In writing autobiographies, women present their individual story as based on a group consciousness that is aware of the cultural limits of being women.¹⁰² By creating this new self within the act of writing in autobiography women create a voice in history that was silenced by the ideologies of dominant male society.

Minority groups like African-Americans and Native Americans were, just like women, always conscious of their inferior position in the creation of their identity and the portrayal of the self in their autobiographies.¹⁰³ Historian Stephen Butterfield writes in his publication *Black Autobiography in America* how the self in black women’s autobiographies is never an isolated self. Instead, the self is a member of an oppressed social group.¹⁰⁴ About the use of

⁹⁵ Chodorow: 167.

⁹⁶ Ibidem: 166.

⁹⁷ Ibidem: 167.

⁹⁸ Susan Stanford Friedman, “Women’s Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice,” in *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998): 75.

⁹⁹ Ibidem: 75.

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem: 75.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem: 76.

¹⁰² Ibidem: 76.

¹⁰³ Ibidem: 74.

¹⁰⁴ Stephen Butterfield, *Black Autobiography in America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974): 2.

autobiography, he adds: “The autobiographical form is one of the ways that black Americans have asserted their rights to live and grow. It is a bid for freedom, a break of hope cracking the shell of slavery and exploitation.”¹⁰⁵ Black women create and portray a self in autobiography that gives them a voice in order to change their inferior position as African-American women.

Male African-American writers are often trapped between the gendered ideology of individualism and their membership of the African-American community.¹⁰⁶ Historian Kimberley Drake examined this struggle in the autobiography of former slave Frederick Douglass. He argues that, unlike the female autobiography of Harriet Jacobs, Douglass uses the masculine form of self in his autobiography.¹⁰⁷ Although Douglass was aware of how autobiographies could serve the cause of abolishing slavery in his community, he was also aware of the ideology of individualism that was expected in male autobiography and that he needed to use this ideology in order to attract a white audience.¹⁰⁸ This shows how within minority groups, the gendered idea of individualism plays a significant role in the expression of the self in nineteenth-century American autobiographies.

2.5 Gendered Ideals in Traditional Native American Culture

The ideals that have been mentioned above are presented as natural and fixed in dominant American society. However, the fact that these ideals were often absent in traditional Native American culture reconfirms that institutional powers enforce the appearance and working of binary gender roles.¹⁰⁹ The definitions of the role of men and women in traditional Native American culture are as diverse as tribal cultures in America, but in general, the roles of women and men were far removed from western ideals on gender roles.

These differences in gender roles have not been well documented by ethnographers who observed traditional Native American culture. According to Native American Studies scholar Robert Steven Grumet, ethnohistorians have assigned the male gender to native figures in their documentation. The act of not specifying the identity of important leaders in Native American culture masked the fact that many of these leaders were actually female.¹¹⁰ The act of masking different gender structures within traditional Native American culture has

¹⁰⁵ Buttersfield: 3

¹⁰⁶ Kimberley Drake, “Rewriting the American Self: Race, Gender, and Identity in the Autobiographies of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs,” *MELUS* 22 (1997): 94.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*: 94.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*: 95.

¹⁰⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990): 25

¹¹⁰ Robert Steven Grumet, “Sunksquaws, Shamans and Tradeswomen: Middle Atlantic Coastal Algonkian Women During the 17th and 18th Centuries,” in *Women and Colonialization*, eds. Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 1980): 49.

reinforced the patriarchal structure in dominant American society because these documentations make society believe that there have never been any alternative gender structures.

Fortunately, through other documents and the telling of history by Native Americans themselves, the presence of alternative gender structures in the history of Native American culture have not been completely erased. Instead of patriarchal, tribal systems were often of a gynocratic nature.¹¹¹ Gynocracy should not be confused with matriarchy, in which females hold the primary functions in government. Instead, gynocracy is a more cooperative system in which women can hold primary functions, but where men are not subordinate to women. The gynocratic nature of tribal systems is based on cooperation, autonomy, and harmony. Hierarchy has never been of great importance in traditional Native American culture. Instead, each position and function in society is equally important in order to function as a harmonious whole.¹¹²

The presence of female Chiefs in several different tribes, the glorification of female shamans, the ruling by female councils as for example with the Cherokee, and the functioning of gynocracy in tribal systems have been silenced but also willfully disrupted by dominant society. Paula Gunn Allen argues that this is due to the (forced) Christianization of the tribes by missionaries. In a time of hardship because of war and colonization, the Christian religion, which is based on patriarchal beliefs, was infiltrated into Native American culture.¹¹³ This meant, according to Gunn Allen, that the women “were firmly under the thumb of Christian patriarchy.”¹¹⁴

However, Gunn Allen does emphasize that the disruption of the gynocratic tribal system should not be seen as incidental or as a logical transition through contact with the western patriarchal societies. Instead, the disruption of existing Native societal structures should be viewed as a purposed tool to extinguish Native American culture.¹¹⁵ By educating Native Americans on the superiority of patriarchal society and hierarchy, dominant society aimed to fragment the existing power structures within the Native American tribes.

2.6 Teaching Gender Performances in Indian Boarding Schools

The Indian boarding schools that were set up by missionaries, but financed by the federal government, focused on the disruption of gender structure in the education of Native

¹¹¹ Gunn Allen: 32.

¹¹² Ibidem: 31.

¹¹³ Ibidem: 33.

¹¹⁴ Ibidem: 33.

¹¹⁵ Ibidem: 35.

American students in order to separate them from their Native culture. Not being used to these strict biased gendered ideals prevailing in nineteenth-century America, Native American students of Indian boarding schools had to adjust to this strong separation of gender in society. By forcing the female students into domestic service courses and the male students in vocational skill courses, these schools tried to make these students perform a gender role that was dominant in American culture but was different than their traditional gender roles.¹¹⁶ As such, gender played a key role in the federal government's intention to destroy the Native American culture in the United States.

These practical courses were not the only method in forcing the student into participating and performing gender roles dominant in American society. Gender role socialization was one of the most important goals of Indian boarding schools.¹¹⁷ This socialization process was more visible in the education of female students. According to Isaac Bairds, one of the missionaries that recruited young students, Native American women were of great importance for the assimilation process: "The girls will need the training more than the boys & they will wield a greater influence in the future. If we get the girls, we get the race."¹¹⁸ As historian Carol Devens argues, nineteenth-century Indian boarding schools were more committed to indoctrinating female students with American ideologies of domesticity and womanhood in general, while male education was mostly focused on the industrial crafts.¹¹⁹

The gendered ideals of domesticity, emotion, and community were the most important instruments of Indian boarding schools to assimilate Native American females into American society.¹²⁰ Domestic novels were an often used tool to indoctrinate Native American students with the ideal of American womanhood.¹²¹ By educating these young Native American women in keeping the public and private sphere strictly apart, the Native American culture, where gender identities were not exclusively binary, had been ignored.

Though less visible in the education of male students, the strict division in female and male identities was still just as expected from the male students of the Indian boarding

¹¹⁶ Craig S Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999): 10.

¹¹⁷ Eric Margolis, "Looking at Discipline, Looking at Labor: Photographic Representations of Indian Boarding schools," *Visual Studies* 19 (2004): 75.

¹¹⁸ Carol Devens, "'If We Get the Girls, We Get the Race': Missionary Education of Native American Girls," *Journal of World History* 3 (1992): 225.

¹¹⁹ Ibidem: 232.

¹²⁰ Amanda J. Zink, "Carlisle's Writing Circle: Boarding school Texts and the Decolonization of Domesticity," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 27 (2015): 44.

¹²¹ Ibidem: 39.

schools. Especially the ideology of individualism was an important point of education because the well-being of the community has always been much more important in Native American than the ideal of the individual. Breaking down this ideal could work in favor of dominant American society because it could dislocate the strong bond between members of the Native American tribes.

The Indian Boarding school education enforced these gendered ideals also in the way they taught Native American pupils how to write. Not only the use of the English language was a tactic to remove the students from their Native heritage, but with the tone and themes they forced the students to write from a gendered perspective that did not conform with their Native gender identity. The use of these gendered ideals in their writings and later on in their autobiographical accounts could suggest that the forceful assimilation process had its intended effect separating the students from the gendered structures of their Native American heritage.

However, instead of using the English language to remove themselves from Native American culture and as an entry into the dominant American society, the students often used the English language against the dominant American culture.¹²² Teaching students how to write within the conventions of gendered ideals was an assimilation instrument but one with an undesired outcome. As historian Amanda J. Zink argues, by teaching the Native American students how to write, the Indian boarding schools created writers that reused the ideology and rhetoric of domesticity to transcend the destinies that were forced upon them by the dominant American culture.¹²³

The use of the gendered ideals prevalent in dominant American society in Indian boarding school autobiographies can be seen as a restrictive but necessary strategy in order to publish their life story. Without using the gendered forms and themes of dominant society within Native American boarding school autobiographies, their voices would not be recognized as legitimate. The use of gendered themes and forms does not mean that the former students were in fact brainwashed and out of touch with their Native heritage. On the contrary, the use of the gendered ideals has been a tactic to become an authorized voice, which provided an audience for their call for protest against the brutal treatment of Native Americans in the U.S.

¹²²Lomawaima: 227.

¹²³Zink :42.

Chapter 3: The Paradox of Autobiography as Tool of Protest: Gendered Ideals in Zitkála-Šá's *American Indian Stories*.

The unconventional nature of Zitkála-Šá's autobiography has been the point of praise and critique by scholars. Her rejection of the conventional model of autobiography needs to be understood at two different levels, according to literary scholar Martha J. Cutter. First of all, Zitkála-Šá does not set forth the individual story of integration and triumph that conventional autobiography would dictate.¹²⁴ Second, Zitkála-Šá does not project a unified and coherent identity which is authorized through language.¹²⁵ By breaking through these autobiographical conventions, Zitkála-Šá challenges the dominant, male, American ideologies. Zitkála-Šá's violation of the traditional form has made that literary scholars have seen her autobiography as one of the most significant pieces of Native American autobiography of the nineteenth century.

However, Zitkála-Šá's unconventional treatment of the genre of autobiography should not be viewed as a product that exists outside these ideologies. Literary scholar Sandra Kumamoto Stanley argues that this is the paradox of Zitkála-Šá's work: "As Zitkála-Šá resists the values of the dominant culture, she also internalizes those values. As such she must become the subject of her own critique."¹²⁶ This is not a critique of Zitkála-Šá's efforts to criticize the dominant ideologies and the institutions that have created and preserved them. Rather, it acknowledges that this is a reality of people belonging to disempowered groups who need a voice of accommodation and reconciliation if they want to use their autobiographies as tools of activism. Otherwise, they might run the risk of becoming silenced again by dominant society.¹²⁷

This chapter will look at the paradox Sandra Kumamoto Stanley describes in terms of gender in Zitkála-Šá's autobiographical work. By analyzing the gendered ideals of domesticity, sentimentalism in writing, and individualism vs community, this chapter will analyze in how far Zitkála-Šá accommodates the gendered ideologies of dominant American society, in order to simultaneously criticize these ideologies that are on the one hand constructed by dominant American society, but on the other hand keep the structure of this

¹²⁴ Martha J. Cutter, "Zitkála-Šá's Autobiographical Writings: The Problems of a Canonical Search for Language and Identity," *MELUS* 19 (1985): 31.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*: 33.

¹²⁶ Sandra Kumamoto Stanley, "Claiming a Native American Identity: Zitkála-Šá and Autobiographical Strategies," *Pacific Coast Philology* 29 (1994): 67.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*: 65.

society in place. In other words, how are these gendered ideals from dominant American society reflected in her autobiographical work and what consequences does that have for the author's aim to use her autobiography as a tool of activism?

3.1 Zitkála-Šá: “Neither a Wild Indian Nor a Tamed One”

Zitkála-Šá, who was given the name Gertrude Simmons at her birth in 1876, was brought up by her Dakota mother on the Yankton Reservation in South Dakota. Her father was a white man who deserted the family before Zitkála-Šá was born.¹²⁸ Zitkála-Šá lived on the Yankton reservation until the age of 12, when she left for the Quaker Missionary School for Indians in Indiana. After three years at the Indian Boarding school in Indiana, Zitkála-Šá returned to the Yankton Reservation to experience that her time at the Indian Boarding school had made her ambivalent towards her Indian heritage.¹²⁹ In her autobiographical essay “The Schooldays of an Indian Girl” she writes: “Even nature seemed to have no place for me. I was neither a wee girl nor a tall one; neither a wild Indian nor a tamed one. This deplorable situation was the effect of my brief course in the East.”¹³⁰ This passage shows that the forced assimilation process caused her to experience cultural dislocation. This is the reason why she returned to the east to enter Earlham College in Indiana.¹³¹ There she was educated to become a teacher and an aspiring violin soloist.

After her college education, Zitkála-Šá started teaching at Carlisle Indian Industrial School, with the hope to give the guidance to the Native children in their education which she never had during her experience at the Indian boarding school. Her job as a teacher made her “slowly comprehend” that the Indian boarding schools were a form of cultural erasure.¹³² She states that: “But few there are who have paused to question whether real life or long-lasting death lies beneath this semblance of civilization.”¹³³ Her commitment in showing the public the disastrous outcome of Indian boarding school education became even stronger after she moved to the Standing Rock Reservation in Utah and married Richard Bonnin who belonged to the Sioux tribe as well.¹³⁴ She began writing her autobiographical essays, which were published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1900, without the interference of an editor. In these essays, which were later published as a book called *American Indian Stories*, Zitkála-Šá used

¹²⁸ Dexter Fisher, “Zitkála-Šá: The Evolution of a Writer,” *American Indian Quarterly* 5 (1979): 231.

¹²⁹ Roseanne Hoefel, “Zitkála-Šá: A Biography.” The Online Archive of Nineteenth-Century U.S. Women's Writings. ed. Glynis Carr, Online. Internet, Posted, Winter 1999.
<http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/gcarr/19cUSWW/ZS/rh.html>

¹³⁰ Gertrude Bonnin, *American Indian Stories* (Washington: Haworth Publishing, 1900): 78.

¹³¹ Hoefel.

¹³² Bonnin: 4.

¹³³ *Ibidem*: 41.

¹³⁴ Hoefel.

her experience to draw attention to the injustice and ill-treatment that her people had to suffer during this forced assimilation process.¹³⁵ After she was elected as secretary of the Society for American Indians in 1916, Zitkála-Šá moved to Washington D.C.¹³⁶ For the rest of her life, Zitkála-Šá was politically active on behalf of improved education, healthcare, resource conservation, cultural preservation, and the investigation of the government's treatment and abuse towards Native Americans.¹³⁷

Despite her many political ambitions, Zitkála-Šá struggles to combine these with her familial responsibilities. To her former fiancée Carlos Montezuma she writes: "Is it possible then to combine these two? Is it within a single person's power to be loyal to a feeble helpless mother and still not the better able to appeal to a thousand mothers-or parents or in short the world-for being kind to those nearest first? I am going to try to combine the two."¹³⁸ In order to combine her ambitions and familial responsibilities, Zitkála-Šá continued her activist role through her literary career.

She hoped that her writings could challenge the existing stereotypes of Native Americans in American society and flip the narrative of the savage and uncivilized nature of Native American culture. Her poetic and sentimental style of writing reached a large (female) white audience and was well received. Zitkála-Šá used certain themes in which she confronted her non-Native audience with her ambivalence towards Christianity and the superiority of American culture which were seen as controversial to be discussed by a Native woman whose position was perceived as inferior to the proud and Christian non-Native audience. Underlining these themes, Zitkála-Šá used her autobiography as a tool to combat the inferior position of the Native American people in America. However, as I aim to show below, she had to work within the constraints of gendered ideas that were prevalent in the dominant male American society in order to be heard at all.

3.2 The Home, Family, and In-betweenness

The concept of family in western society is conventionally used to refer to a group of people who are related by a genetic bond. Traditionally, this bond determines the composition of the home, which often consists of parents and children as one social unit. In traditional Native American culture, the idea of family and the home is defined in a broader sense. The genetic bonds are of importance but are secondary to the place within the tribal community.

¹³⁵ Hoefel.

¹³⁶ Ibidem.

¹³⁷ Ibidem.

¹³⁸ Ruth Spack "Dis/engagement: Zitkála-Šá's Letters to Carlos Montezuma, 1901-1902," *MELUS* 26 (2001): 189.

According to Native American scholar John Red Horse, ideas about what the concept of family means in Native American culture have changed since the contact with dominant American society. The different concepts of home and family in Native American culture were to be challenged in the name of civilization. Thus, the Dawes Act of 1887 had tried to destabilize this communal feeling of family, by assigning land per Native American family by kinship and not per tribe.¹³⁹

The forced contact with dominant society that challenged traditional Native American culture can be traced back in the way Zitkála-Šá portrays family life on the reservation in her autobiography. First of all, Zitkála-Šá describes items and materials that are used in and around the home in western cultures. Zitkála-Šá explicitly describes that she spend her childhood in a tipi made of “weather-stained canvas” instead of traditional buffalo skin.¹⁴⁰ Later on, the wigwam of her childhood, which had been the traditional accommodation for centuries in Native American culture, is replaced by a log cabin. Her mother has decorated this log cabin with curtains and a “checkered tablecloth.”¹⁴¹ According to American literary scholar Ron Carpenter, the intertwinement of the Native American and American cultural practices in the home are an indication of Zitkála-Šá’s bicultural identity.¹⁴² By portraying influences of the dominant culture in the Native American culture of her childhood, Zitkála-Šá invalidates the myth of the ‘vanishing Indian.’ She portrays a Native American culture that has adapted certain aspects of American culture, but that has not vanished through assimilation.¹⁴³

Not only physical items of the home indicate the intertwinement of two cultures in Zitkála-Šá’s autobiography. The importance of kinship in the concept of the family becomes visible in the bond between Zitkála-Šá and her mother. The description of her mother as the caretaker and the head of the domestic home mirrors the gendered ideal of women’s place in the domestic sphere in the dominant culture. Zitkála-Šá recalls: “She treated me as a dignified little individual as long as I was on my good behavior; and how humiliated I was when some boldness of mine drew forth a rebuke from her.”¹⁴⁴ By crediting her mother with her upbringing and by focusing solely on the familial relationship between her and her mother, Zitkála-Šá departs from the traditional notion that Native American children were brought up

¹³⁹ Hoxie: 3.

¹⁴⁰ Bonnin: 7.

¹⁴¹ Ibidem: 40.

¹⁴² Ron Carpenter, “Zitkala-Ša and Bicultural Subjectivity,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 16 (2004): 6.

¹⁴³ Ibidem: 6.

¹⁴⁴ Bonnin: 8.

by a communal effort.

However, according to American literary scholar Susan Bernardin, the act of mirroring her experience of the home and family to these gendered concepts dominant in American society is not exclusively a result of the inescapable contact and adaptation of the American culture with traditional Native American culture. She adds that the themes of the home and family and the use of the genre of autobiography are a literary tactic to familiarize her non-Native readers with her life story and to comply with the readers' expectations of a successful trajectory that follows her movement from being a wild Indian from the Sioux tribe to her achievement as an educated American woman.¹⁴⁵ In the end, this expectation of a triumphant ending is not met. Zitkála-Šá uses the themes of home and the family, and the way these ideals were destroyed by Indian reform policies, to illustrate how the interference of American society in Native American culture stood in the way of the conventional 'happy ending' that is expected in the genre of autobiography.

Indian reform policies were often justified by stating that the education and relocation of Native American children would create a home for the Native American children who were considered homeless. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas J. Morgan argues that Indian boarding schools education was necessary to make Native Americans "feel that the United States, and not some paltry reservation, is their home."¹⁴⁶ By appropriating the gendered ideals of the home and family prevalent in dominant American society Zitkála-Šá, in fact, shows that these ideals of home were present during her childhood, without the interference of Indian reform policies. By placing the gendered ideals of home in a Native American context, she combats the ideology of creating a home for the Native American students, which justified the funding of Indian boarding schools. Zitkála-Šá displays the unjustifiability of these policies and blames the social institutions for the creation of a problem that they proclaimed to solve. Her autobiography shows how the policies have driven her tribe from their physical home: "We were once very happy. But the paleface has stolen our lands and driven us hinter. Having defrauded us of our lands, the paleface forced us away."¹⁴⁷ But more importantly, Zitkála-Šá shows how she is deprived of the feeling of home after her experience at the Indian Boarding school. This becomes painfully clear when Zitkála-Šá is back at the

¹⁴⁵ Susan Bernardin, "The Lessons of a Sentimental Education: Zitkala-Ša's Autobiographical Narratives," *Western American Literature* 32 (1997): 218.

¹⁴⁶ Thomas J. Morgan "Supplemental Report on Indian Education," in *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian" 1880-1900*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973): 225.

¹⁴⁷ Bonnin: 4.

reservation and feels like she does not belong there. Her mother decides to give her a bible, which is the only printed matter that was available at her mother's home. Her mother hopes that these papers will make Zitkála-Šá feel more at home, but the contrary happens: "I took it from her hand, for her sake; but my enraged spirit felt more like burning the book, which afforded me no help, and was a perfect delusion to my mother."¹⁴⁸ The Bible stands for the dominant society which has given her the feeling that she does not longer belong at the reservation. A feeling that Zitkála-Šá loathes, but cannot shake off.

The harm resulting from the dislocation from the native home by social institutions of the dominant society is amplified in the section "Life of an Indian Schoolgirl." Here, Zitkála-Šá elaborates on the physical separation from her mother in the west and the absence of the caring and loving nature in women in the east, whom in ironic reversal of the native stereotype she describes as "cruel," "ignorant," and "superstitious."¹⁴⁹ By showing the cruelty and the traumatic experience of the east and contrasting these experiences with the sheltered, caring, and domestic space of her childhood on the reservation in the west, Zitkála-Šá is flipping the dominant view of the savage and masculine west and the civilized and feminine east: "From happy dreams of Western rolling lands and unlassoed freedom we tumbled out upon chilly bare floors back again into a paleface day."¹⁵⁰ In doing so, Zitkála-Šá does not only challenge the cultural image of the west but also intensifies the feeling of dislocation during her period in the east.

The resignification of the cultural image of the savage west and civilized east is intensified by Zitkála-Šá's reference to the biblical story of Eden. In the section "Big Red Apples" she describes how, when she left for the Indian boarding school, she was persuaded to leave the reservation by the promise of red apples: "I had never seen apple trees. I had never tasted more than a dozen red apples in my life; and when I heard of the orchards of the East, I was eager to roam among them."¹⁵¹ Her mother warns her about the missionaries, stating: "Their words are sweet but their deeds are bitter."¹⁵² Choosing the apples against her mother's advice is a clear reference to the biblical story of Eve who was banned from Eden after she ate the forbidden fruit. By comparing the reservation to Eden, which is considered paradise in Christian religion, Zitkála-Šá uses the religious ideal of Eden, familiar to largest part Christian American society, to subvert the stereotypical depictions of her homeland and

¹⁴⁸ Bonnin: 30.

¹⁴⁹ Ibidem: 22.

¹⁵⁰ Ibidem: 31.

¹⁵¹ Ibidem: 17.

¹⁵² Ibidem: 16.

educate her readers on the harsh consequences for the Native children and their families who fall for the false promises of the Indian reform policies. The way the missionaries lured Zitkála-Šá into leaving the reservation is an allegory of the devil's plan to evict Adam and Eve from paradise. After Zitkála-Šá left the reservation, she was physically allowed to come back, but her education has evicted her from the paradisiacal reservation in her mind.

The traumatic physical dislocation from the reservation and mother by her experience in the Indian boarding school is followed by a psychological dislocation which has led to a state of in-betweenness. The psychological gap between her and her mother and her resistance to dominant American culture makes that Zitkála-Šá feels that she belongs to neither culture. This becomes clear in the juxtaposition of the chapters dealing with her first months at the Indian boarding school. During the chapters at the Indian boarding school, Zitkála-Šá constantly talks about how she resists the efforts of her teachers to assimilate her into 'civilization.' Zitkála-Šá is constantly testing her teachers. In the passage where she is forced to cut her hair, she speaks out how she fought: "No, I will not submit, I will struggle first."¹⁵³ This is followed by many scenes of disobedient behavior. All to fight the erasure of her Native identity: "I was again actively testing the chains which tightly bound my individuality like a mummy for burial."¹⁵⁴ Although she did fight, the effect of her experience east becomes painfully visible when she arrives at the reservation. She describes that despite her longing for home, she unexpectedly feels "unhappy" and that she seemed "to hang in the heart of chaos."¹⁵⁵ The juxtaposition of these two chapters shows that despite her resistance and the physical reunion with her mother, Zitkála-Šá was, as she describes, "neither a wild Indian, nor a tamed one."¹⁵⁶ In other words, she has not submitted to the forces of dominant American society, but she also does not fully connect with her Native heritage.

Zitkála-Šá's state of in-betweenness is an unconventional and unsatisfactory ending in the genre of autobiography. However, the unfulfilling outcome of her autobiography is a successful tool to undermine the ideological justification of Indian boarding schools and the Indian removal policies in general.¹⁵⁷ Instead of fulfilling the promise of creating a home for the Native American student, it has done the opposite of destroying families and their homes in a physical but also a psychological sense. By underscoring the permanent loss of family and the feeling of homelessness after her Indian boarding school experience, Zitkála-Šá uses

¹⁵³ Bonnin: 22.

¹⁵⁴ Ibidem: 27.

¹⁵⁵ Ibidem: 28.

¹⁵⁶ Ibidem: 28

¹⁵⁷ Bernardin: 232.

the gendered vocabulary of home and family in order to, as Bernardin states, “turn a discomfiting spotlight on the non-Native audience itself” and “to view the American culture from an oppositional perspective.”¹⁵⁸

3.3 The Use of Sentimentalism to Gain a Sympathetic Audience

Gendered ideologies prevalent in dominant American society are not exclusively reflected thematically in Zitkála-Šá's autobiography. The sentimentalist tone that she uses is another reflection of a gendered ideal existing in the American culture of her time. As stated in the previous section, Zitkála-Šá's autobiography has been unconventional in comparison to earlier male Native American autobiographies, in that she does not use ethnographic descriptions of the traditional Native American culture. Instead, Zitkála-Šá casts her autobiography within the sentimental literary genre, in which the descriptions of circumstances are subordinate to the emotional journey of the main character.

The assumption was that this display of emotion was predominantly a female trait. This meant that sentimentalism in writing was expected to be used by female writers. Zitkála-Šá's use of emotion in her writing is yet another tool to resignify the cultural image of the west in dominant American society. Thus, she describes her childhood with mostly positive emotional connotations of love and happiness. About her years on the reservation, she recalls: “Loosely clad in a slip of brown buckskin and light-footed with a pair of moccasins on my feet, I was as free as the wind that blew my hair and no less spirited than a bounding deer. These were my mother's pride – my wild freedom and overflowing spirits.”¹⁵⁹ Zitkála-Šá recalls her childhood by evoking universal emotions instead of giving a clear description of time, place, and circumstances. By doing so, she minimizes the differences between the Native and the American culture in an attempt to neutralize her minority position. She does so, in order to conceal her inferior position and to pass for a respected member of the dominant culture. This reconfirmation of sameness through universal emotions is an important tactic to enable her non-native and female audience to identify with her story, which would hopefully lead to sympathy and compassion, and inspire social change.¹⁶⁰

By describing Native American life at the Yankton reservation exclusively from a positive and emotional perspective, according to Paula Gunn Allen, Zitkála-Šá presents an “overly romantic account of Indian life.”¹⁶¹ Gunn Allen draws attention to Zitkála-Šá's

¹⁵⁸ Bernardin: 229.

¹⁵⁹ Bonnin: 3.

¹⁶⁰ P. Jane Hafen, “Zitkala Ša: Sentimentality and Sovereignty,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 12 (1997): 34.

¹⁶¹ Paula Gunn Allen, *Studies in American Indian Literature: Critical Essays and Course Designs* (New York: MLA, 1983): 141.

dismissal of the physical battles between Native Americans and the federal government in her autobiography. The threat of battles had a vast impact on the Native American way of life on reservations. The fear and repercussions of these battles are withheld in Zitkála-Šá's portrayal of her childhood in the west. However, as Native American Studies scholar P. Jane Hafen adds: "The 1876 Battle of the Greasy Grass (Custer's Last Stand), the massacre at Wounded Knee, and the closing of the American frontier in 1890 would have been fresh in the minds of many American readers."¹⁶² These violent confrontations have been, and still are, a controversial subject in American history. By leaving out the historical context and by surrounding her time on the Yankton reservation with overtly positive emotions, Zitkála-Šá's paints an idyllic picture of her childhood that challenges the prejudices and stereotypes that govern the dominant cultural image of Natives prevalent in the dominant American society.

The romanticization of her childhood through the use of positively connotated emotions also has a comparative function in which the contrast with her experience at the Indian boarding school in the east is intensified. Where there was only freedom, love, and happiness in her childhood, Zitkála-Šá describes her experience in the east as marked by the opposite emotions of fear, pain, and rejection. Zitkála-Šá recalls: "Often I wept in secret, wishing I had gone West, to be nourished by my mother's love, instead of remaining among a cold race whose hearts were frozen hard with prejudice."¹⁶³ Ascribing positive and negative emotions to certain physical places, namely the west and east respectively, becomes complicated when Zitkála-Šá returns to the reservation and cannot recall these emotions of happiness and love that were once so inseparable connected to the reservation. Her experience east challenged the strong boundary of positive and negative emotional connotations towards her native homeland in the west and the hostile east which results into a her not recalling the positive emotions she once uncomplicatedly felt towards her culture: "I made no friends among the race of people I loathed. Like a slender tree, I had been uprooted from my mother, nature, and God. I was shorn of my branches, which had waved in sympathy and love for home and friends."¹⁶⁴ This sentimental passage articulates the far-reaching emotional consequences of the Indian reform policy.

However, the effectiveness of Zitkála-Šá's sentimental tone has been the subject of intense debate by critics of her time as well as by contemporary scholars. Art critic and writer Elisabeth Luther Cathy in 1902 argued that Zitkála-Šá used "a kind of melancholy that forces

¹⁶² Hafen: 32.

¹⁶³ Bonnin: 41.

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem: 27.

sympathy, even where it is not admitted to be rational. Many of the grievances, set forth with truly compelling eloquence, are those which only an intensively sensitive nature would nurse and remember, and, after many years, record.”¹⁶⁵ More contemporary critics state that Zitkála-Šá’s use of sentimental language indicates that Zitkála-Šá had unintentionally embraced the gendered ideologies of the dominant American culture that have been forced upon her during her time in the east. In this way, it is argued, her story cannot be not considered ‘authentically’ Native, which could threaten the effectiveness of her autobiography as a tool of protest in service of the Native American community. Her position in a double bind complicates the way she could speak for her community. In order to find a readership, she must accommodate the prevailing gendered conventions and ideologies, but in order to protest, she must fight these ideals that put her people into an inferior position in American society.

Zitkála-Šá recognizes her position as a Native woman who has been highly affected by her education at an Indian boarding school, which has alienated her from both cultures. However, this state of in-betweenness does not leave her powerless or ineffective in fighting for Native American rights. Instead, Zitkála-Šá used the gendered ideal of sentimentalism in order to transform ideas on Native Americans that existed in dominant society and to represent her cultural identity. According to American studies scholar Atilla Silkü this process can only succeed when there is a mutual contact between the oppressor and the oppressed: “By using the colonizer’s language, the writer ‘interpolates’ the cultural material of his own cultural heritage within the dominant Eurocentric culture.”¹⁶⁶ Zitkála-Šá skillfully uses the English language of her oppressor to reach a readership but by describing white people as “pale faces” and calling the train that takes her to the Indian boarding school an “iron horse,” Zitkála-Šá does show her Native perspective on her Indian boarding school experience.¹⁶⁷ In this way, Zitkála-Šá’s excellent knowledge of the English language, which she gained during her period at the Indian boarding school, functions to start a mutual contact between oppressor and the oppressed.

Zitkála-Šá’s mediation between two cultures should not be viewed as a positive outcome of her experience in the east. Her autobiography is an example of the traumatizing and debilitating effect of unwillingly becoming an inhabitant of the space in between two

¹⁶⁵ Elisabeth Luther Cary, “Recent Writings by American Indians,” *The Book Buyer* 24 (1902): 24.

¹⁶⁶ Atilla Silkü, “Fiddler on the Threshold: Cultural Hybridity in Gertrude Bonnin’s American Indian Stories,” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 40 (2008): 120.

¹⁶⁷ Bonnin: 22.

cultures. However, Zitkála-Šá has used her desperate state of in-betweenness to her advantage in order to prevent this deplorable state for those who will fall in between both cultures because of the treatment and policies of American society. Zitkála-Šá has transformed her traumatic experience into a tool that enables her to use the gendered ideal of sentimentalism to transcend cultural boundaries, gain sympathy and correct the inferior position of Native Americans.

3.4 A Personal Story as a Voice to a Community

Her place in between two cultures did not make Zitkála-Šá powerless. Instead, this position enabled her to create a bridge between two cultures. However, it must be noted that this position should not be romanticized, or seen as a satisfactory ending of her life story, because she was prevented from finding an independent selfhood. Instead, her private story of dislocation and loss of cultural identity must be understood as a communal story representing the Native American community who share the same position of in-betweenness.¹⁶⁸ Her autobiography reaches far beyond the genre's conventional and gendered ideal of portraying an individualistic narrative of success. In fact, Zitkála-Šá's *American Indian Stories* does the opposite. Zitkála-Šá's narrative functions as a voice that not only speaks for herself but for the entire Native American community.

In order to subvert the function of conventional autobiography and make it into a tool of protest in favor of the Native American community, Zitkála-Šá has, as literary scholar Sandra Kumamoto Stanley puts it, “mastered the white man’s discourse” instead of rejecting it.¹⁶⁹ The ideology of independent selfhood was merely ascribed to men because it was believed that women’s selfhood was formed through communal and familial relationships. Working within the prevalent gendered discourse, Zitkála-Šá uses this ideology of female selfhood to her advantage by including her relationship with her mother in her autobiography. In doing so, she is able to expose that the consequences of boarding school experience went further than Zitkála-Šá’s personal identity crisis. At the beginning of her autobiography, Zitkála-Šá’s description of her identity is primarily based on her role as daughter. She criticizes her own behavior through the standards that are set by her mother. Zitkála-Šá even recalls how she and her friends used to mirror their mothers’ behavior: “We delighted in impersonating our own mothers. We talked about things we heard them say in their conversations. We imitated their various manners, even to the inflection of their voices.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Stanley: 68.

¹⁶⁹ Ibidem: 68.

¹⁷⁰ Bonnin: 9.

Zitkála-Šá shows her mother's perspective on the physical and the psychological distance between her and her daughter. Before Zitkála-Šá leaves her mother asks her: "My daughter, do you still persist in wishing to leave your mother?"¹⁷¹ The passage is filled with the pain of a mother who is forced to give up her daughter through the temptations that were created through the Indian reform policies. The far-reaching consequences for her mother become visible when Zitkála-Šá is physically present, but unreachable for her mother who cannot solve the unhappiness Zitkála-Šá feels being in between two cultures. By showing her mother's perspective and pain of losing the connection with her child through Indian reform policies, Zitkála-Šá skillfully accommodates the gendered ideal in which the female selfhood is created through familial relationships, to demonstrate that the impact of Indian reform policies went beyond an individual level.

This identity formed through her role as a daughter becomes threatened when she is separated from her mother upon leaving for her boarding school education in the west. Zitkála-Šá expresses how this separation has caused her identity crisis. "When I saw the lonely figure of my mother vanish in the distance, a sense of regret settled heavily upon me. I felt suddenly weak, as if I might fall limp to the ground. I was in the hands of strangers whom my mother did not fully trust. I no longer felt free to be myself, or to voice my own feelings."¹⁷² During her time at boarding school, Zitkála-Šá's feeling of being lost is only intensified: "Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. In my anguish, I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder."¹⁷³ The gendered ideal of identity formation through familial relationships has been threatened because of the underlying ideologies of Indian reform policies, which are ironically enforced by the same dominant discourse. Zitkála-Šá offers her readers a critical perspective on the ideologies that justified the Indian reform policies by showing these conflicting ideals through her personal pain of separation and dislocation.

The attack on the gendered ideal of family-based identities through Indian reform policy is not only reflected in Zitkála-Šá's loss of her daughter role through the separation from her mother. In a passage in which Zitkála-Šá describes her return to the reservation, she shows how the separation has robbed her mother of her maternal identity. "My mother had

¹⁷¹ Bonnin: 17.

¹⁷² Ibidem: 18.

¹⁷³ Ibidem: 23.

never gone inside of a schoolhouse, and so she was not capable of comforting her daughter who could read and write.”¹⁷⁴ The magnitude of the pain caused by the separation of mother and daughter is reinforced by a captivating scene in which Zitkála-Šá’s mother flees into the hills in utter desperation: “After a certain solitude, I was suddenly aroused by a loud cry piercing the night. It was my mother’s voice wailing among the barren hills which held the bones of buried soldiers. She called aloud for her brothers’ spirits to support her in helpless misery. My fingers grew icy cold, as I realized that my unrestrained tears had betrayed my suffering to her, and she was grieving for me.”¹⁷⁵ Zitkála-Šá expresses how she hoped she could “return to her mother” when she was “grown tall,” as by then the psychological gap between them would be filled and they could resume their role as mother and daughter.¹⁷⁶ However, at the end of her autobiography Zitkála-Šá assesses the costs of her experience in the east, stating: “On account of my mother’s simple view of life, and my lack of any, I gave her up.”¹⁷⁷ The consequences of her education in the east have been so far-reaching that reconciliation with her mother had become impossible.

In order to protest the deplorable situation of the Native American people, Zitkála-Šá indeed “mastered the white man’s discourse.” Through its portrayal of the mother-daughter relationship and through showing how the displacement resulting from her physical and psychological separation from her mother influenced her identity formation, her autobiography affirms the gendered ideal of creating an identity through her familial bond with her mother. Zitkála-Šá skillfully uses gendered ideologies dominant in American society to show how these contradict the ideologies that justify the Indian reform policies. By doing so she demonstrates how the ideals in American society are social constructions which only facilitate those who are in power and oppress those who are not.

The fact that the ideology of individualism was only ascribed to men has given Zitkála-Šá the opportunity to develop a dual perspective on her boarding school experience in the east. By describing the effect on herself, her mother, and even her brother (who also went to the east for a ‘white man’s education’ but who “has not been able to make use of the education the Eastern school has given him”) she shows her non-native reader that her story is not incidental, but representative of the victimization of the entire Native American community.¹⁷⁸ By, for example, describing the teachers of the Indian boarding school as an

¹⁷⁴ Bonnin: 28.

¹⁷⁵ Ibidem: 30.

¹⁷⁶ Ibidem: 30.

¹⁷⁷ Ibidem: 41.

¹⁷⁸ Bonnin: 41.

“army of white teachers” Zitkála-Šá places her experience within a larger historical framework of physical and psychological oppression.¹⁷⁹ In doing so, the communal function of her autobiography can be placed in the Native American literary tradition where self-expression is subordinate to the communal function of unification and subversion.

3.5 Zitkála-Šá: The Trickster Figure

Her Indian boarding school experience in the east inevitably influenced Zitkála-Šá’s writings. This can partly explain the gendered ideologies that are noticeable within Zitkála-Šá’s autobiography. However, this analysis has shown that the use of the gendered ideals of domesticity, sentimentalism, and the creation of selfhood through familial relationships which governed nineteenth-century America’s dominant culture in her autobiography have been used in multiple manners and with different functions. The academic argument that Zitkála-Šá’s use of the white man’s discourse has made her autobiography less effective as a tool of protest for the Native American community, overlooks the subordinate position that Zitkála-Šá inhabits as part of a minority group. In order to get an audience, she has to accommodate a language, structure, genres, and gendered ideologies that are familiar to a non-Native audience. The double bind of being an outsider, which forced her to use the discourse that was prevalent in dominant culture to be heard by the members of this dominant culture, places her into an unresolvable position of ambiguity and contradiction.

Zitkála-Šá’s hybrid identity, caused by her feeling of not fully belonging to either culture, makes that her autobiography can be considered a modern trickster tale. These tales, where the cultural hero of the trickster can take any form and can inhabit every emotion, have been of great importance in Native American culture. The trickster is not only fluid in form, but also in his doings. The trickster is both evil and good, foolish and sacred, a troublemaker, but also someone who solves problems, a creator but also a destroyer. In many stories the trickster creates chaos, but after that also creates order. The trickster’s doings can never be characterized by a fixed trait because the trickster’s doing is always twofold, and his acts are always bringing things into balance.¹⁸⁰

Feeding the expectations of her non-native readers by using certain gendered ideologies of the dominant American culture, Zitkála-Šá tricks her readers into believing that she completed a personal journey from a savage Indian girl to an assimilated and civilized young woman. However, the gendered ideologies function as a veil, which on the face of it

¹⁷⁹ Ibidem: 40.

¹⁸⁰ Allen J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humor and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999): 5.

tries to authorize the harsh and political story that Zitkála-Šá tells. She is constantly shifting between different identities, showing like the trickster figure that her identity is not static. Literary scholar Carlton Smith argues that the main function of the trickster in contemporary Native American cultural products has been “its multivalent levels of narrative, deconstructive thrusts, and overall critique of Western notions of stable truths.”¹⁸¹ This is exactly what Zitkála-Šá does. She uses images and ideologies of dominant society in order to critique these exact ideologies that underlie the oppression of Native American people. The ‘truth’ of Indian reform policies is a different truth for those who suffer the consequences of this ‘truth.’

¹⁸¹ Carlton Smith, “Coyote, Contingency, and Community: Thomas King's "Green Grass, Running Water" and Postmodern Trickster” *American Indian Quarterly* 21 (1997): 518.

Chapter 4: Native or American? Gendered Ideals in the Autobiographies of Charles Eastman and Luther Standing Bear

The autobiographies of Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux* (1928) and of Charles Eastman, *From the Deep Woods of Civilization* (1916) have been praised by their contemporaries for their embracement of the enforced assimilation but also, more recently, criticized by scholars for the same reason. Thus, in an early review of *From the Deep Woods of Civilization*, Charles Eastman was said to be an example of a Native American who “in less than half a lifetime had traversed the whole path from savagery to civilization.”¹⁸² Connotated as a positive development at the turn of the twentieth century, the transformation described in the early review has been recently criticized by scholars who argue that both Eastman’s and Luther Standing Bear’s autobiographies are too positive towards the assimilation policies and that the authors use the dominant American ideals instead of ideals of their Native Sioux culture, which could diminish the effectiveness of the function of the autobiographies as tools of protest.

However, literary scholar Erik Peterson rightfully argues that both their positive contemporaries and the recent critics assume that there is “straight line assimilation” in which both groups of critics posit the categorical existence of two mutually exclusive identities.¹⁸³ Claiming that Eastman and Standing Bear have adopted the dominant American culture suggests that they have become “less Indian.”¹⁸⁴ The categorization of mutually exclusive identities implies that Standing Bear’s and Eastman’s cultural identity can be transformed in only one direction, namely from Native to American identity.¹⁸⁵ This idea that the dominant American and Native American identities are fixed precludes the possibility of a fluid identity existing in between these identities. According to Arnold Krupat, Native American autobiographies are “interstitial.” By this he means that they exist outside the familiar structures of identity.¹⁸⁶ This means that they cannot be categorized solely as an American, or a Native product. Instead, Luther Standing Bear’s and Charles Eastman’s autobiographical writings could be categorized as existing in between these structures. In other words, in their

¹⁸² Review of *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* by Charles A. Eastman, *The North American Review* 204 (December 1916): 949.

¹⁸³ Erik Petersen, “An Indian, an American: Ethnicity, Assimilation and Balance in Charles Eastman’s *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 4 (1992): 146.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibidem*: 146.

¹⁸⁵ David H. Brumble, *American Indian Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988): 149.

¹⁸⁶ Krupat: 30-31.

books they use both cultures in order to create a bicultural identity that can speak within and for both cultures.

The use of the dominant American culture and ideals in the genre of Native autobiography is thus not necessarily a representation of straight-line assimilation. Instead, Standing Bear and Eastman are aware of their inferior position as Native American authors, but in order to give cultural authority to their story and to voice the violent treatment towards the Native American community, they needed to use the gendered ideologies dominant in American culture. Focusing on the gendered ideals of domesticity vs the public sphere, reason, and individualism vs community, this chapter will analyze how Luther Standing Bear and Charles Eastman accommodate the gendered ideologies of dominant American society, while simultaneously criticizing these structures in American society that keep the inferior position of Native Americans in place. In other words, this chapter's aim is to answer the question: how are the gendered ideals from dominant American society reflected in Luther Standing Bear and Charles Eastman's autobiographical works and what consequences does that have for the authors' aim to use their autobiography as a tool of activism?

4.1 Luther Standing Bear: An Actor Who Protests "Playing Indian"

Another Native American writer who used his autobiography to make the suffering of the Native Americans visible was Luther Standing Bear. Luther Standing Bear was born in 1868 at the Spotted Trail Agency in Rosebud, South Dakota, as a part of the Sioux Nation.¹⁸⁷ Luther Standing Bear was the son of George Standing Bear, who was a Dakota Chief.¹⁸⁸ Luther Standing Bear was brought up according to the traditional standards of the Sioux culture. He was educated in fighting and hunting. However, the traditional way of life of the Sioux tribes became endangered during the last half of the nineteenth century. Military defeats, the disappearance of the buffalo, and confinement to the reservation were all factors that changed Sioux life drastically.¹⁸⁹ George Standing Bear realized that they were subjected to white American society and because of that, he sent his son to the Carlisle Industrial School for Indians in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, when Luther Standing Bear was eleven years old.¹⁹⁰

After his education at the Carlisle Industrial School for Indians, Luther Standing Bear returned to the Rosebud Reservation. After his time in the east, Luther Standing Bear had a hard

¹⁸⁷Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975; reprint Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928): ix.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibidem*: viii.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*: x.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*: x.

time readjusting to tribal life.¹⁹¹ He had several jobs as a teacher and an agency clerk before he joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows. After that, he went to Hollywood to star in several Hollywood films such as "Ramona" and "Black Oak."¹⁹² During these shows and films, Luther Standing Bear came to understand that the portrayals of Native Americans in these forms of popular culture were not meant to be representations of Native American cultures but were reflections of white Americans' ideas on how Native Americans acted and what their place was in American history.¹⁹³ The fact that he had to "play Indian" instead of representing his culture truthfully began to bother Luther Standing Bear and he quit his job as an actor.¹⁹⁴

Unlike Charles Eastman and Zitkála-Šá, Luther Standing Bear was not an active member of the Society for American Indians, whose biggest goal was to change the opinion on Native Americans in American society. Nor did he hold other political positions in an attempt to improve the Native American situation. However, through his writing, he did become a spokesperson for this cause.¹⁹⁵ His autobiographies are a cry for recognition of the 'real' Native American experience instead of the representations that were prominent in the Wild West shows of Buffalo Bill and the many Western movies that were produced in Hollywood. He dared to write about events in history from a Native American perspective in order to change the already existing perceptions of savage, cruel and uneducated Native Americans.¹⁹⁶ In this sense, his autobiographies were tools of activism in the struggle to show how white American society mistreated Native Americans.

In his autobiography *My People the Sioux*, Luther Standing Bear used his English education as a weapon against the dominant American society. However, just as Charles Eastman, Luther Standing Bear was aware that he was constrained by ideas about gender -- in his case about masculinity -- in dominant American society. As I aim to demonstrate in the analysis of his work below, he had to accept and use some prevalent ideals about masculinity in his writing in order to become a voice in the debate about the improvement of Native Americans' inferior position in dominant American society.

4.2 Charles Eastman: An Acculturated Sioux

Charles Eastman was born in 1858 as Hadakha in Minnesota as a member of the Santee Sioux tribe. In 1862, Eastman fled from Minnesota to Canada with his grandmother where he was

¹⁹¹ Standing Bear: xiii

¹⁹² Burt: 618.

¹⁹³ Ibidem: 617.

¹⁹⁴ Ibidem: 628.

¹⁹⁵ Ibidem: 628.

¹⁹⁶ Ibidem: 633.

renamed Ohiyesa. The news that his father was killed by American soldiers triggered Eastman's hate towards the white man.¹⁹⁷ He was brought up by his grandmother in the traditions of the Sioux tribe and as a potential Sioux warrior. Eastman described this part of his childhood, where the contact with dominant society was limited, in his first autobiography *My Indian Boyhood* (1902). His life took a turn after his father, who it later turned out had been imprisoned instead of executed, took Eastman back to America to learn the ways of the white man.¹⁹⁸ Though initially Eastman struggled to comprehend and adapt to this new life, eventually he dedicated himself to serving his father's wishes to learn the white man's ways. After his education at an Indian Boarding school in South Dakota, Eastman received his bachelor degree at Dartmouth and continued his education at Boston Medical School from which he graduated in 1890 as the first Native American physician.¹⁹⁹

During the U.S. army attack at Wounded Knee, Eastman assisted the wounded on the Native American side at the Pine Ridge reservation. The injustice and humanity that he witnessed during this massacre shook his regained trust in American society.²⁰⁰ He left Pine Ridge in 1893 with his wife Elaine Goodale Eastman, a white teacher he had met at the reservation. His experience at Pine Ridge reservation and the brutality of the U.S. army at Wounded Knee persuaded Eastman to use his position in an attempt to improve the inferior position of Native American communities in American society. In 1897 Eastman went to Washington as the legal representative and lobbyist for the Sioux tribe in their efforts to secure the restoration of annuities that had been taken from them after the Minnesota uprising in 1862.²⁰¹ In 1911, Eastman became one of the founders of the Society of American Indians, an organization that attempted to improve reservation conditions, to protect Native Americans from injustice, and to gain citizenship for all Native Americans.²⁰²

Eastman's political positions were not the only means by which Eastman manifested his dedication to the improvement of the inferior position of his people. In his published writings, he demonstrated the value of Native American culture through fictional and autobiographical stories. In these stories, Eastman is often critical of the white man's exercising his power to destroy Native American culture. His expressions of appreciation for the Native culture and his efforts to keep this culture alive alongside the dominant American

¹⁹⁷ Petersen: 147.

¹⁹⁸ Ibidem: 147.

¹⁹⁹ Ibidem: 148.

²⁰⁰ Ibidem: 148.

²⁰¹ "Charles Eastman," Early Native American Literature, Accessed April 29, 2019,

<http://nativeamericanwriters.com/eastman.html>

²⁰² Ibidem.

culture illustrate that Eastman was not fully assimilated. Throughout his life, he always rejected the “assimilated” label. Instead, he preferred to refer himself as an “acculturated Sioux.”²⁰³ He used his knowledge and status as an ‘acculturated’ Native American with a white man’s education and worked within the gendered structures dominant in American society in order to enhance the position of his people. Persuaded – in accordance with the beliefs prevalent in his times – that the progress of civilization was unstoppable and inevitable, Eastman hoped that Native Americans could participate in American society. This, he believed, did not mean that they had to lose their Native culture. Instead, Eastman foresaw a future where Natives and Americans could form one society in which both cultures could live in harmony and be respected equally.²⁰⁴

4.3 The Separation of Spheres: Women’s Tipi, Men’s Battlefield

In his book *Democracy in America*, published in 1840, the French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville addressed the existence of two separate, gendered, spheres within nineteenth-century American society.²⁰⁵ He observed how “In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes and to make them keep pace one with the other, but in two pathways that are always different.”²⁰⁶ The division of the two spheres by gender was uncommon in traditional Native American culture. As discussed in chapter 1, Native American women often held governing positions in their Native communities and were thus not restricted to domestic work. Besides, the strict separation of the two spheres did not exist at all in traditional Native American culture. The Native American culture is community-based and familial structures, ideals of the home, and political positions were all intertwined in service of the well-being of the community.

The absence of the structure of two separate spheres in Native American communities was described as chaotic and uncivilized by the policy makers of American society already in the early stages of contact with Native Americans. The creation of an image of the gendered structures of Native American culture as uncivilized in, for instance, popular culture, has reinforced the patriarchal structure of American society as the only functioning and civilized structure of ruling. Luther Standing Bear and Charles Eastman had to take these preconceptions, widespread in American society, about the communal structure into account in

²⁰³ Raymond Wilson, *Ohiyesa: Charles Eastman, Santee Sioux* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983): 142.

²⁰⁴ Petersen: 150.

²⁰⁵ Linda K. Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History,” *The Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 10.

²⁰⁶ Alexis de Toqueville, *Democracy in America* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1835; reprint, University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2002): 101.

writing their autobiographies. The challenge for Standing Bear and Eastman, then, was that on the one hand they had to oppose this stereotypical perception of their culture, but on the other hand that they had to do so within the gendered structures of the dominant society, in which the public and domestic sphere should not be intertwined. In order to challenge this stereotypical perception of Native American communal life, while still working within the gendered structures of the dominant culture, Luther Standing Bear paints a romanticized picture of the communal tribal life of his childhood. In order to translate this idealized portrait of his Native childhood to his non-Native audience, Standing Bear shows how the gendered ideals of home, family, and politics prevalent in American society are represented in Native American culture as well.

In his relatively long and more ethnographical than autobiographical description of his childhood, Standing Bear wants to give the reader the impression that, unlike American society's stereotypical interpretation of chaos and primitivity in Native American communities, the foundation of the communal structure was formed through ideals of a stable home and of familial relationships. In his defense of the tipi as a primitive and uncivilized home Standing Bear states: "Our home life began in the tipi. It was there we were born, and we loved our home. A tipi should probably seem queer to a white child, but if you ever have a chance to live in one you will find it very comfortable – that is, if you get a *real* tipi; not the kind used by moving-picture companies."²⁰⁷ The explicit reference to the stereotypical images of Native American culture in American cultural products shows how the description of his childhood in *My People the Sioux* functions to challenge these stereotypical images present in motion pictures and novels.

Standing Bear's urge to challenge these stereotypes through the ethnographic description of his childhood was, as literary scholar Frederick Hale has argued, a result of Standing Bear's career as a Native actor in Hollywood, where commercial success was of greater importance than an accurate representation of Native American life.²⁰⁸ Luther Standing Bear states in his autobiography: "I have seen probably all of the pictures which are supposed to depict Indian life, and not one of them is correctly made... I have gone personally to directors and stage managers and playwrights and explained this to them, telling them that their actors do not play the part as it should be played, and do not even know how to put on an Indian costume and get it right; but the answer is always the same, 'The public don't know the

²⁰⁷ Standing Bear: 26.

²⁰⁸ Frederick Hale, "Acceptance and Rejection of Assimilation in the Works of Luther Standing Bear," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5 (1993): 31.

difference, and we should worry!’ ”²⁰⁹ His autobiography, and in particular his recollection of his Native upbringing, was an opportunity to make his non-Native audience see this difference that the motion picture industry did not want to consider.

Given Standing Bear’s goal to break down the stereotypical portrayal of Native American life, it is striking that he conceals the actual communal structure of his Native community and instead adopts the dominant gendered structure of the two separate spheres to describe the Native life on the reservation. He thus mirrors dominant American society by explicitly mentioning the difference between the roles of men and women within the culture and shows how these resemble the American structure of the domestic and the public sphere. For example, he states: “There were no idlers in our camp, no lazy ones. When the men had nothing else to do, they went hunting, which kept our stomach filled. The women were kept busy making moccasins, clothing, and playing games.”²¹⁰ Standing Bear clearly distinguishes women’s role as caretakers who “fixed up the tipi as comfortably and inviting as possible” and “stayed home with us children, while father was on warpath.”²¹¹

He explicitly addresses his experience as an actor and the representation of tribal life in motion pictures as a motivation to illustrate an “accurate and reliable” picture of the Sioux life in his autobiography.²¹² By having the Native societal structure mirror that of dominant American society and by concealing the communal structure endemic to Native society, Luther Standing Bear tries to accomplish a sense of familiarity for his non-Native readers. This is a tactic to diminish the negative connotation of the contrast between a civilized, progressive American society and an uncivilized and primitive Native American society. Luther Standing Bear thus had to work within the gendered framework of separate spheres and compromise the ideal of the Native communal structure in order to speak to a non-native audience and use his autobiography as a tool of protest for his people.

Charles Eastman also used the gendered ideal of separate spheres in his autobiography, but did so differently. The division between the female domestic and male public sphere is not a strategy Eastman uses explicitly. However, he does use the same strategy of comparison to create a feeling of sameness and familiarity for his non-Native readers in his autobiography *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*. But instead of comparing the Native culture to American culture, as Standing Bear did, Eastman boldly takes the subordinate culture as a point of

²⁰⁹ Standing Bear: 285.

²¹⁰ Ibidem: 62.

²¹¹ Ibidem: 17,82

²¹² Ibidem: iii.

reference to compare American culture to Native American culture. Gendered ideals and gender identities do play a significant role in these comparisons. As Native American studies scholar Peter Bayers has argued: “Drawing equivalences between Santee and middle- and upper-middle-class white manhood, Eastman illustrates that Santee—and by extension, all Native males—are intrinsically equal to white males in their manly attributes and thus capable of full and equal U.S. citizenship.”²¹³

Persuaded that Native men were limited by their primitive nature and often seen as loose cannons, dominant society believed that Native Americans were not capable of a truly ‘civilized manhood.’ As American Studies scholar Joel Pfister argues: “Manliness was scripted in exclusively capitalist terms: competing in the marketplace, laboring in prescribed fashion at particular occupations, and supporting oneself independent of the government. No other cultural invention of manhood was credited.”²¹⁴ Eastman adds to this claim that the ideal of manhood is merely a cultural construction: he proclaims that he was “trained to be a man” and “trained to be a warrior.”²¹⁵ Some would say that this could be seen as a denial of his cultural heritage because Eastman implies that his Native identity is not congenital. However, Eastman is using the theory of cultural construction to show how all men are equal, by stating that manhood is not something you possess but learn. The fact that Native Americans are equal to American men concerning their intellectual capacity makes that ideals of manhood can be learned by Native American men. In his autobiography, he states: “I believe that an Indian can learn all that is in the book of the white man, so that he may be equal to them in the ways of mind.”²¹⁶ This reasoning exposes the fluidity of the formation of identity and masculinity and suggests that Native men are capable of learning the ideals of white manhood.

Eastman does not solely suggest Native men’s capability of assimilation. In order to break down the stereotypical portrayal of Native manhood, Eastman shows how at the root, Native American manhood and American manhood evince many similarities; he does so by comparing the two in his autobiography.²¹⁷ For instance, Eastman recalls seeing a hardworking farmer, covered in sweat and dirt in order to provide for himself and his family, which might be one of the most typical personifications of the American ideal of masculinity. He compares

²¹³ Peter Bayers “Charles Alexander Eastman’s *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* and the Shaping of Native Manhood,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 20 (2008): 52.

²¹⁴ Joel Pfister, *Individuality Incorporated: Indians and the Multicultural Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004): 62.

²¹⁵ Charles Eastman, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003 reprint; Boston: Little, Brown, 1916): 1.

²¹⁶ *Ibidem*: 28.

²¹⁷ Bayers: 64.

this farmer with the Native men who return from battle: “With sleeves rolled up, face and hands blackened and streaming with sweat, I thought he looked not unlike a successful warrior just returned from the field of battle. His powerful muscles and the manly way in which he handled the iron impressed me tremendously.”²¹⁸ By boldly comparing the two cultures, Eastman carefully places the Native and American ideas of manhood on the same level through juxtaposition and in that way subverts the stereotypical portrayal of the violent and savage nature of Native American manhood that existed in dominant American society.

Later on in his autobiography, Eastman uses his former strategy of placing Native and American ideals of manhood on the same level, to emphasize his conviction of the Native men’s capacity to learn to function within the dominant ideals of manhood. Eastman was an advocate of the Dawes Act because he believed that this would be the only way in which Natives could earn an equal and independent position within dominant American society without losing their Native identity entirely.²¹⁹ The reservation system, however, he came to feel, took away the manhood of Natives: “I was much struck with the loss of manliness and independence in these, the first ‘reservation Indians’ I had ever known, I longed above all things to help them to regain self-respect.”²²⁰ The reservation system robbed Natives of the Native ideal of manhood and of their full potential to play an equal part in dominant American society.

As Bayers rightfully argues, Eastman used the notions of manhood from his Sioux upbringing, while he “also understood the necessity of appealing to his white audiences notions of manhood if he was to further the goals of the Dawes Act.”²²¹ More than Luther Standing Bear, Eastman mirrors the ideals of masculinity and the male place in the public sphere in his description of Native American life. But by specifically mentioning the inferior position of Native men while confirming their masculine potential in American society, he accepts and works within the gendered structure of separate spheres dividing men and women’s place in American society. His protest is mainly focused on gaining opportunities for Native Americans in the public domain and less on the emotional and mental impact of the injustice towards Native Americans.

4.4 Native American Protest through Reason

By placing his focus on the deprivation of job and political opportunities for Native Americans as a result of their inferior position in American society, Eastman glosses over the complex and

²¹⁸ Eastman: 22.

²¹⁹ Bayers: 52.

²²⁰ Eastman: 71.

²²¹ Bayers: 70.

the physical and emotional trauma resulting from the violent contact between Native Americans and American society. As literary scholar Drew Lopenzina states about Eastman's non-confrontational tone in his autobiography: "He is so averse to highlighting intercultural conflict or acknowledging white atrocities that the most telling details inevitably fall by the wayside. His account remains a sort of breathless sketch that denies the large-scale human tragedy these events encompassed."²²² This non-confrontational tone is visible when Eastman speaks about the aftermath of the massacre of Wounded Knee: "All this was a great ordeal for one who had so lately put all his faith in the Christian love and lofty ideals of the white man. Yet, I passed no hasty judgement, and was thankful that I might be of some service."²²³ At the beginning of his autobiography, Eastman touches on the friction between his community and American society through the Minnesota outbreak in 1862. Because of this, Eastman tells us, he was "taught to never spare a citizen of the United States."²²⁴ However, Eastman dismisses this tension quickly by stating that this was "the one unfortunate thing about my training."²²⁵

Soothing over of emotional trauma in Eastman's autobiography is a strategy to appeal to his non-Native audience. Eastman was aware that overt accusations of the cruel ways in which American society dealt with his tribe, would not be conducive to convincing his audience of the need to change the inferior position of his people. As a consequence, Eastman decided to alter his language to match the gendered ideal of reason. This ideal, prevalent in dominant American society, was used in opposition to the female ideal of sentimentalism. As we have seen above, rationalism was one of the most valued principles of the public sphere in American society.²²⁶ The trait of reason, which was ascribed to man's character, was the socially accepted fashion to approach public matters in American society. Eastman knew that he had to write within this gendered framework of reason if he wanted to successfully authorize his claim of equality for Native Americans.

Unlike many other emotional testimonies by Indian boarding school students -- for example, Zitkála-Šá, Luther Standing Bear, and Sarah Winnamucca -- Eastman describes how he underwent his white man's education with reason. In a passage in which he questions the wishes of his father to go to an Indian boarding school, he shows how his emotions tell him that life in American society is "a false life! a treacherous life."²²⁷ However, he represses these

²²² Drew Lopenzina, "'Good Indian': Charles Eastman and the Warrior as Civil Servant," *American Indian Quarterly* 27 (2003): 732.

²²³ Eastman: 66.

²²⁴ *Ibidem*: 2.

²²⁵ *Ibidem*: 2.

²²⁶ Hender: 113.

²²⁷ Eastman: 5.

emotions by reasoning that “the sooner we accept their mode of life and follow their teaching, the better it will be for us all. I have thought much on this matter and such is my conclusion.”²²⁸ This is only one example of how Eastman explicitly expresses how he weighs every decision and that not emotion but reasoning determines the choice he makes.

One of the reoccurring scenes in Indian boarding school autobiographies is the forced cutting of the hair of the Native students, which is often symbolic for the violent attack and the defeat of Native American culture through the Indian reform policies that enforced assimilation. Eastman’s experience of cutting his hair is described in terms that are far from emotional: “I didn’t want to go to that place again, but father’s logic was too strong for me, and the next morning I had my long hair cut, and started into school in earnest.”²²⁹ The lack of emotion evinced during his experience at the Indian boarding school has been understood in recent scholarly research as an indication of the degree to which Eastman fully assimilated to dominant American culture and how his autobiography functioned as a propaganda tool in favor of American society’s Indian policies instead of a protest tool to improve the inferior position of Native Americans.²³⁰

As an advocate of the Dawes Act, which included federal financing of Indian boarding schools, Eastman understandably does not connotate his own Indian boarding school experience as negative or traumatic. During his education at Dartmouth Eastman recalls: “I was a sort of prodigal son of old Dartmouth, and nothing could have exceeded the heartiness of my welcome.”²³¹ His approach to his education in the white man’s world is more pragmatic in that he does not see his education as a form of cultural submission but as an opportunity for the Native community to gain more power by using a white man’s education: “I wished that our young men might at once take up the white man’s way, and prepare themselves to hold office and wield influence in their native states.”²³² As Lopenzina rightfully argues, Eastman’s experience was indeed different from governmental boarding schools that Zitkála-Šá and Luther Standing Bear attended. At Beloit college, Eastman got a traditional white man’s education rather than an industrial one and students were not forced to abolish their Sioux language.²³³ They were even taught how to read and write in their traditional Sioux language. The gendered framework in combination with his “somewhat fortuitous set of circumstances”

²²⁸ Eastman: 5.

²²⁹ Ibidem: 25.

²³⁰ Lopenzina: 728.

²³¹ Eastman: 38.

²³² Ibidem: 37.

²³³ Lopenzina: 739.

led to a more descriptive than emotional testimony of his Indian boarding school experience.²³⁴ This might have led Eastman to an attenuation of the more emotional documentation evinced in other Native people's testimonies of the governmental Indian boarding school experience.

However, as an advocate for a white man's education for Native American children, Eastman does speak out about the testimonies of his contemporaries who went to governmental boarding schools and criticizes the treatment and the brainwashing practices that were set out to remove every aspect of Native American culture from the students. "Our younger element has now been so thoroughly drilled in the motives and methods of the white man, at the same time losing the old mother and family training through being placed in boarding school from six years of age onward, that they really have become an entirely different race."²³⁵ In comparison with his own experience, the testimonies must have been an eye-opener to the fact that Indian reform policies were not set up to create the ideal of a harmonized American society that Eastman had envisioned.

Eastman's autobiography should be considered within the historical and gendered context of his time. Eastman was aware that the dominant society had the power to fully exterminate the Native American identity. This awareness was fueled by Eastman's presence in the aftermath of the massacre of Wounded Knee at the Pine Ridge reservation in December 1890. Seemingly favoring full assimilation, Eastman's use of the narrative and gendered structure of reason was never one of cultural negation or complete assimilation, but rather a call for a kind of a combined continuity. He states: "This was my ambition, that the Sioux should accept civilization before it was too late! I wished that our young men might at once take up the white man's way, and prepare themselves to hold office and wield influence in their native states."²³⁶

Unlike Eastman, Luther Standing Bear did attend an industrial governmental Indian boarding school. However, his tone concerning his experience at this boarding school is comparable to the positive connotations marking Eastman's description of his schooldays. In his testimony of his Indian boarding school experience, Standing Bear also used the gendered framework of reason to show his willingness and positive attitude towards his white education, stating that "it paid to do whatever was asked of me, and to do it without grumbling."²³⁷ The white education of Native boys seemed to be the best solution for the Native Americans,

²³⁴ Lopenzina: 739.

²³⁵ Eastman: 164.

²³⁶ Ibidem: 65.

²³⁷ Standing Bear: 153

according to Standing Bear, who states that the Indian boarding school “was the best place for the Indian boy.”²³⁸

Just as Eastman, Standing Bear does not criticize the Dawes act itself, but he does protest the way it has been carried out by the U.S. government. Despite his accomplishments through his white education, Standing Bear is disappointed by the lack of improvement of his situation: “With all my title of chieftain, and with all my education and travels, I discovered that as long I was on the reservation, I was only a helpless Indian, and was not considered any better than any of the uneducated Indians.”²³⁹ The sovereignty and independence that Luther Standing Bear expected to receive after his extensive education in the east were not granted. Agents of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, appointed by the federal government in Washington, were governing the reservations, which made bettering the position of his people “an uttering impossibility.”²⁴⁰

The lack of emotion in describing the deplorable situation of his people on the reservation could diminish the urgency of the matter. However, by placing his life story and addressing the problematic situation of his people within the gendered framework of reason, Standing Bear emphasizes the practical rather than the emotional damage done to his people and offers a practical solution, namely, granting Native Americans full American citizenship. “I trust as you read these pages you will voice my plea to help my people, the Sioux, by giving them full citizenship. The Indian has just as many ounces of brains as his white brother and with education and learning he will make a real American citizen of whom the white race will be justly proud.”²⁴¹ Through the gendered ideal of reason, Luther Standing Bear entered the political arena of dominant society on its terms but could use it as a weapon to show the failing outcome of Indian reform policies.

4.5 Individual Warriors or a Communal Fight?

Some critics have asked the question if Luther Standing Bear and Charles Eastman were qualified to enter the political arena of dominant American society on behalf of the Native American communities because of the distance from their traditional culture caused by their education. Both writers follow the narrative structure of individual progression that, as we have seen, was a conventional feature of the genre of autobiography. The individual’s identity formation is gendered in that men were supposed to find their identity without interference or influences from other individuals. This structure is confirmed by the title of Charles

²³⁸ Standing Bear: 155.

²³⁹ Ibidem: 277.

²⁴⁰ Ibidem: 277.

²⁴¹ Ibidem: 203.

Eastman's autobiography *From Deep Woods to Civilization*, which implies that through his individual progression, he has found the light of civilization through the thick bush of savagery.

The implied fulfillment of a successful path from a savage Indian boy to an educated man is continued in the story of Eastman's life. According to Petersen, Eastman uses the conventional structure of the jeremiad. A jeremiad is a religious form of a conversion narrative, in which an irreligious narrator is converted and reaches a spiritual epiphany.²⁴² Even though Eastman did convert to the Christian faith after his education at an Indian boarding school, the conversion that Petersen hints at is the transformation of a savage into a 'civilized' man. By following this conventional structure, Eastman appeals to his non-Native audience but subverts the audience's expectations by the absence of a climactic endpoint in which he fully embraces his newfound identity.²⁴³

As an advocate of education and acculturation for Native American men, Eastman emphasized that civilization is not inevitably a victory or a climactic endpoint for Native Americans. Eastman states: "Some people, imagine that we are still wild savages, living on the hunt or on rations; but as a matter of fact, we Sioux are now fully entrenched, for all practical purposes, in the warfare of civilized life."²⁴⁴ By referring to the Indian reform policies as warfare, Eastman shows how this new and inevitable cultural structure will not be without a struggle or fight for the persistence of the Sioux identity.

Instead of describing the civilization process as the climactic endpoint to his newly formed identity, Eastman leaves his readers with his ambiguity towards both cultures: "I am an Indian; and while I have learned much from civilization, for which I am grateful, I never lost my Indian sense of right and justice. I am for development and progress along social and spiritual lines, rather than those of commerce, nationalism, or material efficiency. Nevertheless, so long as I live I am an American."²⁴⁵ This passage is the embodiment of the contradictory juxtaposition that Eastman has been using throughout his autobiography and which has left his readers, and critical scholars, in doubt about his loyalty to either culture. Written within the dominant gendered structure of individualism the autobiography of Eastman does not conventionally function to present a coherent identity; instead, it does the opposite of advocating how ideals from both cultures can exist together in a new societal

²⁴² Petersen: 149.

²⁴³ Ibidem: 149.

²⁴⁴ Eastman: 165.

²⁴⁵ Ibidem: 109.

system. The autobiographical account of Eastman is used to portray how not assimilation in which Native Americans lose their Native heritage to become a member of dominant American society, but acculturation in which the Native American culture and the American culture melt into one culture, can break the boundaries between two cultures without the inferiorization of the Native Americans by dominant American society.

Luther Standing Bear's story of his progression from growing up as an 'uncivilized' Native boy to obtaining American citizenship does consistently reflect the gendered ideal of individualism. Throughout his narrative he accommodates the ideal that hard work will lead to individual reward, as is reflected in a passage where Standing Bear states: "I came back to school more determined than ever to learn the white people's ways, no matter how hard I had to study."²⁴⁶ Rewarded with being the first Native American with a fast promotion at his job outside the boarding school, Standing Bear fuels the expectations of the non-Native reader by forming an autobiographical identity that was conventional in the genre of autobiography.

Later in his autobiography, Standing Bear shows how these individual achievements through hard work at the Indian Boarding school was not for his own good, but for the benefit of his tribe. "I thought that someday I might be able to become an interpreter for my father, as he could not speak English."²⁴⁷ Later on in his education, Luther Standing Bear shows how strongly his Native American identity remains intact despite the actions of the Indian Boarding schools: "I felt as if I should burst out crying. I was not so brave that night, after all. If I had not cared for my race, all the strong impressions would have had no effect upon me, but the thought of working for my race brought tears to my eyes."²⁴⁸

Standing Bear's autobiography ends with him gaining American citizenship, which seems to be the practical but climactic point of the formation of his autobiographical identity and which is a conventional ending in autobiographical works. However, Standing Bear attenuates this satisfactory ending for his audience, by stating that his ending is exceptional and that this path is unobtainable for other Native Americans through their inferior position in dominant American society: "The Indian is bright, and he is capable of holding good, responsible positions if he is given a chance. Why not give the Indian a chance?"²⁴⁹ Through the structures of gendered ideals dominant in American society, Luther Standing Bear in his life story presents himself as an example of a bright, capable and responsible Indian, while

²⁴⁶ Standing Bear: 118.

²⁴⁷ Ibidem: 114.

²⁴⁸ Ibidem: 179.

²⁴⁹ Ibidem: 203.

simultaneously he uses his autobiography as a tool to protest the position of Native Americans who have not been given this chance.

Conclusion

As discussed in the previous chapters, several critics have doubted the authenticity of the 19th-century Indian boarding school autobiographies. According to these critics, the extensive contact with dominant American culture has unintentionally or unconsciously led the Native American writers to embrace the ideologies that were dominant in American society. Not considering their story as ‘authentically’ Native, these critics doubt the effectiveness of Indian boarding school autobiographies as a tool of protest for the inferior position of Native Americans in American society. However, as this thesis has aimed to show, these critics overlook the historical and ideological restrictions these writers faced in using their life stories as tools of protest. The forced contact between Native American culture and American culture has indeed challenged and changed Native American culture. As P.J Hafen has argued, Native American writers “exist in complex relation to multiple traditions.”²⁵⁰ These changes of Native culture through contact with American culture have been described in the Indian boarding school autobiographies.

For example, Zitkála-Šá shows how her mother traded her wigwam for a log cabin as her home and Luther Standing Bear describes how the Native warriors used guns instead of bow and arrow to shoot their wild game. The adaptations and changes in Native American culture that have been described in the autobiographies, however, do not make the autobiography less ‘Native.’ Native American culture should not be viewed as a culture that exists in a vacuum. Instead, Native American culture should be perceived as a culture that has been challenged and influenced by the domination of American culture, but that still exists and is alive today. This is why the Indian boarding school should be approached within its historical context, in which the enforcement of Indian reform policies indeed challenged and changed but did not destroy Native American culture.

But the historical context of the Indian reform policies in the nineteenth century does not fully explain the use of the ideologies of the writers of Indian boarding school autobiographies. Due to their inferior position in American society, writers of Indian boarding school autobiographies were not solely restricted to the underlying ideals of the genre of autobiography. As this thesis has hoped to demonstrate, gendered ideals dominant in American society which diverged from the gendered ideals in traditional Native American culture, had to be considered in Native American autobiographies if they wanted to be an

²⁵⁰ P. Jane Hafen, “Native American Literatures,” in *A Companion to American Indian History*, eds. Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002): 234

effective and authorized voice. Without using the gendered ideals of the public and the domestic sphere, sentimentalism and reason, and community and individualism, which were dominant in nineteenth-century society, their stories would be silenced.

5.1 Creating Sameness through Gendered Ideals

The friction inherent in the need to write from within a gendered framework that is culturally not their own is minimized in the autobiographies of Zitkála-Šá, Luther Standing Bear, and Charles Eastman. All three writers obscure the gendered ideals of the Native culture they grew up in and instead minimize the differences between the Native and American culture in terms of gendered ideals. By creating a feeling of sameness, the authors attempt to break down the stereotypical image of the Native American community as savage and uncivilized. Despite the gynocratic nature of most Native American communities, in which women can hold primary functions, but where men are not subordinate to women and where cooperation and harmony are the most significant principles, Zitkála-Šá, Standing Bear, and Eastman all three mask this original Native gender structure in order to let the non-Native audience identify with their life story.

The gendered line that is drawn between male and female traits in dominant American society is mirrored in the three autobiographies. As a female autobiography, Zitkála-Šá's work shows that, unlike the stereotypical portrayal of tribal life in American cultures, the gendered ideals of the domestic, sentimentalism, and community have distinctly been present during her tribal upbringing. By not solely telling her life story from her own perspective, but adding her mother's experiences and the consequences of Indian reform policy to her story, Zitkála-Šá effectively mirrors the gendered ideals of dominant society through the persona of her mother. By portraying her mother as a caring and emotional character, but still as a traditional Native American woman, Zitkála-Šá resignifies the stereotypical cultural representation of the savage tribal structure.

Luther Standing Bear's more ethnographic than an autobiographical description of his childhood conceals the communal structures of his tribe and portrays his childhood within the gendered structure of American society. He mirrors dominant American society by repeatedly mentioning the difference between the roles of men and women within the Native American culture and by emphasizing how these resemble the American structure of the domestic and the public sphere. The act of mirroring is even more explicit in Eastman's autobiography in which he explicitly compares Native American warriors to American farmers. However, in the male autobiographies, the act of mirroring functions not so much to portray similarities between the two cultures; instead, Standing Bear and Eastman stress the promising qualities

of Native Americans. In doing so, Standing Bear's and Eastman's autobiographies mirror the characteristics of Native Americans and Americans which could eventually lead to a sameness in social structures if this opportunity was given by American society.

So instead of perceiving the act of mirroring dominant gendered ideals in the Indian boarding school autobiographies as a removal from their Native culture, it should be viewed as an effective tactic to bridge the gap between American culture and Native culture. The three authors were well aware of their inferior position in American society and compromised and accommodated the gendered ideals dominant in American society to make their non-Native audience critically think about the preconceptions towards Native American culture and help them identify with their cause and to create support for social change.

5.2 Using and Breaking Down Dominant Gendered Ideologies

As this thesis has shown, not only the friction between the difference between the gendered ideals of dominant American society and Native society should be considered. The strategy of using ideologies of American society in order to challenge these ideologies that place and trap Native American in an inferior position in American society is another facet which complicates the use of the genre of autobiography for Native Americans. The gendered form and themes used in the autobiographies of Zitkála-Šá, Luther Standing Bear and Charles Eastman seem contradictory but were necessary to challenge these same ideologies that justified the Indian reform policies and the ill treatment towards Native Americans in the nineteenth century. Instead of perceiving it is a restriction, the three authors have all used the gendered framework to their advantage in challenging the status quo.

The representation of her life story through the gendered framework dominant in American society has given Zitkála-Šá the opportunity to show the instability of these gendered ideologies that appear to be static. The gendered ideologies of home and the importance of communal relationships for the creation of female selfhood were widely seen as absent in Native American culture and thus used to justify the Indian reform policies. Zitkála-Šá has shown how these ideologies were not only present in Native American culture but also how these ironically disrupt the same ideals through the enforcement of the Indian reform policies. Blaming these policies for the disruption of her relationship with her mother, the feeling of dislocation and the struggle to form an identity, Zitkála-Šá skillfully shows the contradictory nature of the gendered ideologies that justify the Indian reform policies through her emotional recollection of her experience and the aftermath of her time at an Indian boarding school. Her emotional but confronting autobiography illustrates how the ideals in American society are social constructions which only facilitate those who are in power and

oppress those who are not.

Luther Standing Bear and Eastman also use the tactic of portraying the obstructive nature of the American ideologies for Native Americans. However, the restrictions of the gendered framework these authors were expected to use to illustrate the social construction of American ideologies, become visible in the different tone and themes they foreground in their autobiography in comparison to Zitkála-Šá's emotional journey of loss and dislocation. Luther Standing Bear and Charles Eastman both show how the governmental policies towards Native Americans had a negative practical impact on the Native American community. Instead of highlighting the psychological pain that Zitkála-Šá skillfully portrays in order to move her non-native readers to action, Eastman and Standing Bear focus on political and physical battles between the federal army and Native tribes in for example Wounded Knee and the hierarchical and corrupt actions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to illustrate the social and physical depredation that Native Americans had to endure. Like Zitkála-Šá, these authors both use their autobiographies to challenge existing ideologies that function to keep Native Americans in their inferior position, but through the male-gendered framework of reason, and individualism.

5.3 Using In-betweenness to Bridge Cultures

The Indian boarding school experiences of the three authors have placed them in a space in between two cultures. Although the negative impact of their education has put them in this space where they do not fully belong to either culture, the power of the autobiographies of Zitkála-Šá, Luther Standing Bear, and Charles Eastman lies the way in which they use their two-folded identity as a tactic to use their life story as a tool of protest. Their engagement with both the American and the Native American culture and gendered ideologies enhanced the reader's ability to identify with their story, but gave them also a way to challenge the existing and stereotyped cultural imagination of Native American culture and the ill treatment towards Native Americans through federal policies.

By transforming the conventional function of autobiography, which was intentionally to celebrate the triumph of an individual, into a powerful tool of protest for an entire community, Zitkála-Šá, Luther Standing Bear and Charles Eastman have skillfully used their awareness of the compromises they had to make in the themes and tone they had to use as part of a minority group. By using the gendered ideologies of the public and domestic sphere, emotion and reason, and individualism and community and accommodating these ideals to let the non-Native audience identify with the cause and challenging these same ideals that justified the discrimination of Native American culture, the three authors have constantly

switched between the two cultures. In that way, their position in between the two cultures can close a gap between the American culture and Native American culture and create a sense of equality which will stop the oppression of Native American culture.

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