"Hostile and Friendly": The "Pygmalion Effect" at Cheyenne River Agency, 1873-1877*

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On 29 April, 1868 at Fort Laramie, Wyoming Territory, representatives of the United States government concluded a peace agreement with ten tribes of the Dakota Indians. In signing the Treaty of 1868, both parties pledged to forever abstain from warfare and to maintain peace on the high Great Plains. To insure peace, the commissioners drew boundaries for a large tract of land encompassing the western half of the present state of South Dakota as a reservation for the Sioux Indians. Unauthorized persons were prohibited from trespassing on the reservation and the Indians were to adjust their nomadic tendencies to specified geographical limits.

*The "pygmalion effect," in its sociological context, is defined as: "how one person's expectation for another person's behavior can quite unwittingly become an accurate prediction simply for its having been made" (Robert Rosenthal, *Pygmalion in the Classroom* [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968], p. vii).

1. Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 2 vols., 2d ed. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 2:998. Although Kappler gives the impression that the Treaty of 1868 was signed on a definite date, at a stated location, and by certain tribes of Sioux Indians, other sources indicate the more indefinite aspects of the agreement. "In the spring the commission resumed its duties, and met the Ogalalla and Brule Sioux, at Fort Laramie, on the 29th of April, 1868, concluded a treaty with them, and thereafter, during the spring and summer, at divers places on the Missouri river, the same treaty was submitted to the Upper and Lower Yan tonais, Ueepapas, Blackfeet, Sans Arc, Two Kettle, Minneconou, Lower Brule, and Santee Sioux, and was accepted and ratified by them" (George W. Manypenny, *Our Indian Wards* [Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1880], p. 199).
Under Article 4 of the Treaty of 1868, the United States agreed to construct an agency on the Missouri River near the center of the Sioux Reservation. On this site warehouses, which would house annuities and various provisions allotted to the Indians under the treaty agreement, would be built, along with a saw mill, a mission house, and a school building. Also provided for was the erection of a residence for the Indian agent, the official in charge of administering the agency and supervising agricultural, educational, and religious programs designed to promote the rapid acculturation of the government’s wards.  

The plans for a central agency were deemed impractical by the government because the nomadic tribes manifested little interest in assembling at a single location. Consequently, the sites for three agencies were chosen in strategic locations, with the migratory habits of the Sioux in mind. After the construction of Whetstone, Grand River, and Cheyenne River agencies throughout Dakota Territory, the tribes of Sioux began to frequent particular centers of distribution. For the Indians whose wandering cycle revolved around the Black Hills region, Cheyenne River Agency became a stopover. As the Sioux became more dependent on services and rations provided at the agencies, many began to take up residence near these centers.

In terms of demography, Indian agencies during the early reservation period (1868-1878) were susceptible to radical fluctuations. Reliable census data were almost impossible to obtain. Presumably, the Indians objected to censuses being taken because it frightened the younger men, who, in turn, would leave the reservation to commit depredations upon the local white population. More often, the fluctuation corresponded directly to the supply of government annuities available at the agency. This response to the ration and annuity system of distribution created special problems for the agent,

2. Ibid., p. 999.
4. Agent Bingham to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 13 Nov. 1874, U.S. Office of Indian Affairs—Letters Received, 1824-1881, Cheyenne River Agency, 1873-75, Record Group 75, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
who was responsible for estimating the quantity of provisions needed. With the irregular arrival of "wild roving Sioux," the agent was confronted with the alternative of either turning away the Indians or quickly depleting the agency’s stores. If the annuities were depleted, there was no incentive for the Sioux to reside at the agency. The problem of coordinating supply and demand was often beyond the agent’s control. When annuities failed to arrive, the population fell off drastically. As a result, supply exceeded demand on the succeeding ration day, and beeves rotted in the warehouses.

In 1873 Agent Henry W. Bingham of Cheyenne River Agency reported that 3,600 Indians were permanently located in agricultural districts along the Missouri River. By 1875 the population at Cheyenne River reached 7,586, more than doubling that of 1873. However, in September 1876 the figure reported by Agent James Cravens to the commissioner of Indian Affairs was only 2,935 Indians. Several weeks later the census returns revealed a decline of 290 more Sioux. By November the population had shrunk to 1,763, a loss of nearly 1,300. Then, in December 1876, 300 Indians arrived at the agency, bringing the number to 2,000 permanent residents. A simple look at the annual census reports reveals the loss of nearly 1,000 Sioux over a one-year period. This figure, in itself, is not staggering unless viewed in the context of daily, weekly, and monthly migration. The unpredictable influx and outflow of Indians not only caused serious administrative problems for the agent, but contributed to the instability of the reservation as a growing community.

This instability also created problems of definition for the agent. To cope with the fluid composition of his agency, the

6. U.S., Department of Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior, 1875 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1875), p. 235. The statistics were taken from Agent Bingham’s annual report from Cheyenne River Agency, 1 Sept. 1875; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1877, p. 52. The statistics were taken from Agent Craven’s annual report from Cheyenne River Agency, 18 Aug. 1877. Agents Bingham and Cravens held the office of Indian agent at Cheyenne River from 1873 to 1876 and from 1877 to 1879, respectively.
agent categorized his wards as “friendly” and “hostile,” “progressive” and “nonprogressive.” Although these somewhat arbitrary classifications misrepresented the degree of mobility on the reservation, they served several purposes. First, the terms functioned as a simple basis for assessing the Indians’ degree of civilization. More importantly, the agent hoped that the permanent residents would themselves accept the division and ultimately disassociate themselves from their people who remained nomadic.

Those Sioux who resided permanently at the agency and allowed themselves to be subjected to the agent’s civilizing schemes were classified as friendly. By 1872 just under two thousand of the Two Kettle, Minneconjou, Sans Arc, and Blackfeet tribes of Sioux Indians had taken up permanent residence at Cheyenne River Agency. During the summer of that year, William Welsh, a member of the Board of Missions of the Protestant Episcopal Church, made a tour of the Sioux and Ponca agencies on the Missouri River, for the purpose of
investigating conditions at the agencies and assessing the progress of the Indians.\(^7\)

In his report of 10 July 1872, Welsh commented on the state of civilization to which the Cheyenne River Sioux had progressed. Cleanliness and altered methods of food preparation and consumption were important indicators that the Sioux were experiencing "the dawning of civilization." For the first time since their supposed domestication, the Indians complained that rats had fouled their flour and that meat dragged on the ground was unfit for consumption. In the earliest reservation days, dogs had often chewed upon carcasses of cattle for hours before they were distributed to the Indians. Now, the Sioux were reported as "offended" by this most uncleanly habit.\(^8\)

These progressive Sioux were apparently "well disposed towards the whites." One chief, who painfully recalled a time when he had indulged in hurling insults at the whites, regretted his earlier demonstrations of uncivil behavior. Welsh was impressed by the fair-mindedness of these Indians who were engaged in cultivating the soil and building log houses, and who expressed an interest in the construction of a school and mission at the agency.\(^9\)

Not all Sioux preferred to abandon "the wild and uncertain life." Though Agent Bingham reported in 1873 that approximately one half of the Indians were friendly and one half "hostile or roaming," census statistics suggest that a more accurate count would place the ratio at 3 to 1 Sioux favoring a "wandering life on the plains." These five or six thousand Cheyenne River Sioux visited the agency in small bodies at irregular intervals throughout the year and once collectively in the spring, when the largest proportion of the annuities was allotted.\(^10\)

In the early reservation period, the effects of biculturation or the formation of a unique third culture, which was neither Indian nor Anglo but something quite in between, were


\(^8\) Ibid., p. 8.

\(^9\) Ibid., pp. 9-10.

Semicivilized Sioux Indians on their way to the Cheyenne River Agency to secure rations.

Thus, the definitions of friendly and hostile were terms of value only to outsiders. The Sioux would not have conceptualized these terms in the context of progressive versus nonprogressive or nomadic versus sedentary. In the framework of a real structural and ideological division, these definitions were meaningless. The reservation Sioux were not advanced to the degree that such arbitrary classifications were legitimate. To the Sioux, such terms probably meant nothing more than temporary definitions of population distribution. However, over a period of time, the effects of biculturation would emphasize the differences in life styles between the nomadic and domestic Sioux. If the drastic fluctuations were to continue, the agent realized that he must make the definitions a concrete reality for those Sioux who were undergoing the processes of acculturation. By imposing these terms on his wards, the agent disassociated the hostiles and friendlies and, thus, undermined any outside force that might have jeopardized his civilizing programs.

In time, the reservation Sioux would accept these designations and voluntarily disassociate themselves from their nomadic kin. This ultimately led to the creation of factions at

Cheyenne River Agency. The causes of this change in outlook and relationship were complex and numerous. From 1872 to 1877 problems caused by population fluctuation moved from the general to the specific. During the earlier years at Cheyenne River, problems of flux were due to the migratory habits of the Sioux. This was simply an integral part of the Indians’ life styles that had to be coped with by the agents. However, in time problems of flux would tend to focus around particular issues, such as the gold rush to the Black Hills and military involvement in the administration of Cheyenne River Agency. Since many of the Indian agents at the Dakota agencies were inexperienced in dealing with Indians at a short distance, the Sioux’s nomadic tendencies created problems. A number of isolated incidents occurred during the year 1873-1874 to mark the beginning of turmoil created by intratribal problems of definition.

Frank Grimier, an employee of the post trader at Cheyenne River, was shot in the neck and killed while en route from Sioux City, Iowa, on 20 March 1873. The murderer, after taking the horse, saddle, and pistol of the dead man, retreated in the direction of the Black Hills. Though depredations committed by roving Sioux were somewhat routine, the response of the Cheyenne River Sioux signified a new attitude toward the nomadic Indians. Agent Bingham easily formed a party of peaceful Sioux willing to track down the offender, but its members feared retaliation from their nomadic kin and refused to take a second group beyond the immediate region of the agency.12

Contrary to the impression created by the agent, a simple division did not exist between hostile and friendly at this early date. The offender, Whip, “not a hostile, but one of the so-called friendly Indians,” regularly drew rations at the agency and spent much of his time encamped within the locale of the reservation. While a case could be made that the friendly Indians were beginning to disassociate themselves from the roaming Sioux and even feared retribution from their less progressive brothers, it was too early to easily distinguish

12. Agent Bingham to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 22 Mar. 1873, Letters Received, Record Group 75.
between the seminomadic and the wholly nomadic, or the hostile and friendly. With time, the agent’s definitions more accurately portrayed the division. In 1873, however, there was still an inherent cultural, political, and social bond between the nomadic and the domestic Sioux.\textsuperscript{13}

For the plains tribes, participation in intertribal warfare provided an avenue to gain military honors and material possessions. Often the nomadic tribes raided the defenseless villages of the sedentary tribes settled along the Missouri River. As late as 1874, the Sioux tribes had not relinquished the custom of launching periodic war parties against the peaceful Arikara, Gros Ventres, and Mandan Indians. On 24 March 1874, a war party of four hundred Sioux left Cheyenne River Agency for the Arikara villages near Fort Lincoln, Dakota Territory. The war party intended to stop at Standing Rock Reservation to gain reinforcements. There was a great deal more excitement generated over this war party than those before. Smaller groups had previously sought a battle only with the Arikara scouts employed by the army at Fort Lincoln. The announced purpose of attacking the Arikara people indicated a broader type of intertribal warfare than heretofore engaged in by the seminomadic wards of Cheyenne River Agency. Lieutenant-Colonel George A. Custer, commander at Fort Lincoln, interpreted their declaration as a subterfuge, their real purpose to leave the reservation and perpetrate hostilities against the whites in the vicinity.\textsuperscript{14}

Both Agent Bingham and General David S. Stanley, the commandant of Fort Sully, Dakota Territory, recommended decisive action in dealing with the group of hostiles. The Indian agent suggested that the participants be punished for such conduct and threatened to withhold their food rations in the future. General Stanley, experienced in the art of Anglo-Indian warfare, recommended that since the Indian would not “be amenable to soft words,” the troops had “better use powder

\textsuperscript{13} Agent Bingham to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 16 Apr. 1873, Letters Received, Record Group 75.

\textsuperscript{14} Lieutenant-Colonel George A. Custer to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, St. Paul, Minn., 25 May 1874, Letters Received, Record Group 75.
and lead at once.” Despite strong words and threatened retribution, the raid was a success. The party returned in early June and reported killing eight Arikara, with the loss of only one Sioux. Lieutenant Carlisle P. Boyd, a senior officer at Fort Sully, reported to his superiors in Saint Paul that “several fresh scalps have been brought in by the Sioux party, over which they have been very jubilant and exultant.”

In his annual report for 1875, Agent Bingham reported that the “habit of organizing and directing war parties, so long in existence among the Indians, is beginning to lose the great interest and excitement formerly felt in such expeditions.” For only the permanent residents was the agent’s assessment accurate. The issue of intertribal warfare formed a basis around which the newly born factions, hostiles and friendlies, crystallized. The resident wards had always accepted the practice as a customary habit of the young men. However, because it was often difficult for the agent or military authorities to distinguish between the two groups, despite what the agent’s polar definitions implied, the permanent residents feared that retribution would include all reservation Sioux. The “more sensible portion” of the Indians began to disapprove of the war parties when they realized that they might mistakenly be included in the membership of the party whose rations were to be withheld for participating in intertribal conflicts. The reservation Sioux, usually the older and, in the eyes of the agent, the more sensible and responsible members of the tribe, attempted to appease the young men by making presents of horses and guns, in lieu of what might have been taken in battle.

The agent’s interpretation that the new “antagonistic friendship” that seemed to exist between the progressive Sioux and their traditional enemies was caused by the gradual erosion of hereditary ideas points out his misunderstanding of the effects of the government programs in disrupting the Sioux’s social and political system. To the agent, it was the influence of Christian teachings that caused the elders to supplant feelings of

15. General David S. Stanley to George A. Custer, 22 May 1874, Letters Received, Record Group 75.
16. Lieutenant Carlisle P. Boyd to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, St. Paul, Minn., 20 June 1874, Letters Received, Record Group 75.
hatred with feelings of mild antagonism. The division that was developing between the nomadic and domestic Sioux stimulated the progress of those who were left alone to acculturate without outside interference. Yet, nowhere in the writings of the agent does he reveal an awareness that the prior conception of friendly and hostile and progressive and nonprogressive was shaping into a reality that manifested itself in the formation of factions.\textsuperscript{18}

The progress of the wards was noted by the agent, despite the increased alienation between the two Sioux groups. This dissention is interpreted as a positive sign for those Sioux who had voluntarily cut themselves off from the hostiles. However, the agent did not assess the damage in terms of disintegration of membership groups or the dissolution of the ideological and structural basis of a people. Agent Bingham correctly reported the results of divisiveness, although he incorrectly attributed them to general government civilizing programs rather than to the realization of simple concepts created and imposed by him and slowly accepted by the reservation Sioux.

Population fluctuation on the Sioux Reservation had paradoxical results. The continual influx and outflow made a distinction between nomadic and seminomadic, and thus hostile and friendly groups, difficult to define. Yet, the agent was effective in combating the retarding influence of flux by imposing on the resident wards strongly polar definitions that represented a nonexistent situation. In the context of the pygmalion effect, however, what the reservation Sioux believed became a reality.

Another cause for population fluctuation was the proximity of the Cheyenne River Agency to the Black Hills. Some Sioux resided in the Black Hills during the entire year. Most Indians were only seminomadic and commuted between the Black Hills, where they visited relatives and pursued their traditional life style, and the agency, where they received food rations. Paha Sapa, the Black Hills, also held religious significance for the Sioux. The sacred hills attracted a large number of Sioux, particularly during the summer when religious ceremonies such as the Sun Dance were performed.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
In the summer of 1874, Lieutenant-Colonel Custer led the United States Cavalry Expedition of 1874 into the Black Hills, with the stated purpose of conducting a geological survey of the region. There were also unstated reasons for the expedition. First, the Black Hills remained a stronghold where the Sioux allegedly retreated after committing acts of hostility. Colonel Custer was instructed to investigate the possibility of the construction of a military post in the Black Hills, which would function as a watchdog over the hostile Sioux. Second, rumors of the discovery of gold in the Black Hills were causing much excitement in border towns such as Sioux City, Iowa, and Yankton, Dakota Territory. Mining expeditions were being organized in these frontier towns as early as 1872. They only awaited word that the government had purchased the Black Hills from the Indians to get the jump on a new gold rush. However, some miners did not wait for the Sioux to relinquish their claim to Paha Sapa. In September 1874, General Phil Sheridan instructed Brigadier-General Alfred Terry to detain or retrieve by force any mining expedition organizing at or leaving from Sioux City or Yankton.

Unofficially, the Custer Expedition was also supposed to refute or corroborate the rumors of gold in the Black Hills. If the rumors proved true, then the government was interested in negotiating an agreement with the Indians. The common person cared little about the scientific findings of the expedition. With the economic depression that followed the Panic of 1873, gold was the topic of concern.

Interest in the Black Hills generated much excitement and suspicion on the part of all the Sioux. When the Custer Expedition penetrated the Sioux Reservation, Agent Bingham was forced to take every precaution to prevent the less progressive more hostile Indians at the agency from attacking Custer and his troops. Later in the year, supported by troops from Fort Sully, Bingham met many miners when they arrived within fifty miles of the agency and forced them to turn back. Meanwhile, the less progressive Indian element wanted to form

20. Telegram of 3 Sept. in Yankton Press and Dakotaian, 10 Sept. 1874.
21. Ibid., 2 July 1874.
a war party and repel the invaders. To increase their strength, the hostiles invited and even threatened the progressive element to join them. This added more tension to the already unsettled atmosphere at Cheyenne River Agency.  

Frontier journalism played an important part in contributing to this climate of excitement on the Sioux Reservation. Since news of gold sold newspapers, reported findings were the subject of many articles. The *Sioux City Journal* of 10 February 1875 reported that a miner was in town with no paper money, but $7,000 in gold dust, discovered in the Black Hills.  

To corroborate the story, the names of all those who were remunerated with gold dust for services rendered were included. Tales also floated in of expeditions formed in Sioux City, which had circumvented attempts by the military and Indian agents to prevent them from entering the gold region. One newspaperman commented that “our boys” are “doing well and accordingly happy.” Again, in the 2 March issue of the *Sioux City Journal*, by-lines read, “Reliable News from Sioux City Party, Rich Diggings and a Fine Country Discovered, Miner can Make from $10 to $25 a Day.”  

Newspaper reports of the abundance of gold in the Black Hills disturbed Agent Bingham. In a letter to the commissioner of Indian Affairs on 4 March 1875, the agent recommended that the Indian Bureau “partly check the great publicity being given to the belief that the Black Hills will be open to settlers in early Spring.” As far as Bingham was concerned, the problem was twofold. First, the newspaper reports agitated the situation by printing untruths regarding the availability of gold in the Black Hills and the status of Paha Sapa in terms of ownership. Second, the West was inhabited by “credulous” people whose imaginations were “more powerful than their reason.”

22. Agent Bingham to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 5 Dec. 1874, Letters Received, Record Group 75.  
24. Ibid., 20 Feb. 1875.  
25. Ibid., 2 Mar. 1875.  
26. Agent Bingham to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 4 Mar. 1875, Letters Received, Record Group 75.  
27. Agent Bingham to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 12 Mar. 1875, Letters Received, Record Group 75.
The hostile and friendly Sioux reacted very differently to the invasion of their Black Hills. At the agency councils were held to discuss the sale of the region. Agent Bingham noticed a marked change in the feelings of the reservation Sioux, who, for the first time, asserted that it was the unanimous desire of the Indians to peaceably relinquish the Black Hills. On 1 December, the agency Sioux made a proposition that a specified number of chiefs and headmen be called to Washington to negotiate a settlement. The council stated that they were simply anxious to have the matter settled.  

The progressive Sioux realized that the problem of the Black Hills, which agitated the hostile element to the point of war, might engulf them also. By 1875 the progressive Sioux were called “farming” Indians by the agent, denoting their progress in agricultural pursuits. Although this minority of Sioux still clung to many old habits and customs, it had committed itself to a new life style based on farmwork. To disrupt their progress and gain reinforcements for the coming battle to retain the Black Hills, the hostile Sioux tried to induce the progressives to quit the agency and retreat with them to their encampments. Much tension resulted from the efforts of the nomadic Sioux, and Bingham remarked, “the very unsettled state of affairs during the fall, winter, and spring, are sufficient causes to dissuade a less civilized people than Indians from adopting a mode of life to which they had previously been strangers. Still, with all these disadvantages, I am happy to say that no secession among the Indians partly civilized has to be reported.”

Although the government’s efforts to negotiate for the Black Hills region were thwarted by the overwhelming opposition of the hostile Sioux, the breach between the two groups widened. For the first time the progressives had overtly

28. Agent Bingham to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1 Dec. 1875, Letters Received, Record Group 75.
30. Under Article 12 of the Treaty of 1868, “No treaty for the cession of any portion or part of the reservation herein described which may be held in common shall be of any validity or force as against the said Indians, unless executed and signed by at least three-fourths of all adult male Indians” (Kappler, Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, p. 1002).
opposed, as a body, the nomadic Sioux majority by offering to negotiate for the sale of the Black Hills. The minority reacted to threats by restating their feelings of friendship for the government. Because the hostiles were being arrested on entering and leaving the agency, the peaceful Sioux were naturally nervous. Even assurances by the agent that they would receive kind treatment by the government did little to allay the fears of the peaceful Sioux that they might be mistaken for hostiles and dealt with in the same manner.

The composition of the progressive element was crystallizing. Certain chiefs and headmen had emerged representing the interests of the permanent Sioux residents. The progressives clearly had no right to negotiate the sale of the Black Hills, but they nevertheless proceeded to do so. Several years earlier a more likely turn of events would have seen the reservation Indians joining their nomadic kin in defense of the Black Hills. However, by 1874 the third culture rejected the overtures of the hostiles and adopted a course of expediency designed to insure peace with the government at all costs.

Time did not heal the wounds of the emerging factions. Instead, events took an ominous turn. On 7 February 1876 the Indian Bureau transferred its jurisdiction over the hostile bands to the War Department for “appropriate action.” On 22 July control of all agencies on the Missouri River was transferred from the Department of the Interior to the army. Agent Bingham was simply directed to cooperate with the commanding officer of Fort Sully in the administration of Cheyenne River Agency.\(^{31}\)

The presence of the army intensified all problems at Cheyenne River. Definitions of the two groups took on even more rigidity as a result of the army’s policy of treating friendly and hostile Indians alike. Many of the residents of Cheyenne River hunted small game in the vicinity of the agency. The agent had allowed only peaceful Indians to purchase powder and lead from the post trader. However, the military authorities wished to disarm everyone and confiscate all ponies. This generated much fear in the minds of the progressive Sioux, who, in reaction declared their allegiance to the government all the

more. In fact, in October, the friendly Sioux voluntarily moved to the other side of the Missouri River in order to isolate themselves from the hostiles who were beginning to drift into the agencies as they felt the pressure of military campaigns on the plains.

There was no equivocation on the part of the army in classifying the Indians into two groups. General William T. Sherman, commander of the Department of the Missouri, stated that the Indians "must be on the side of the government, or on the side of the hostiles," and that in time "this status will be fixed." Bingham created definitions indicating a clear distinction between hostile and friendly Indians, which did not exist to the extent the terms implied. However, the military thought that most Indians were somewhere in between and devised a test to place them in one category or the other.

Both the army and the agent agreed that the ultimate aim of the government was the confinement and civilization of the Indians. However, in terms of means, there was much disagreement. Bingham and his successor, Dr. James Cravens, first worked toward the civilization of the progressive minority. Isolated from the hostiles, they hoped the progressive Sioux would not be influenced by the newcomers. Rather than allowing the hostiles to disrupt the progress of the permanent residents, the agent planned for the opposite effect. Through contact with the progressives, the ranks of the hostiles would diminish as members crossed over to the progressive side. Thus, the examples of the semicivilized Indians would act as a positive influence on the hostiles.

The peaceful Sioux had accepted their classification as friendly, associating it with better treatment from the government. They had expressed a desire to adopt white ways and thereby pleased the agent. All in all, the progressives felt that they had earned the right to be considered separate and apart

32. General William T. Sherman to the Secretary of War, 8 Aug. 1876, Letters Received, Record Group 75.
33. Sherman devised no specific testing device in order to distinguish between the hostile and friendly. Rather, by the use of military measures, the army was compelling the Sioux to choose sides, thereby eliminating what was referred to as the majority in the middle. Sherman to Military Division, Missouri, 1 Dec. 1876, Letters Received, Record Group 75.
from the hostiles by any authority, be it civil or military. The permanent wards, as well as the newcomers, however, were to be reclassified so that they might be more accurately separated into friendly and hostile groups. Because the army was intent on punishing the hostiles who had been involved in the late encounter with military troops at the Little Big Horn, the peaceful progressives went to great lengths to assure the military that they were indeed peaceably disposed. Even Agent Cravens testified that the friendly Sioux did not consider themselves allied with the hostiles, but, to the contrary, "proved themselves as anything but enemies of the government."34

Waiting for rations at Cheyenne River Agency on 22 December 1890

Testimony by the agent and the Indians themselves did not convince the military authorities of the latter’s peaceful disposition. As a result of the large number of Sioux hostiles surrendering after the Sioux campaign of 1876, the army adopted broad administrative measures to cope with their presence at the agencies. The peaceful Sioux inevitably suffered under the same regulations designed to punish the hostiles. First, no ammunition was to be distributed to either hostile or friendly Indians. This action prompted George W. Felt, the post

34. Agent Cravens to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1 Dec. 1876, Letters Received, Record Group 75.
trader at Cheyenne River, to address a letter of protest to the commissioner of Indian Affairs. Felt made the point that game obtained by hunting was essential to the Indians’ survival. He noted that in 1875 the Sioux brought in 20,000 pounds of antelope skins, “the flesh of the animals knowing [sic] been consumed by them as food, they also killed many other animals using the fur and pelts for clothing.” Animal hides were also traded at the post for other useful commodities.

However, the military refused to grant any privileges to the progressives until all Indians could be resorted into precise categories. This injustice disturbed the progressive chiefs and headmen at the agency. Unsettled conditions caused by the presence of the military were breaking down accepted definitions, and consequently, the friendlies were losing all rights and immunities. Therefore, in the fall of 1876, to establish peace and allay the uneasiness Little Bear and White Swan, two Minneconjou chiefs, offered to form a party to take peace pipes to the hostile camps “to induce them to lay down their arms and effect a permanent treaty.” The chiefs asked that the military cease operations against the hostiles pending the negotiation. If the parley should fail, the progressive leaders promised that they would “effect a treaty for the sale of the Black Hills.”

The military rejected the proposal of the peaceful Sioux. General Phil Sheridan, head of the Department of Dakota, commented that the proposition was an “old Indian dodge” with which he was familiar, “especially as its been played on me once or twice.” Sheridan further added that as far as he was concerned, it would be better “to have all the Indians at the Agency leave than knowingly let one of the hostiles come in.” Although the army’s approach to administering Cheyenne River actually intensified factional problems, Sheridan interpreted the actions of the friendly and hostile Indians as a conspiracy. He attributed the trouble to the young men who committed hostilities against the advice of the “old and peaceable.”

35. George W. Felt to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 29 Jan. 1876, Letters Received, Record Group 75.
36. Agent Bingham to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 4 Aug. 1876, Letters Received, Record Group 75.
37. Ibid.
However, he maintained that the peaceable still received a share of the plunder and protected the depredators once they returned to the agency. To the army, clear cut distinctions between the two groups did not exist. Rather, most permanent residents and newcomers were considered equally guilty. Actual factions did exist, despite the conclusions of army officials. In fact, it was the army’s policy of resorting the friendly from the hostile that resulted in very identifiable factions.  

The rigid military measures also inhibited the civilizing progress of the progressive Indians. In September 1877, Agent Cravens reported that although there was no inclination towards rebellion, the peaceful Sioux felt “a deep sense of wrong.” Thomas L. Riggs, a Congregational missionary to the Sioux and a member of the American Board of Missions, agreed with Cravens and the progressives that the military regulations were severe and “wholly unjustifiable.” Though the progressives did not actually regress, they had become “sullen and impatient.” The friendly element was disappointed that the government had not adequately protected them from the harsh measures implemented by the army. Their response to the severe treatment manifested itself in a predictable way. On 5 December 1877, Little-No-Heart, chief of the Minneconjous, addressed a letter to the president of the United States. The progressive chief maintained that his people had not been concerned with the wars carried on by the hostiles. In an effort to disassociate the peaceful from the hostile Sioux, Little-No-Heart asserted that “those [Indians] who caused you so much trouble . . . have caused us much trouble also.” He reminded the president that he had been willing to “deliver them [the

38. Sheridan to Military Division, 9 Aug. 1876, Letters Received, Record Group 75; Sheridan to the General of the Army, 23 Aug. 1876, Letters Received, Record Group 75. It is possible that one of the unstated reasons for the army’s rejection of the proposition was Article 12 of the Treaty of 1868, which required the approval of three-fourths of the adult Sioux males for the cession or sale of lands. Regardless of the cooperation of the progressive minority, they did not constitute three-fourths of the adult male Sioux Indians located within the Great Sioux Reservation.

39. Agent Cravens to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 4 Sept. 1877, Letters Received, Record Group 75.

40. T. L. Riggs to the Secretary of Interior, 17 Feb. 1877, Letters Received, Record Group 75.

41. Ibid.
hostiles] up on demand” or assist in capturing the hostiles. In the end the chief concluded, “I suppose we will have to suffer, the same as before, for their misdeeds.”

By early 1878, Cheyenne River Agency was relatively calm; Indians were reported “comparatively . . . peaceable, and tractable.” With the confiscation of their ponies the migratory habits of the nomadic Sioux were inhibited. This allegedly channeled their energies in more productive directions. Many of the “turbulent spirits” had even adopted the white man’s style of dress. By the close of 1878, the times of turmoil seemed to be at an end. Reformers and missionaries invaded the reservations, intent on bringing civilization, Christianity, and citizenship to the Indians.

Because Agents Bingham and Cravens misunderstood the factors contributing to the rapid civilization of the progressive minority, they were unaware of the disruptive effects caused by the imposition of the polar definitions of hostile and friendly on the Sioux. The agents were unable to anticipate the ultimate effect of such definitions. At the time of their creation and application they had seemed to be convenient terms of classification. By 1878, both were still unaware of the far-reaching implications of their actions. To them the progress of the progressive minority had only been temporarily retarded by population fluctuation. Yet in 1878, “some progress” was noted for all the Sioux. The existence of factions was simply attributed to the different degrees of civilization the two groups had reached.

The “pygmalion effect” had paradoxical results. The progressive minority readily accepted the definitions of friendly as representing their relationship to the government. To live up to the expectations implied by the definition, they voluntarily disassociated themselves from their hostile relatives. In this way, the realization of the “pygmalion effect” paralleled the process of acculturation. While the “pygmalion effect” cannot explain

42. Chief-No-Heart to the President of the United States, 15 Dec. 1877, Letters Received, Record Group 75.
44. Ibid., p. 21.
the civilization progress of all the Indians on the Sioux Reservation, it does offer a possible and reasonable explanation of the progress of the progressive Sioux at Cheyenne River Agency from 1873 to 1877.

More importantly, the "pygmalion effect" contributed significantly to the development of factions at Cheyenne River Agency. The implications concerning the power and influence of the Indian agent in determining the condition of the Indians under his supervision are far-reaching. Despite the fact that the government was prolific in issuing directions and programs for the civilization of the Indians, it was the Indian agent who unwittingly influenced the outcome of Indian policy.
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