

WOMEN'S STUDIES CELEBRATION
Women's History Month 2005

NOMINATION: Papers and projects done in completion of course work for Spring, Summer and Fall 2004 eligible for nomination. Students do not need to be enrolled Fall 2004 or Spring 2005 to be eligible. (Students are encouraged to identify works they would like nominated and approach their professor to initiate the process.)

Instructor Jane M. Pederson History Dept. _____

Course Number and Name HIST 798 Fall 205 Semester completed _____

Title of Nominated Work : "A Dead Woman's Dress: Gender and Race in Captivity During the Minnesota Indian War of 1862"

CATEGORY: Sampson:
Undergraduate Research Paper _____ See _____
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Turell _____
Belter _____

STUDENT INFORMATION:

Name Joanne M. Jahnke Wegner

Email mjwegner@wwt.net Year/Major : History/Graduate

Local Address 1209 E. Laneville Ave

Durand, WI 54376

Local Phone: 673-3105

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As the nominating instructor, please notify the student and ask them to turn in the paper, or attach to your nomination form.

.....
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Submission deadline is February 11, 2005.

****WHY DO YOU, THE INSTRUCTOR, RECOMMEND THIS AS AN EXEMPLARY STUDENT PAPER/PROJECT?**

Joanne Jahnke Wegner's paper "A Dead Woman's Dress: Gender and Race in Captivity During the Minnesota Indian War of 1862" is an outstanding paper in numerous ways. Firstly, she asks historically important questions. In what ways did gender and race shape the experience of women captives among the Dakota during the Minnesota Indian War of 1862. Her comprehensive and careful analysis pushes our understanding of the complexity of gender constructions and interracial relationships in the nineteenth century. She interrogates the relationships between women within and between races, and male and female relationships across the cultural divide.

Secondly, Joanne provides a new and important interpretation. She goes beyond the earlier work of both historical and literary analysis by identifying the distinctive gender roles and identities of women in captivity. The heart of her analysis is in Chapters IV and V. She argues that previous interpretations of captivity narratives have been grounded in Euro-American assumptions and that if examined through the lens of Dakota culture new constructions of the captive's roles and experience can be identified, including that of slave and servant; wife and mother; adopted kin and cultural critic.

Joanne's e comprehensive and professionally written historiography of the captivity narrative is one of the best reviews of literature that I have seen and it sets the stage for understanding Joanne's own contribution to the field. Her detailed interrogation of eight women's narratives provides extensive support for her argument. Finally her paper is well-written, extensively documented and well-organized. She provided helpful chronologies, and illustrations, and made creative use of tables to clarify the complexities of eight different narratives.

**A Dead Woman's Dress: Gender and Race in Captivity
During the Minnesota Indian War of 1862**

By

Joanne M. Jahnke Wegner

**A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of**

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At


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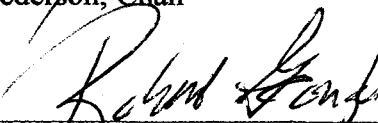
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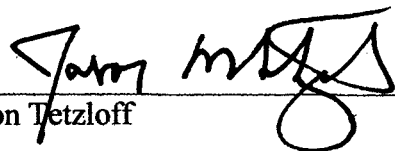
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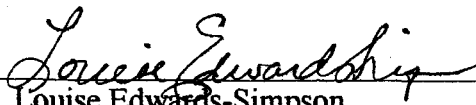
Dr. Jane Pederson, Chair



Dr. Robert Gough



Dr. Jason Tetzloff



Dr. Louise Edwards-Simpson

APPROVED: _____
University Dean of Graduate Studies

A Dead Woman's Dress: Gender and Race in Captivity
During the Minnesota Indian War of 1862

By

Joanne Marie Jahnke Wegner

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2004
Under the Supervision of Jane Pederson


This thesis examines the interaction of gender and race in captivity resulting from the Minnesota Indian War of 1862. Minnie Buce Carrigan, Helen Mar Tarble, Nancy McClure, Jannette DeCamp Sweet, Mary Schwandt, Urania Frazer White, Mary Butler Renville, and Sarah Wakefield each wrote narratives about their captivities. This paper also delineates four new roles for captive women based on native, not white, cultural roles: slaves and servants; wives and mothers; adopted kin; and cultural critics.

Through detailed descriptions, these women revealed how prewar roles and white cultural milieu shaped their interpretations of captivity. Once in the Dakota camps, white women were at the mercy of another, very different people. Captive interaction with Dakota men was shaped by prewar contacts, men's roles in the initial attacks, sexual assault, threats of violence throughout captivity, and in some cases, men's roles as protectors of white women and children.

Captive interaction with Dakota women was shaped by shared care of captive children, food, clothing, gendered divisions of labor and the role of Dakota women as

protectors or persecutors of captive women. Cultural differences influenced interaction between white women and Dakota men but differences became more obvious as white captives and Dakota women lived and worked closely together in Dakota camps. Dakota and white women both had similar gender roles before captivity including childcare, preparation of food and clothing and care of the home, but different ideologies supported these roles.

These captives wrote their narratives for a variety of reasons, but they revealed a great deal about Dakota life and culture, their temporary roles in that new culture, and how they redefined themselves after captivity. The women reacted in a variety of ways from hatred of the Dakota to trying to understand why it happened to appreciating the Dakota and blaming white malfeasance for the war. In the end, each captive struggled to redefine herself and her role as she reentered white society.



Dr. Jane Pederson November 2004

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Introduction

Indian captivity has been part of American history since colonial times. Once captives were released, they struggled to make sense of their experiences, sometimes in written form as captivity narratives. Captives related their experiences with Indians, provided detailed descriptions of Indian life, and documented their reactions to life with the Indian “other.” Whether these narratives were written for religious or propaganda purposes, they revealed valuable information about the interaction of cultures along the frontier.

Over centuries of contact, both men and women wrote captivity narratives as the frontier moved across the continent. Captivity narratives varied in length and content but all discussed what life was like for Indian captives. The captivity narratives chosen for this paper include eight narratives by women who were held in captivity during the Minnesota Indian War of 1862. Minnie Buce Carrigan, Helen Mar Tarble, Nancy McClure, Jannette DeCamp Sweet, Mary Schwandt, Urania Frazer White, Mary Butler Renville, and Sarah Wakefield were all taken captive and held by the Dakota Sioux for varying lengths of time. Many of the narratives began in a similar vein as the women related the terror of seeing loved ones killed before their own captures. The women provided detailed descriptions of their captors and their own roles in Dakota camps. After captivity, they wrote their narratives for a number of reasons: to justify their actions while in captivity, to regain assets lost in the mayhem, and to make sense of what happened in order to move on. Beyond this, the narratives were valuable for the women’s descriptions of Dakota life. Many of the women made numerous observations

about Indian life ranging from clothing, food and work patterns to Dakota political, social and religious practices.

These eight narratives were chosen for several reasons. First, they do not fit the propaganda models prevalent for captivity narratives at the time. These eight women had a different captivity experience because they were held for fairly short periods of time, remained close to their homes throughout captivity and knew some of their captors before the war. Second, the narratives revealed much about the women themselves as they tried to write their way to an understanding of the war and their roles both in captivity and upon returning to white society. Finally, both the women and the Dakota interacted in culturally specific ways that shaped the captivity experience for both groups.

There are three main questions that arise after examination of the narratives. First, how did white women, Dakota men and women, and mixed blood persons interact within the context of captivity? And further, to what degree did each group's pre-existing cultural ideas concerning gender and race shape the experiences of each group? Second, how did women's identity and roles change as a result of the captivity experience? Before the war white women had specific roles and identities founded in white culture. As captives, their identities were challenged and their roles changed while living with the Dakota. These women came to have dual identities and roles—one set based on white cultural definitions of womanhood and another set based on Dakota definitions. Through their narratives, captive women tried to reconcile these roles and reclaim their identity after captivity. Finally, were any of the captives able to move beyond cultural constructs to have sympathetic relationships with their captors?

In order to explore these questions, it is necessary to draw upon a number of complex historiographical and historical interpretations. The first chapter will address academic examination of captivity narratives using literary and historical analysis to place narratives within American literary and historical canons. It will also introduce the main challenge presented in this thesis. Existing academic scholarship classifies images of captive women in terms of women's roles in white culture. This paper proposes a move beyond those classifications by defining four new roles for captive women perviously neglected by historians. These new roles include captive women as slaves or servants; wives and mothers; adopted kin; and cultural critics. Each of these roles reflects captive roles in the native setting and acknowledges their movement through multiple roles based on both white and Dakota culture during captivity.

The second chapter will provide the historical context from which this group of narratives emerged. The Minnesota Indian War of 1862 will be examined in some detail to provide a clear picture of why Dakota Sioux chose to attack the whites, the course of the war, and its aftermath. Also, traditional Dakota culture and gender roles will be explored to provide a background for one half of the actors in the captivity setting.

Chapter three will explore the white cultural milieu from which female captives came. By providing a brief discussion of women and Indians on the frontier, white gender roles, and ideas of race in the mid-nineteenth century, a clearer picture of nineteenth century culture will emerge. This is important because these beliefs and perceptions influenced how women analyzed both their captors' and their own actions in captivity. Finally, a biography will be provided about each of the eight captives to provide a clearer sense of each woman as she navigated captivity and its aftermath.

The fourth chapter examines the interaction of Indian men and white women in the setting of captivity. Interaction between these two groups is examined in detail from pre-war contacts to initial capture through captivity and release to see if preconceived notions of gender and race shaped their behavior towards one another. The perceived sexual threat posed by Indian men is also explored as this was one of the main concerns for captive women.

The fifth chapter continues this type of examination but explores white captive interaction with Dakota women. Interaction between Dakota and white women was encoded differently than that of white women and Dakota men as both groups of women shared some gender specific tasks before the war and during captivity. In captivity white women lived on intimate terms with Dakota women giving their interactions a richness not often observed between captive women and Dakota men. This chapter will also explore the interactions among white captives themselves during and after captivity. Indian captivity greatly disturbed women's identities as they struggled to redefine their roles. Each woman navigated captivity differently according to her own needs. Due to differing strategies, women castigated their fellow captives if they violated cultural taboos by becoming too familiar with their captors.

Each of these eight women struggled to come to terms with Indian captivity and its legacies. By providing narratives of their experiences, they provided individual perspectives on the war that would have otherwise gone unheard. Their struggles to maintain their identities as white women while living with the Dakota provide dramatic insights into captor-captive relationships. These relationships provided captive women

with new roles defined by Dakota culture and showed captive women new cultural possibilities upon which to base their identities.

Chapter 1

Captivity Narrative Historiography

Captivity narratives comprise a substantial American literary genre. They are tales told by men and women about trials in Indian captivity. The earliest captivity narratives were written by Puritans and functioned as spiritual autobiographies—tales of God’s providence and religious redemption—which brought the captive and larger community closer to God through suffering and redemption. Later narratives evolved into propaganda against the French, British and Indian enemies. Finally narratives were fictionalized using stock scenes of violence and torture to justify expansion driven by Manifest Destiny and extermination of the Indians in the west. These three stages of captivity narratives are only rough estimations of how the narratives evolved and all three types persisted or blended as white settlers spread to new frontiers and encountered different Indian tribes. Just as it is impossible to lump all Native Americans into one group, it is also impossible to pigeonhole narratives based on the time they were written. The content varied among the different time periods and depended very much on the nature of the author and her purpose for writing.

Dorothy Dondore conducted the earliest academic examination of captivity narratives in a brief paper given in 1929. Dondore addressed the powerful and pervasive nature of captivity narrative literature and outlined the variety of functions that captivity narratives served. According to Dondore, they had value as religious, marketing, historic, ethnographic and biographical documents that shed light on many aspects of history and many different people that would otherwise be forgotten. She noted the problems presented by narratives as sources but said:

Yet there is about the best of them the unaffected pathos of people who have suffered deeply and the dignity and repose that comes from an ordeal safely passed. The captors too, though revealed at times as fiendish torturers, become humanized through the revelations of their domestic kindness, their loyalty to their friends, their bravery, generosity and endurance.¹

Dondore appreciated the narratives on a number of levels and her assessments of their value have continued to influence captivity narrative scholarship.

The next academic studies of captivity narratives emerged in the 1940s with work of literary scholars Phillips D. Carleton and Roy Harvey Pearce. Carleton and Pearce were pioneers in classifying captivity narratives as a specific American genre with distinct characteristics.² Carleton felt the narratives, whether for religious or propaganda purposes, shared a basic structure that made them satisfying to the reader—capture, trials in the wilderness at the hands of the Indians, and eventual escape or ransom.³ He also believed that the narratives both revealed and shaped the story of the United States as it developed across a fluid frontier.⁴

Pearce believed that captivity narratives comprised not just one genre but several because the literature changed so much over time. Narratives comprised three different genres not only because of variance in style but variance in purposes they served.⁵ According to Pearce, the first genre included simple religious documents used to show the Providence of God and the eventual salvation of the survivor; the second genre was propaganda against the French, British, and Indians, all of whom stood in the way of westward expansion.⁶ The third genre consisted of completely fictionalized accounts

¹ Dorothy Dondore, "White Captives Among the Indians," *New York History* 13 (1932): 292-300.

² Phillips D. Carleton, "The Indian Captivity," *American Literature* 15 (May 1943): 167-180.

³ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁴ Carleton, 180.

⁵ Roy Harvey Pearce, "The Significances of the Captivity Narrative," *American Literature* 19 (March 1947): 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-6.

such as penny dreadfuls and novels by Cooper and Melville.⁷ Pearce was also the first to emphasize that narratives could be used for historical study because they provided insight into native ways of life and settler's attitudes on the frontier.⁸

Erwin Ackerknecht explored the psychological effects of captivity on white children and young women who were abducted and lived with the Indians. He concluded that the differences between the races were not racial or biological but cultural and that children who had been raised and socialized as Indians stayed with them because they were part of an Indian family and tribal community.⁹ Finally, Marius Barbeau discussed the causes of captivity and treatment of the captives by their captors. Barbeau created the first real compilation of captivity literature and outlined various information that could be gleaned from captivity narratives.¹⁰ These early studies were very important because they opened captivity narratives for literary, historical, psychological and ethnohistorical study.

In the 1970s, Richard VanDerBeets began a prolific career studying captivity narrative literature, influencing literary and historical scholars alike. In his dissertation "The Indian Captivity Narrative: An American Genre," he classified captivity narratives as the first unique American genre which grew with the country and reflected both the settler's anxieties and their cultural needs. In a time when American literature barely

⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁸ Ibid., 20.

⁹ Erwin, H. Ackerknecht, "White Indians: Psychological and Physiological Peculiarities of White Children Abducted and Reared by North American Indians, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 15 (January 1944): 15-36.

¹⁰ Marius Barbeau, "Indian Captivities," *Proceedings in the American Philosophical Society* 94 (December 1950): 529-531.

existed, the captivity narrative filled a need for the reading population.¹¹ He then moved beyond Carleton and Pearce stating that captivity narratives acted as an archetype of the American frontier experience. Captivity narratives all had certain principles that unified them as one genre: cannibalism; scalping; abduction; initiation into the Indian way of life; escape, ransom or rescue; and readjustment to white society.¹² Captivity narratives reflected the basic fears of the colonists and showed how they found an outlet for these fears through literature.

Richard Slotkin developed the idea of archetype further. For him, captivity narratives mirrored the development of an American frontier mythology. Despite changes over time, narratives at any stage remained central to shaping American mythology because they continued to mirror patterns of American life at that specific point in time.¹³ According to Slotkin, a myth had three basic structural elements: a protagonist whom the audience identified with; the universe of the protagonist reflected that of the audience; and a narrative in which the interaction of the protagonist and his world were described. Captivity narratives possessed these three elements and were therefore examples of American myths. Narratives functioned as myth because they included the captive as a protagonist; the wilderness as a reflection of the settlers' universe; and were obviously narratives reflecting the interactions of the protagonist in

¹¹ Richard VanDerBeets, *The Indian Captivity Narrative: An American Genre* (Lanham: University Press of Amherst, 1984); "The Indian Captivity Narrative: An American Genre," Ph. D. dissertation, University of the Pacific, 1973: vi-vii; "'A Thirst for Empire': The Indian Captivity Narrative as Propaganda," *Research Studies* 40 (September 1972): 207-215; "A Surfeit of Style: The Indian Captivity Narrative as Penny Dreadful," *Research Studies* 39 (December 1971): 297-306; "The Captivity Narrative as Ritual," *American Literature* 43 (January 1972): 548-562; *Held Captive by Indians: Selected Narratives, 1642-1836* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973).

¹² VanDerBeets, *Indian Captivity Narrative as Ritual*, 549.

¹³ Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence—The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*, (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1973): 8.

the wilderness. In this way, captivity narratives functioned as representations of the process by which American myth, and thus America, were made.¹⁴ It was the settlers' struggles in the wilderness with the Indians that in part defined American character.

In the 1970s, James Levernier conducted historical analysis of captivity narratives. He and Hennig Cohen named Indian captivity as an historical reality that shaped the national character, became an original theme in American literature, and defined the basic issues in white culture.¹⁵ They divided the narratives into five phases which corresponded with preoccupations of white culture: initial contacts with the Indians; Puritan and Jesuit trials of the spirit; the land imperative as the country expanded west; narratives collected behind the frontier once the Indian threat had passed; and beyond the frontier where the captivity motif was used as a theme in literature."¹⁶

Like Ackerknecht, James Axtell and J. Norman Heard reviewed narratives of people who had been captured as children or young adults and chose to remain with the Indians. Axtell and Heard discussed the strength of ties established by the captives who over time ceased to be captives and instead became members of native families as adopted kin and spouses.¹⁷ With these strong ties, many captives refused to rejoin white society. This refusal cast strong doubts about the superiority of a white culture that would not welcome a captive with mixed blood children and Indian kin.

¹⁴ Ibid., 17.

¹⁵ James A. Levernier and Hennig Cohen, *The Indians and Their Captives* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977): xiii-xiv; James A. Levernier, "Indian Captivity Narratives: Their Functions and Forms", Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1975; James A. Levernier, "The Captivity Narrative as Regional, Military, and Ethnic History," *Research Studies* 45 1 (March 1977): 30-37.

¹⁶ Ibid., xiii-xiv.

¹⁷ James Axtell, "The White Indians of Colonial America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3 32 (January 1975): 55-58; J. Norman Heard, *White Into Red: A Study of the Assimilation of White Persons Captured by Indians* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1973): 13-14.

In the early 1980s both literary and historical analysis of captivity narratives shifted. Literary analysis focused primarily on the importance of Mary Rowlandson's narrative, believed to be the first captivity narrative, and the Puritan captivity narrative tradition overall.¹⁸ Mitchell Robert Breitwieser conducted the most comprehensive examination of this type. In *American Puritanism and the Defense of Mourning: Religion, Grief, and Ethnology in Mary White Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative*, he asserted that Rowlandson's individualism and ability to survive in captivity outside of the control of the Puritan community was a challenge to her former way of life.¹⁹ Because she survived, she was seen as one of the elect and so was the Puritan community that she represented. Breitwieser discussed her views of Indians as heathens, devils and hellhounds, labels prominent in Puritan society, but also reviewed how she hinted at the kindness of the Indians as well. It seemed that the Indians were not as bad as the Puritan

¹⁸ Frances Roe Kestler, "Mary White Rowlandson: The Significance of her Narrative in American Literature," Ph. D. Dissertation, St. John's University, 1982; Annette Kolodny, "Among the Indians: The Uses of Captivity," *Women's Studies 3&4* (1993); Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, "The Indian Captivity Narratives of Mary Rowlandson and Olive Oatman: Case Studies in the Continuity, Evolution, and Exploitation of Literary Discourse," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 27 (Spring 1994): 33-46; Kathryn Zabelle Derounian, "Puritan Orthodoxy and the 'Survivor Syndrome' in Mary Rowlandson's Indian Captivity Narrative," *Early American Literature* 22 (Spring 1987): 82-93; Teresa A. Toulouse, "'My Own Credit': Strategies of (E)valuation in Mary Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative," *American Literature* 64 (December 1992): 655-76; Margaret Davis, "Mary White Rowlandson's Self-Fashioning as Puritan Goodwife," *Early American Literature* 27 (Spring 1992): 49-60; Ann Stanford, "Mary Rowlandson's Journey to Redemption," *Ariel* 7 (July 1976): 27-37; Tara Fitzpatrick, "The Figure of Captivity: The Cultural Work of the Puritan Captivity Narrative," *American Literary History* 3 (Spring 1991): 1-26; David L. Greene, "New Light on Mary Rowlandson," *Early American Literature* 20 (Spring 1985): 24-38; Kathryn Zabelle Derounian, "The Publication, Promotion, and Distribution of Mary Rowlandson's Indian Captivity Narrative in the Seventeenth Century," *Early American Literature* 23 3 (1988): 239-261; David Downing, "'Streams of Scripture Comfort': Mary Rowlandson's Typological Use of the Bible," *Early American Literature* 15 3 (1980-1981): 252-259; Leland S. Person Jr., "The American Eve: Miscegenation and a Feminist Frontier Fiction," *American Quarterly* 37 (1985): 668-685; Jane Tompkins, "'Indians': Textualism, Morality and the Problem of History," *Critical Inquiry* 13 (Autumn 1986): 101-119; David L. Minter, "By Dens of Lions: Notes on Stylization in Early Puritan Captivity Narratives," *American Literature* 45 (November 1973): 335-347; David T. Haberly, "Women and Indians: The Last of the Mohicans and the Captivity Tradition," *American Quarterly* 28 4 (Autumn 1976): 431-444.

ministers portrayed them.²⁰ Her narrative challenged stereotypes of Indians and raised questions about Puritan Indian policies. Rowlandson's narrative presented just as many challenges to the Puritan way of life as it did justifications for her reabsorption into it.

Historical works also shifted to studies of Puritan narratives but focused on other smaller groups of regional narratives and the realities of Indian captivity as well.²¹ These authors provided excellent and detailed deconstruction of a small group of narratives to reveal details about the personal, cultural, and ethnic milieus of the time. There was one other interpretation that bears mention here because it revealed the myriad of ways captivity narratives could be interpreted. Harry J. Ross in "Trapped by Society, Imprisoned in the Wilderness: Captivity in American Literature 1680-1860" stated that narratives were patriotic tales which reminded Americans they had freed themselves from captivity by Europe through the Revolutionary and French and Indian wars. Indian captivity reminded the reader that he was in danger of losing his freedom if he did not

¹⁹ Mitchell Robert Breitwieser, *American Puritanism and the Defense of Mourning: Religion, Grief, and Ethnology in Mary Towlandson's Captivity Narrative* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990): 17-21.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 137-140.

²¹ Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark, *Puritans Among the Indians—Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676-1724* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1981); J. M. Bumstead, "'Carried to Canada': Perceptions of the French in British Colonial Captivity Narratives, 1690-1760," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 13 (Spring, 1983): 76-96; Stanley, B. Kimball, "The Captivity Narrative on the Mormon Trails, 1846-65," *Dialogue* 18 (Winter 1985): 81-88; Julie Rehbock, "Women and Indians in the 1800s: Captivity Narratives as Fact and Fiction," M.A. San Jose State University, 1989; Phoebe S. Allen, "The Double Exposure of Texas Captives," *Western Folklore* 32 (1973): 249-261; Captain Greg Sieminski, "The Puritan Captivity Narrative and the Politics of the American Revolution," *American Quarterly* 42 1 (1990): 35-56; Colin G. Calloway, editor, *North Country Captives: Selected Narratives of Indian Captivity from Vermont to New Hampshire* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992); Robert J. Denn, "Captivity Narratives of the American Revolution," *Journal of American Culture* 2 (1980): 575-582; LtCol Nancy B. Samuelson USAF (Ret), "The Fate Worse Than Death: Women Captives of the Indians Wars," *Minerva* 3 4 (Winter 1985): 117-137; Lonnie J. White, "White Women Captives of Southern Plains Indians 1866-1875," *Journal of the West* 8 (1969): 327-354.

remain steadfast against outsiders. Thus, captivity narratives celebrated American liberation through a ritual reenactment of its deliverance from Europe.²²

At the same time, women's historians challenged traditional historical interpretations of captivity narratives and discussed the actual roles and experiences of female settlers and captives. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich discussed the important role of women in the captivity narrative tradition. Captivity was traditionally seen as a time when women were vulnerable to sex crimes, physical abuse, loss of children, and over work. While this may have been true, Ulrich saw captivity as opening a whole new life for female captives after the initial capture and initiation phases. Captive women had a new home, new family and friends and different experiences not found within the confines of white society thus becoming actors and not just victims in captivity.²³ White women saw that Indian women had more power and equal relationships with their spouses, thus revealing gender roles that were more fluid than those in white culture. The captives discovered that there were different social arrangements that seemed better than white society and caused difficulties when some captives refused to return home. Some captives also used the differences that emerged during captivity to critique problems they saw in white society.

In *The Indian Captivity Narrative: A Woman's View*, Frances Roe Kestler focused on the function of women's captivity narratives. She began with Rowlandson but also considered narratives from other time periods to trace the functions of captivity narratives. Women's narratives provided vital information about an area for new settlers,

²² Harry J. Ross, "Trapped by Society, Imprisoned in the Wilderness: Captivity in American Literature 1680-1860," Ph. D. Dissertation, Northwestern, 1989: 17-18.

²³ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives—Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650-1750* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982): 203.

portrayed an image of women as commodity that women on the frontier had to face, related the possibility of going native and renouncing white culture, pinpointed conflicts between settlers and native peoples, told of the resourcefulness of women in dealing with physical and mental hardships in captivity and showed women making their own contributions to frontier settlement.²⁴ She also discussed how women struggled to rejoin white society and resume their lives after captivity.²⁵

Interpretations by Ulrich and Kestler along with those by Annette Kolodny were vital because they not only brought the special issues of female captivity to the forefront, but also placed women as actors, not just victims, in the captivity setting.²⁶ Women confronted cultural conflict during their captivities, probably at a higher rate than men, who were more likely to be killed or escape. Annette Kolodny noted that as a result, “The narrative of female captivity functions not as any wish-fulfillment fantasy but, instead, as the only available literary form to mirror back some aspect of contemporary women’s frontier reality.”²⁷ Frontier women gained a voice through captivity narrative literature.

In 1993, Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Levernier wrote the most comprehensive study of captivity narratives, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900*.

²⁴ Frances Roe Kestler, *The Indian Captivity Narrative: A Woman's View* (New York: Garland, 1990): xiii-xiv.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, xvii.

²⁶ Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984): 33-34; see also “Among the Indians: The Uses of Captivity,” *Women's Studies Quarterly* 3&4 (1993): 184-195. For more recent works on women’s captivity see Lisa Logan, “Marty Rowlandson’s Captivity and the ‘Place’ of the Woman Subject,” *Early American Literature* 28 (Fall 1993): 255-277; Carolyn Berry Hunter, “Ten Southwestern Captivity Narratives,” Ph. D. Dissertation, Northern Arizona University, 1992; Christopher Dean Castiglia, “Captive Subjects: The Captivity Narrative and American Women’s Writing,” Ph. D. Dissertation, Columbia, 1991; Samantha Selwood, “Catherine Sager Pringle and the Captivity Narrative Genre,” M. A., University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 1993.

Drawing on the diverse body of scholarly material about captivity narratives, they reevaluated the contemporary context of the narratives and the current significance of captivity imagery.²⁸ Derounian-Stodola and Levernier used literary, mythological, and historical interpretations to discuss the importance of the captivity narrative from 1500-1900 and expanded the definition of the narrative to include military and local histories, and fictionalized accounts.²⁹ They revealed how captivity narratives shaped both the American literary tradition and American culture through an assessment of the uses and interpretative structure of captivity narrative literature.

Derounian-Stodola and Levernier also defined images in of women in captivity narrative literature. While women portrayed themselves in different ways throughout their narratives, they almost always framed themselves with the violated family unit. "Their narratives stress that captivities main metonymy was the dramatic and decisive fracturing of the original family unit. Family, of course, symbolized not only individual households but society at large and the greater social chaos caused by American Indian incursions."³⁰ Captives used their roles as mothers, sisters, and daughters to define their identities. These roles became even more important during captivity as women struggled to hang onto their identities in the face of new cultures.

Derounian-Stodola and Levernier defined five images of women captives, all within the paradigm of the violated family: victims and virgins; victors and vanquishers; mothers, daughters, and sisters; traumatized women; and transculturated women. As

²⁷ Annette Kolodny, "Captives in Paradise: Women on the Early American Frontier," in *Women's Personal Narratives: Essays in Criticism and Pedagogy*, edited by Lenore Hoffman and Margo Culley (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1985): 109.

²⁸ Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900* (New York: Twayne, 1993): xii.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, xii.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

victims and virgins, female captives faced physical, sexual, and spiritual exploitation in the forms of abuse, torture, enslavement, rape and food deprivation and, in the case of the Puritans, forced conversion to Catholicism. Women did not act for themselves but were mainly used at the whim of their captors.³¹ As victors and vanquishers, captives exerted control over their fates by challenging Indians through physical force or escape. Because they had witnessed the murders of family members and faced constant threat themselves, their use of violence was justified by white society even though it took them out of their traditional roles as caretakers and nurturers.³² In all female narratives, the role of mother was central. This image of the captive as mother, daughter, or sister outraged by the Indians played most poignantly on white audiences. The idea of sisterhood in captivity also extended to unrelated women who shared the same captivity as the author and bonded as sisters in suffering.³³ The traumatized woman was a victim who suffered severe emotional abuse but survived her captivity with lasting psychological scars that emerged during the course of her narrative.³⁴ Finally, the transculturated woman was a white woman who embraced Indian life, sometimes began a new family, and chose to stay with her Indian relatives despite being offered freedom and return to white culture.³⁵

The other seminal work that emerged in 1993 was *White Captives—Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* by June Namias. She focused primarily on female captivity narratives using four different perspectives: imperial, cultural, ethnohistorical and gender based. Namias analyzed a different narrative for each perspective to track changes in the form and function of narratives over time. The imperial perspective dealt

³¹ Ibid., 119.

³² Ibid., 133.

³³ Ibid., 146.

³⁴ Ibid., 153.

with captive imagery as it fueled Manifest Destiny and the growth of a powerful American nation.³⁶ The cultural perspective discussed the captivity narrative as an American genre that revealed the Euro-American character of society.³⁷ The ethnohistorical approach used both history and anthropology to get a clearer picture of Indian –white relations on the frontier, and the gender-based approach examined male and female interaction on the frontier.³⁸

Namias emphasized that captivity narratives brought women, children and Indians—previously marginalized groups—to the forefront of American frontier history.³⁹ Captivity narratives written by women showed a complex set of relationships between white men and women, white women and Indian men, and white children and their adoptive Indian families. Because Indian ways of life challenged the white patriarchal system, women saw different ways of working and living with men, albeit men of a different race. She also discussed the gendered stereotypes of women found in captivity narratives and divided them into three groups: survivors, amazons, and frail flowers.⁴⁰

While these images correspond roughly with those of Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, Namias divided her images chronologically with survivors dominating the colonial period, amazons the early Republic, and frail flowers after 1830, when a culture of domesticity supported more limited roles for women based in the home.⁴¹ The survivor in the early colonial period experienced a wide variety of stresses in captivity,

³⁵ Ibid., 158-159.

³⁶ June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993): 15.

³⁷ Ibid., 16.

³⁸ Ibid., 15-17.

³⁹ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 24.

which she tried to make sense of in order to survive and move closer to God.⁴² The amazon of the early Republic period resisted captivity in a variety of ways ranging from murder of her captors to escape. Her physical strength grew from a personal threat to her family and herself.⁴³ Finally, the frail flower emerged in the 1830s and 1840s as the culture of domesticity grew and reshaped women's roles. As Namias wrote about the frail flower, "She is the poor, hapless woman who is taken unawares. She is shocked and distressed by her capture and by the deaths and dislocations that go with it. What makes her a candidate for Frail Flower status is that she rarely emerges from her shock, distress, and misery."⁴⁴ This woman was a victim only and did not take an active part in her captivity.

Academic interest continued with explorations into how Indian captivity informed our national identity. In 1995, Gary L. Ebersole wrote a definitive study of Indian captivity imagery, tracking both the historical reality of Indian captivity as well as focusing "largely on narrative representations of captivity, but with attention to their historical setting and to the contemporary reading practices brought to bear on these texts."⁴⁵ In *Bound and Determined: Captivity, Culture-Crossing, and White Womanhood from Mary Rowlandson to Patty Hearst*, Christopher Castiglia explored how both female captives' identities and the narratives of their experiences changed due to contact with the "other," sometimes offering a critique of the patriarchy from which they

⁴¹ Ibid., 24.

⁴² Ibid., 29.

⁴³ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁵ Gary L. Ebersole, *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Post-Modern Images of Indian Captivity*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995): 3.

came.⁴⁶ Rebecca Blevins Faery used white female captives and Pocahontas to discuss the development of “the politics of race and gender, national identity and subjectivity, representation and reading that have clustered around these connected figures throughout U. S. history.”⁴⁷

Michelle Burnham provided a textual analysis of both captivity narratives and sentimental novels from the nineteenth century to show that the captive occupied a liminal space between cultures and that in this space, white cultural constructs were challenged by the captive’s experiences with the “other.”⁴⁸ Beyond this though, she examined the reader’s response to sentimental writing in narratives and novels alike which masked the colonialism and violence inherent in America’s founding.⁴⁹ Susan Scheckel, in *The Insistence of the Indian—Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*, asserted that American treatment of Indians in the nineteenth century revealed American ambivalence about a national identity founded on denial of native natural rights.⁵⁰

A final important work to be noted is *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives* by Pauline Turner Strong. Strong provided an historical and cultural analysis of the power of the captivity tradition in American history by reviewing the idea of self versus other, examining the complexity of the practice of taking captives thus placing Indian captivity within a larger

⁴⁶ Christopher Castiglia, *Bound and Determined: Captivity, Culture-Crossing and White Womanhood from Mary Rowlandson to Patty Hearst*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996): 9.

⁴⁷ Rebecca Blevins Faery, *Cartographies of Desire: Captivity, Race, & Sex in the Shaping of an American Nation*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999): 13.

⁴⁸ Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment—Cultural Exchange in American Literature 1682-1861*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997): 20-21.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁰ Susan Scheckel, *The Insistence of the Indian—Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998): 14.

historical setting, and discussing the reality of captivity as a historical practice versus how it is portrayed in captivity narratives.⁵¹ Each of these texts provided a more detailed analysis of the power and prevalence of Indian captivity and captivity narratives in shaping American culture and character.

In summary, the most important interpretive issues surrounding captivity narratives have been to define it as a genre, discuss the function of Indian captivity in developing an American mythology, and emphasize the role of the female captive. The role of women in the captivity narrative tradition continues to be central as scholars discuss the role of gender and race in female captivity. Other scholars focus on editorial versus authorial voice in female narratives and how this shaped the story that was told. Historians place Indian captivity within its historical context to explore how captivity shaped the development of racism, American national character and American culture as imagery of Indians and captivity remain pervasive.

Despite the excellent interpretations of captivity narrative literature thus far, there are areas that need to be explored. First, there has been little ethnographic study of the narratives to glean information about specific Indian captors. While captivity narratives as primary sources do present certain problems, detailed information remains about Indian life that can provide otherwise unknown information about native gender relations, work patterns and religious practices.⁵² Another area to explore is the role of gender in

⁵¹ Pauline Turner Strong, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999): 3.

⁵² Captivity narratives present difficulties because some were fictionalized and used as propaganda against the British, French and Indians at different points in American history. Also, the captive writing the narrative had experienced severe trauma at the hands of the Indians and may have been biased when relating experiences during captivity. Editors also assisted captives and sometimes changed the facts of the narrative to suit their own purposes. Despite obvious and unpreventable biases, captivity narratives still function as primary sources which provide detailed information about the captives, their captors, initial attack, life in the Indian camps, and resumption of life after captivity. Sometimes, the information

male captivity. If men were captured instead of killed outright, they had very different captivity experiences from those of women which sometimes included torture and death but other times adoption into the tribe, where their roles differed greatly from those of female captives. Finally, the roles of female captives need to be explored within the context of Indian society and not within that of white society they were removed from. In this way, captives can be placed within a different cultural context, the one that helped produce the narrative in the first place.

Several important works besides those of Namias, Derounian-Stodola and Levernier influenced the development of new roles presented in this research. Melvin J. Thorne was the first author to delineate two distinct images of women in captivity narrative literature: fainters and fighters. As fainters, women were unresourceful, physically weak, emotionally distressed given to weeping, and passive.⁵³ The counter image Thorne identified was captive women as fighters who were emotionally tough, resourceful, physically strong and active during captivity.⁵⁴ These two distinct images supported two other portrayals of women. First, women were seen as more daring the farther they moved from civilization. Second, dual images reflected an ambivalence about women's proper roles in early America versus more clear roles for nineteenth

provided in these sources is not available in other sources especially concerning Indian ways of life. For those working with captivity narratives, this means a heightened awareness the captive's experiences and resultant biases, the period of time in which the narrative was written, and why the author chose to write the narrative. This awareness allows the historian to cull valuable information from the narratives despite any problems with authorial bias thus allowing exploration of sources that give voice to those previously without.

⁵³ Melvin J. Thorne, "Fainters and Fighters: Images of Women in the Indian Captivity Narratives," *Midwest Quarterly* 23 3 (1982): 427-428.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 429-430.

century women.⁵⁵ More importantly, Thorne briefly noted how images of women in captivity narratives changed over time to reflect changes in women's roles:

Colonial American approved of both the fainters and the fighters because the role of colonial women was less well defined than that of women in the nineteenth century. But after 1800 the fighters became fewer in number and their behavior had to be reconciled with the more genteel image of the nineteenth century woman.⁵⁶

This was not necessarily true as women continued to actively resist capture or escape.

But Thorne's work still opened for examination the images of captive women that later scholars such as Namias, Derounian-Stodola and Levernier would build on.

Christopher Castiglia also helped to define captive women imagery by defining four different types of narratives written by women: typical narratives, fighting narratives, remaining narratives, and a critique of both. In typical narratives, women continued to see Indians as savages and waited for white men to rescue them. In fighting narratives, captive women either fought to avoid capture or escaped at some point whereas in remaining narratives captive women chose to remain with the Indians because life with them was no worse than life among whites. Finally, as a critique of both, captive women did not side with either culture but instead criticized them both.⁵⁷ Even though he did not define specific roles for women, captive images clearly emerged in his summary of the narrative types. These types are easily transposed into distinct roles for women as victims, vanquishers, transculturated women and critics of both cultures.

The work of Namias in particular but also Derounian-Stodola and Levernier are springboards for the research and analysis presented here. Their definitions of captive

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 433-434.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 435-436.

⁵⁷ Christopher Castiglia, "Captive Subjects: The Captivity Narrative and American Women's Writing," Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia, 1991: 22.

images of women has clarified women's roles as all three authors recognized the complexities of female captivity and how captive women's roles evolved during their confinement as they formed relationships with their captors. Once returned to white society, captive women experienced an ambivalence that was difficult to reconcile and express effectively. This paper will move beyond the images of women as victims and virgins; victors and vanquishers; mothers, daughters and sisters; traumatized women; and transculturated women presented by Derounian-Stodola and Levernier and captive images outlined by Namias—survivors, amazons, and frail flowers—to define captive women's roles in terms of their captor's culture.

In "Mary Rowlandson's Captivity and the 'Place' of the Woman Subject," Lisa Logan moved beyond the images defined by Derounian-Stodola, Levernier, and Namias to discuss two identities for captive women, particularly Mary Rowlandson. "Rowlandson's work engages the intersecting and overlapping positions—physical, ideological, social, discursive—that she occupies: Puritan, woman, captive, writer, wife, mother, neighbor. . . . Throughout the text, captivity operates as a metaphor to reveal the position(s) she inhabits as a woman author and gendered and political subject."⁵⁸ As a former captive and writer, Rowlandson had two identities as she searched for an authorial voice. This was important because as she searched for her voice, Rowlandson reconstructed her world out of the challenges and new roles of Indian captivity. Logan highlighted these changed roles: "At home, Rowlandson was an important and influential person, a minister's wife, a mother to her children. In this new, unstable, wilderness place, she is a servant, shuffled from master to master, begging for food from

⁵⁸ Lisa Logan, "Mary Rowlandson's Captivity and the 'Place' of the Woman Subject," *Early American Literature* 28 3 (Fall 1983): 256.

strangers.”⁵⁹ Rowlandson’s previous roles were destroyed by her capture and she had to adopt new roles not of her own choosing. This change in roles caused Rowlandson to lose her very identity as the people and places through which she previously defined herself were destroyed.⁶⁰ These same things could be said of the captive narratives explored here as women struggled to maintain their identities in the face of cultural contact. Although Logan did not go on to define new roles for captive women based on Indian culture, she paved the way for further development in this area.⁶¹

The limitation of these categories is revealed when images of captive women fail to encompass new roles for women as part of Indian society. While in captivity, women lived in completely different social, economic, and religious settings. Native cultures had different rules of behavior for women and captives had to adjust to new cultural and gender constructs. Thus, four new categories should be added to define images of women in captivity. These include captive women as slaves and servants; wives and mothers; adopted kin as sisters, daughters, and nieces; and cultural critics. While some of these roles mirror those defined by Namias, Derounian-Stodola and Levernier due to similar gender roles in both cultures, these new categories define captive women’s roles in terms of native, not white, culture.

Derounian-Stodola and Levernier briefly discussed five of the narratives used in this paper in their classifications of captive women imagery: “Sweet’s account shows her in the role of mother; McClure portrays herself as a vanquisher, and, because she was

⁵⁹ Ibid., 266.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 266.

⁶¹ Although not within the scope of this paper, Clara Sue Kidwell also redefined roles for Indian women. In “Indian Women as Cultural Mediators,” she asserted that Indian women’s roles must also be considered within the context of both cultures, not just white culture which created stereotypes of Indian women. Native women had powerful roles in their own tribes and families that need to be considered as well in

half-Indian—through her mother—and married to a “mixed-blood,” as a transculturated woman too; Schwandt-Schmidt, the most traumatized of the three, presents herself as a victim, someone with permanent psychological scars.⁶² Later they classified White and Carrigan both as traumatized women who were treated relatively well but suffered permanent psychological damage as a result of captivity.⁶³ These assessments are accurate based on existing historiographical definitions of captive women’s roles. But each of these women and the other women whose narratives are featured here had other roles in captivity that correspond to the four new categories.

Tables One and Two provide a snapshot of how all eight captives featured here fit into existing historiographical classifications versus the new categories based on women’s roles in captivity. For example, Mary Schwandt was obviously a victim, frail flower and traumatized young woman, but according to the new roles based on the captivity structure, she was also a slave, used mainly for sex in the early days of her captivity, and later an adopted daughter of Snana, who cared for and protected Schwandt as one of her own children. As a mixed blood captive, Nancy McClure is more difficult to classify. As a girl, the missionaries had educated her and this gave her an affinity for white culture. She became transculturated to white society but this preference was challenged during her captivity as she refused to help captive women and children. It was difficult to judge the depth of her acculturation because she herself struggled with her own identity, professing to prefer white culture but allying herself with Dakota relatives as kin and the mixed bloods who fought with the whites during the war. Her

order for a more complete picture of their lives to emerge. Clara Sue Kidwell, “Indian Women as Cultural Mediators,” *Ethnohistory* 39 (Spring 1992): 97-107.

⁶² Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, 116.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 155-156.

TABLE 1
Images of Women in Captivity Narrative Literature-Historiographical Classifications

	Schwandt	McClure	Tarble	Renville	Carrigan	Wakefield	White	Sweet
Victims	X			X	X			X
Vanguisher		X	X					X
Mother								
Daughter	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sister								
Traumatized	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Transculture		X	X		X-SISTER	X		
Survivor			X			X		
Amazon								X
Frail Flower	X			X				X

TABLE 2
Images of Women in Captivity Narrative Literature-Capivity Classifications

	Schwandt	McClure	Tarble	Renville	Carrigan	Wakefield	White	Sweet
Slave/Servant	X							
Wife/Mother		X				X-Perceived		
Adopted Kin	X	X	X-Pre-captivity		X	X	X	
Cultural Critic				X		X		

captivity revealed the ambivalent position of mixed heritage people between white and Dakota society. This made her difficult to classify as her identity and roles are more fluid because she moved easily between both cultures.

Other captives are less difficult to classify. Helen Tarble fit into several categories. She was a vanquisher, survivor and amazon because she outwitted her captors, escaped, and managed to survive with two children in the wilderness. She was also a mother traumatized by her capture. Before captivity she was transculturated to Dakota society becoming an adopted member of the tribe. During her brief captivity, Tarble served as a servant to the Dakota. June Namias classified Wakefield as a mother whose morality and conscience extended to a critique of the larger community.⁶⁴ Wakefield could definitely be classified as a mother, survivor, and traumatized woman under the original classifications of captive women. But during captivity she became adopted kin, the presumed wife of a Dakota man and thus transculturated to Indian life. Wakefield also used her roles in both cultures to critique how white officials conducted the war. Each woman moved through multiple roles through the course of captivity. By combining Namias, Derounian-Stodola's and Levernier's images of women with the newly defined roles of captive women, a more complete picture of female captivity emerges that encompasses all the cultural roles, both white and Indian, that women experienced during captivity.

⁶⁴ Namias, 240.

Chapter 2

Dakota Indians and the Minnesota Indian War of 1862

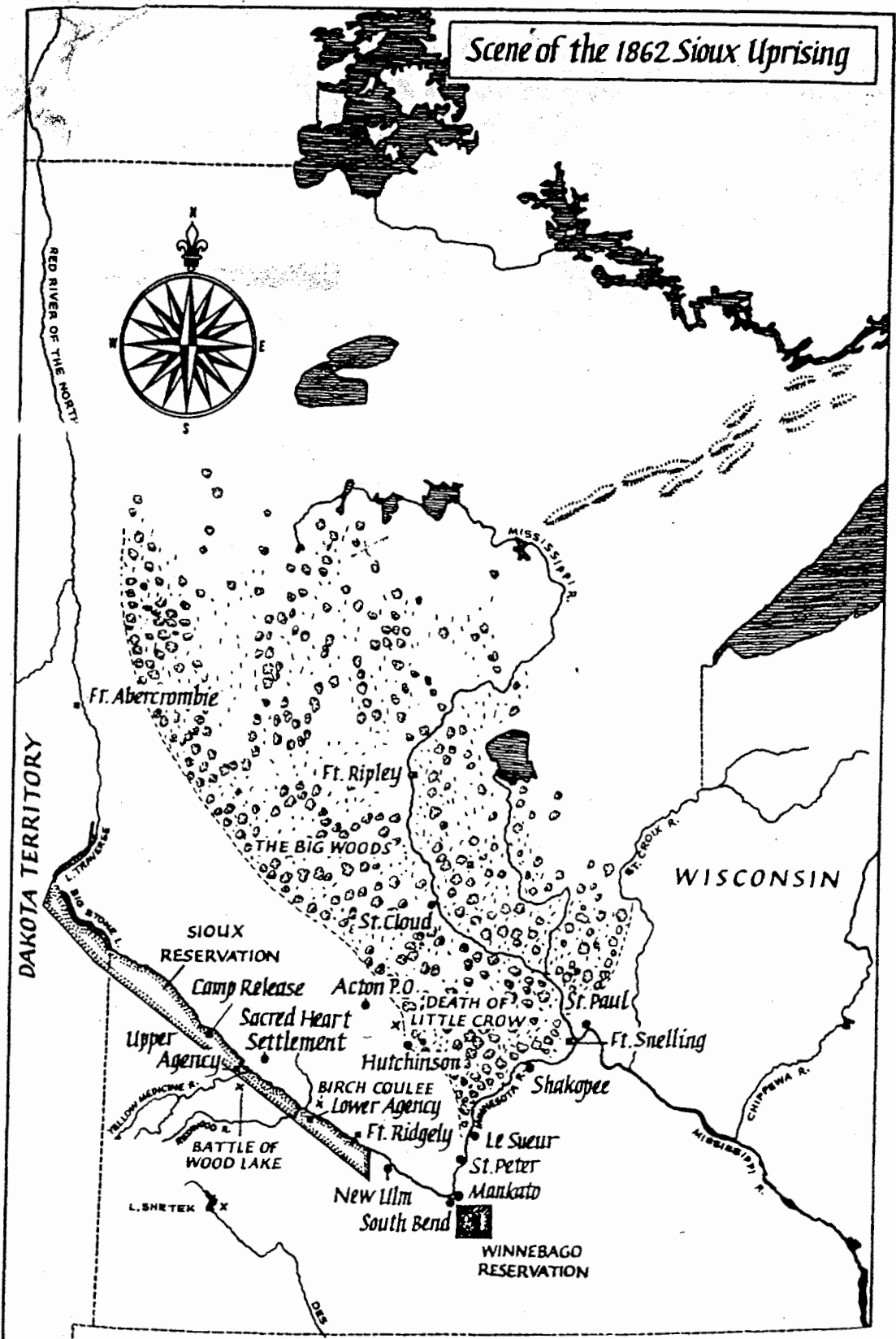
To gain a clearer understanding of the environment that sparked war and facilitated captivity, this paper will first examine the Dakota cultural milieu and the incidents that led to war. The Minnesota Indian War of 1862 began on August 18, 1862 and ended on September 26, 1862, with the release of captives. The Dakota Sioux, or Santee, involved in the war consisted of four bands: Wahpekute, Sisseton, Wahpeton, and Mdewakanton. They lived mostly in Minnesota and were a semi-nomadic people with fairly permanent villages who traveled at different times of the year for hunting and gathering of different resources.⁶⁵ Their earliest contacts with whites came from French fur traders. According to Paul Beck, by the late 1700s, the Dakota were dependent on European trade goods but still had control of their lands and culture. Their customs, religious beliefs and gender roles remained largely intact until American settlers moved into the area.⁶⁶

Dakota society was divided along gender lines as they practiced a highly mobile subsistence pattern based on hunting, gathering, and corn cultivation. In the spring, women harvested maple sap for sugar while men hunted muskrats to have pelts for the fur trade.⁶⁷ Both men and women returned to their summer camps where women cultivated corn, gathered berries, roots and medicinal herbs while the men hunted and

⁶⁵ Paul Beck, *Soldier, Settler, and Sioux: Fort Ridgely and the Minnesota River Valley, 1853-1867* (Sioux Falls: Pine Hill Press, Inc., 2000): 1-2.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁷ Samuel J. Pond, *The Dakota or Sioux in Minnesota as They Were in 1834* Reprint (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1986): 53-55; Janet D. Spector, *What This Awl Means: Feminist Archaeology at a Wahpeton Dakota Village* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1993): 19-20.



Reprinted from *Soldier, Settler, Sioux* by Paul Beck

warred with the Ojibwa.⁶⁸ In the fall, the Dakota removed to northern lakes to harvest wild rice and onto the fall deer hunt, both of which provided integral parts of Dakota subsistence.⁶⁹ In the winter, they returned to the woods near their summer camps to live off stored food.⁷⁰

A strong kin network bound the Dakota giving each member in a specific position in the tribe with certain duties to the family unit and the community as a whole. In the context of this kin network, men and women had specific duties to insure the well being of the whole tribe.⁷¹ They had separate duties but were perceived as equals when it came to supporting the tribe. Nineteenth century observers often commented on the roles of Dakota women. Although nineteenth century observers judged Indian men and women by their own ethnocentric standards of gendered work. They revealed how work was divided among gender lines for the Dakota by providing information about native gender roles not found in other sources. In "Beasts of Burden and Menial Slaves: Nineteenth Century Observations of Northern Plains Indian Women," Kathleen M. Weist notes the issues surrounding nineteenth sources:

Even though their observations were colored by their own cultural biases. . . [they still] witnessed Indian women and men seeking goals, implementing decisions, and in general, acting and reacting within their cultural environment. Not all of what they wrote should be completely dismissed. When their descriptions are placed in a more complete historical and cultural context and when viewed from a different perspective . . . their observations indicate a relatively high rather than low status."⁷²

⁶⁸ Pond, 26-27; Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984): 3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁷⁰ Spector, 67-77; Anderson, *Kinsmen*, 6.

⁷¹ Anderson, *Kinsmen*, 11.

⁷² Kathleen M. Weist, "Beasts of Burden and Menial Slaves: Nineteenth Century Observations of Northern Plains Indian Women," in *The Hidden Half*. See also Patricia Albers, *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, Inc., 1983): 4.

Philander Prescott, an interpreter to the Dakota in the 1840s described the work roles of men and women:

The men hunt a little in summer, go to war, kill an enemy, dance, lounge, sleep, and smoke. The women do everything – nurse, chop wood, and carry it on their backs from half to a whole mile, hoe the ground for planting, plant, hoe the corn, gather wild fruit, carry the lodge, and in winter cut and carry the poles to pitch it with... and the men often sit and look on.⁷³

Historian and minister Edward Neill also said of the Indian women: Dakotah females deserve the sympathy of every tender heart. From early childhood they lead ‘worse than a dog’s life’... They are the hewers of wood, and drawers of water for the camp.” He then went on to lament that they needed to be taught the sphere of white women, which would free them from their burdensome tasks.⁷⁴ These quotes demonstrate a number of important points. First of all, they showed the cultural biases of nineteenth century observers and revealed how perceptions and observations about the Dakota were shaped by preexisting stereotypes. These are the same stereotypes that partially informed the captive women’s views of Indians and shaped how they narrated their stories about life with the Indian other in captivity. Also, these quotes provided valuable insight into Dakota life from first hand observation albeit biased. There are few other sources from the time that describe in such detail Dakota social, political, and religious life in the years preceding the war.

Samuel Pond, a missionary to the Sioux in the 1830s, provided a more balanced account of the lives of Dakota men and women. Pond summarized the work relationships between men and women best in his comment on the rigors of the fall hunt:

⁷³ Philander Prescott, *Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of Indian Tribes of the United*, edited by Henry Schoolcraft (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, and Company, 1853): 188.

⁷⁴ Edward Neill, *The History of Minnesota From the Earliest French Explorations to the Present Times*, (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Company, 1882): 82-83.

While the woman was carrying the wood, her husband perhaps, after a weary day spent pursuing game, was bringing it home on his back a distance of five or ten miles. When Dakota women were told that the men made them do all the work, they laughed for they knew better.⁷⁵

Indian women were responsible for a great many tasks including hauling wood and water, making clothes and tools needed for women's work, caring for children, maintaining the summer lodges or tepees year round, breaking and setting up camp, gathering and preserving wild and cultivated foods and cultivating corn.⁷⁶

In *What This Axl Means*, Janet Spector utilized a feminist approach to archaeology in order to study Dakota gender roles as revealed in artifacts, narrative accounts, and interviews with Dakotas themselves. In her second chapter, she painted a detailed portrait of the life of one young woman and her duties at summer camp. Upon their return to the camp, women repaired the houses they lived in for the summer by resetting the poles, walls, and roofs or by leveling them and beginning anew. After this, women gathered wild fruits and berries while the men traded with the trader who had arrived on his annual trip. Janet Spector was able to confirm women's roles through her archaeological work particularly in the midden or dump of a Wahpeton village. She discovered many material remains of women's work ranging from discarded tools to plant material to cooking utensils. There were also fur trade goods associated with women like bits of copper from kettles and beads.⁷⁷

Through her archaeological work, Janet Spector created an intimate look at the roles and duties of Dakota men and women. Her approach provided a valuable

⁷⁵ Pond, 49.

⁷⁶ Pond, 56-59; Spector, 109-110.

⁷⁷ Spector, 109-112.

interdisciplinary approach by recovering valuable information about Dakota gender roles as performed in the villages. Spector imagined the duties of a young Dakota woman:

When Mazaokiyewin completed more complicated work, such as sewing and decorating a buckskin dress or pipe bag, she formed diamond-shaped clusters of four small dots, which symbolized the powers of the four directions that influenced her life in many ways. She liked to expose the handle in its beaded case so that others could see she was doing her best to ensure the well being of the community.⁷⁸

As a young woman, Mazaokiyewin's role as a producer was vital for the well being of the tribe. She needed to perfect those skills when she was young so she would be useful in supporting her family and tribe.

Dakota men, on the other hand, were indeed primarily concerned with the hunt because it provided most of the food and clothing for the tribe.⁷⁹ Through her dig, Spector was able to paint a fairly clear picture of Dakota men's world as well. The midden held many articles associated with men, especially animal remains from the hunt such as deer, waterfowl, and animals trapped for their pelts including skunks, raccoons, otters, and beavers.⁸⁰ Traces of hunting and fishing implements from traders were also found in the dump.⁸¹ Another important found artifact associated with men was pipestone. Indian men spent part of their time fashioning elaborate pipe bowls for ceremonial use.⁸² This points to a rich ceremonial life at the village based in the male world of political and religious leadership.

Overall, Dakota society was roughly egalitarian with labor divided along gender lines. Speaking of Dakota women, Pond said, "In many respects they were treated by

⁷⁸ Ibid., 25.

⁷⁹ Pond, 22.

⁸⁰ Spector, 113.

⁸¹ Ibid., 114.

⁸² Ibid., 114-16.

men as equals, and participated with them in their most solemn religious festivals. They had no voice in the public councils, but they contrived to make themselves heard at home.”⁸³ Women also had different habits, dispositions, and even patterns of speaking than men dividing Dakota society along clearly defined gender lines. Pond asserted that Indian women were “feminine” in their habits as they worked to sustain the tribe. They were interested only in duties specific to women and would look to men for protection when they could. “Even the language spoken by the women differed from that of the men, so that by reading a single sentence of a letter one can tell whether it was written by a male or female. In a word, the difference in disposition and habits ‘between men and women’ was as great among the Indians as among us.”⁸⁴ Pond was astute enough to observe that gender differences existed between Indian men and women. Women and men were strong and capable people whose roles complemented each other to insure the continued survival of the tribe.

More modern scholars of plains Indian women also contrasted Indian men and women’s patterns of work, religious and political roles by discussing native constructions of gender. In “The Political-Economy of Gender: A 19th Century Plains Indian Case Study,” Alan M. Klein noted the important role of Indian women in supporting the tribe. But he also showed how women’s power declined slightly to the hide trade: “While women were never to completely lose their position in the political economy, their removal from crucial spheres of production adversely affected their ability to control status-bearing goods.”⁸⁵ Beatrice Medicine also recognized that native women had

⁸³ Pond, 140.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁸⁵ Alan M. Klein, “The Political Economy of Gender: A 19th Century Plains Indian Case Study,” in *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women* edited by Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine

become more dependent and vulnerable, but there were still tribal roles that provided them with alternative sources of power: “More specifically, it is argued that the warrior role for women was institutionalized in Plains Indian communities, and that it was one of several culturally accepted positions which accorded women power and prestige in areas typically identified as ‘masculine’.”⁸⁶ Women could also gain prestige and power through other female sodalities such as craftwork and the production of sacred and ritual objects. Mary Jane Schneider noted the power Indian women gained from excellence in female handiwork:

The manner in which a woman could obtain wealth and status through her craftwork is analogous to the manner in which a man obtained wealth and status through brave exploits. The individual, male or female, who most closely approximated the ideals, was assumed to have received supernatural assistance. Women counted robes and tipi covers in much the same way that men counted coups.⁸⁷

While Plains women’s tribal status and roles may have declined by the nineteenth century with the advent of the hide trade and extensive contact with white culture, they still retained power and prestige because of their contributions to support the tribe.

Modern scholars of Plains women also delved further into native constructions of gender and compared these with white gender roles in the nineteenth century. According to Nancy Shoemaker in *Negotiators of Change*, native gender identity was shaped by the work men and women performed. “From the Indian perspective, gender was socially constructed and not biologically determined. Many Indian societies had an

(Washington D. C.: University Press of America, Inc., 1983): 155-156. See also Nancy Bonvillian, “Gender Relations in Native North America,” *The American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 13 2 (1989): 1-28.

⁸⁶ Beatrice Medicine, “‘Warrior Women’: Sex Role Alternatives for Plains Indian Women,” in *The Hidden Half*: 267-268.

⁸⁷ Mary Ann Schneider, “Women’s Work: An Examination of Women’s Roles in Plains Indian Arts and Crafts,” in *The Hidden Half*: 116; Mary V. Dearborn, *Pochanhontas’s Daughters: Gender and Ethnicity in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

institutionalized acceptance of gender variation, sometimes referred to as a third gender, or more commonly, berdache.”⁸⁸ Native notions of gender were socially constructed with male and female identities based on duties performed. In this way, native gender roles were shaped by the needs of the tribe and not patriarchal definitions of proper male and female behavior. The differences between native and white women’s roles were shaped by differences in the perceived status of women in both cultures. According to Shoemaker, “In contrast to Euro-American women living under patriarchy, Indian women were not categorized as dependents who fell somewhere between men and children in the social hierarchy. Women, men, and children were all recognized as autonomous beings.”⁸⁹ Native women and children were valued in their own right as well as for the support they provided as workers for the tribe. Control of production and distribution of food and other resources afforded native women more power than white women possessed under patriarchy. Native constructions of gender also were flexible enough to allow women to explore more masculine roles providing more strong-willed women with an outlet for their energy.

⁸⁸ Nancy Shoemaker, *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women* (New York: Routledge, 1995): 5; See also Bonvillain 2-4, Daniel Maltz and JoAllyn Archambault in *Women and Power in Native North America*, editors Laura F. Klein and Lillian Ackerman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995) and Kathleen M. Brown, “The Anglo-American Gender Frontier” in *Negotiators of Change*. For a more thorough analysis of gender theory informing this paper please see Kathleen M. Brown, “Brave New Worlds: Women’s and Gender History,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3 2 (April 1993); Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Julia T. Wood, *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender and Culture* (Belmont: Wadsworth Pub. Co, 1994); Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Elizabeth Jameson and Susan Armitage, Editors, *Writing the Range—Race, Class and Culture in the Women’s West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Joan M. Jensen and Darlis A. Miller, “The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West,” *Pacific Historical Review* 49 (1980): 173-213.

⁸⁹ Shoemaker, 7.

Causes of War

The problems that would lead to discontent and war began in the 1850s with three treaties made between the U. S. government and the Dakota Sioux of Minnesota. Through three treaties in 1851 and 1858, the Dakota ceded most of their lands in return for annuities paid in money, food and trade goods. Sisseton and Wahpeton Dakota signed the treaty of Traverse des Sioux on July 23, 1851. They exchanged land in southern and western Minnesota for \$1,665,000 in annuities. On August 5, 1851 Mdwakanton and Wahpekute bands signed the Treaty of Mendota giving lands in southeastern Minnesota for \$1,410,000 in annuities and cash. The treaties also established a reservation for all four bands twenty miles wide by one hundred fifty miles long on either side of the Minnesota River. By the time the treaty making finished, Dakota had ceded a total of twenty four million acres of land, which was promptly opened for white settlement.⁹⁰

Two Indian agencies were established on the reservation to serve the Indians. The Redwood or Lower Agency served the Mdwakanton and Wahpekute bands, about two to three thousand people, and the Yellow Medicine or Upper Agency served the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands, about 4000 people. There were also about six to seven hundred people of mixed Indian-white heritage living on the reservation as well.⁹¹ In 1858, the Dakota signed an third, more restrictive treaty in Washington, D.C. that deprived them of

⁹⁰ Gary Clayton Anderson, *Little Crow: Spokesman for the Sioux* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1982): 60-61; Charles E. Flandrau, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865* (St. Paul: Pioneer Press Co., 1891): 728; Richard L. Mackie, "The Trial and Execution of Sioux Indian Prisoners After the Minnesota Uprising of 1862," Master of Arts in Teaching, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 1972, 1-2; June Namias, Editor, *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees* by Sarah Wakefield (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997):17.

⁹¹ Beck, xi; Jerry Keenan, *The Great Sioux Uprising: Rebellion on the Plains August-September 1862* (Cambridge: DaCapo Press, 2003):19-20; Duane Schultz, *Over the Earth I Come: The Great Sioux Uprising of 1862* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992): 16.

lands north of the Minnesota River, authorized the government to establish forts, agencies, schools and other improvements, held the Dakota responsible for any damages they incurred against the whites, and limited payment for Dakota drunkenness.⁹²

According to David Nichols in *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics*, “The sale of these lands brought in funds designated for advancing the ‘civilization’ of the Indians. However, \$96,000 of Lower Sioux money was nearly all absorbed by claims, leaving only \$880.58. The Indian system in Minnesota had always been extraordinarily corrupt, and it was making life more difficult for the Indians every year.”⁹³ Most of the monies paid for this land were given to non-Indians causing tensions to rise as Dakota were left without means to pay for food and other necessities.⁹⁴ The only military presence in the immediate area was Fort Ridgely, which was about fifteen miles from the Redwood Agency and forty miles below the Yellow Medicine Agency.⁹⁵

As white settlers moved into the area, two very distinct cultures came into contact and eventually conflict. According to Paul Beck in *Soldier, Settler, and Sioux: Fort Ridgely and the Minnesota River Valley 1853-1867*, white settlement of the Minnesota Valley was a pivotal point for Dakota-white relations:

By 1855, the Minnesota Valley was in a state of flux, with the Santees desiring to continue their traditional existence and the newly arriving settlers determined to create civilization out of the wilderness. The presence of both groups in the valley indicated the beginning of a pivotal transition period between the frontier and settlement.⁹⁶

⁹² Namias, *Six Weeks*, 18.

⁹³ David A. Nicols, *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1978): 76.

⁹⁴ Anderson, *Little Crow*, 111; Mackie, 2.

⁹⁵ Beck, 8; Theodore C. Blegen, editor, *Lincoln's Secretary Goes West: Two Reports by John G. Nicolay on Frontier Indian Troubles in 1862* (LaCrosse, Wisconsin: Sumac Press, 1965): 58-59; Daniel Buck, *Indian Outbreaks* (Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, Inc., 1965): 127; William Watts Folwell, *A History of Minnesota, Volume 2* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1961): 129.

⁹⁶ Beck, 16. Ojibwa to the north of the Sioux also felt similar pressures when the outbreak commenced and it was widely feared that they would also rise up and attack the whites, but they did not. The Ojibwa were

When the Santee delegation traveled to Washington, D. C. in 1858 to make the third treaty, they complained about problems resulting from the first two treaties in 1851 including treaty violations by whites, fraudulent practices of traders, and the government's failure to provide all the goods and annuities promised in the earlier treaties. By this time, some of the issues that would eventually lead to war had emerged:

Pressure on their community and culture intensified, causing breakdowns in traditions and conflicts between those who stressed assimilation and those who rejected it. Hunger caused by diminishing hunting lands only added to the growing bitterness the Native Americans felt. Most white settlers regarded the Santees as savages and a threat to their view of what civilization was, believing the frontier was unconquered until the removal or assimilation of Native Americans.⁹⁷

There were both internal and external pressures mounting against the Dakota, neither of which could be prevented or defused before violence broke out.

On March 8 and 9, 1857, Inkpaduta, a Wahpekute chief, led a small group of warriors against settlers in Spirit Lake, Iowa. Thirty-four whites were killed and four women were taken captive. Although Inkpaduta was considered a renegade, his actions were symbolic of the growing frustration Dakota felt with white encroachment on Indian lands and erosion of their traditional way of life. It only made matters worse that Inkpaduta and his followers were never captured and punished for their crimes.⁹⁸

traditional enemies of the Sioux and this kept them out of the war. Please see Anderson, *Little Crow*, 143-144, Folwell, 146 374-378 and Buck , 177-179. There was also a small Winnebago population present in Minnesota on a reservation in Blue Earth County near Mankato when the war began. Please see Jason Tetzloff, "The Diminishing Winnebago estate in Wisconsin: From White Contact to Removal," M.A., University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 1991, and *Winnebago Indians* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1974).

⁹⁷ Beck, 38.

⁹⁸ Beck, 43; Theodore Blegen, *Minnesota: A History of the State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963): 265; Neill, 725; Charles E. Flandrau, "The Indian War of 1862-1864, and Following Campaign in Minnesota" in *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars 1861-1865*, Second Edition (St. Paul: Pioneer Press Co, 1891): 729.

Annuity payments were also a constant source of conflict from the first treaties in 1851. The payments were often late and there was rarely enough money and goods to cover everyone who came for payment. According to Paul Beck, "The presence of the army was required quite often as the Dakota were hungry, frustrated with the constant pressures of the whites upon their culture and lands, and outraged with the price gouging and greed characteristic among the traders."⁹⁹ Along these lines, other whites in the area, including the soldiers stationed at the fort blamed the incompetence of Indian agents who mismanaged the annuity payments and distribution of goods to the Indians.¹⁰⁰ The soldiers in particular felt that the hunger, poverty, and mistreatment of the Indians would eventually lead to violence.¹⁰¹

The Dakota felt violated by whites on a number of different levels. Due to the length of Dakota-white contact, early traders became members of the tribes through marriage and kinship ties. Once part of the tribe, the trader's relationship became more than just economic as providing goods became imbued with social expectations.¹⁰² The Dakota transferred this same complex understanding of trade and social expectations to their relations with the U. S. government during and after the treaty making process. Because Dakota ceded land and were promised goods, they believed that the U. S. government would care for them within the context of reciprocal kin networks. When the government failed in its promises by providing shoddy goods, late annuities and payment

⁹⁹ Beck, 56.

¹⁰⁰ Folwell, 227-228; Blegen 262, 267; Doane Robinson, *A History of the Dakota or Sioux Indians: From Their Earliest Traditions and First Contact with White Men to the Final Settlement of the Last of Them Upon Reservations and the Consequent Abandonment of the Old Tribal Life*, Reprint from 1904 Edition, (Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1967): 256-257; C. M. Oehler, *The Great Sioux Uprising* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959): 14; Neill, 724; Flandrau, 729; Mackie, 3-4.

¹⁰¹ Beck, 67.

to the traders for fabricated debts, the Dakota were left in need.¹⁰³ As a result, good relations between the Indians and the federal government broke down, leading to further breakdowns between the Dakota, traders, and white settlers.

The ever-worsening relationship between the Dakota and the traders was one of the primary causes of the war. Between annuity payments during the year, the Dakota depended on the traders for food and goods. Once Dakota funds ran out, they purchased goods on credit from traders. At the next year's annuity payment, traders would be paid first for Indian debts accrued the previous year. Over time, more annuity money was going to traders and the Dakota were left without money and food they so desperately needed. The Dakota became more dependent on traders and fell further into debt to the point where they slowly starved.¹⁰⁴ The Dakota felt defrauded by traders who were taking money that belonged to them.¹⁰⁵ In the summer of 1862, when the annuities were late in coming, traders cut off the Dakota until payment would be made. On August 15, the Dakota negotiated again for food but were turned away when trader Andrew Myrick said, "So far as I am concerned, if they are hungry let them eat grass or their own dung."¹⁰⁶ This statement would come back to Myrick with a vengeance when the war began. This situation was intolerable for Dakota men who watched their families starve on the prairie while awaiting annuity payment.

Strained relations were also exacerbated by the continued influx of white settlers. From 1860 to 1862, the population in the five county area around the fort tripled from

¹⁰² Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984): x; *Little Crow*, xiii, 17; Neill, 24; Oehler, 13.

¹⁰³ Duane Schultz, *Over the Earth I Come: The Great Sioux Uprising of 1862* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992): 8-9; *Kinsmen*, 244; *Little Crow*, 28-30, 60, 111; Oehler, 13.

¹⁰⁴ Beck, 138; Schultz 8-9.

¹⁰⁵ Schultz, 6; Anderson, *Little Crow*, 121-129; Oehler, 25; Folwell, 214, 233; Neill, 724; Mackie, 3-4.

13,000 to 40,000 people. By 1861, when the regular army troops left the fort to join the Civil War, white settlers outnumbered the Dakota by five to one.¹⁰⁷ As the whites came, they settled on Dakota lands and severely depleted shared resources in the area and limited Dakota access to game and other food.

Hunger and starvation were also catalysts for war. As early as 1854, Mary Ann Riggs, a missionary to the Sioux noted, “They have doubtless told you how the Indians are returning from the payment half starved.”¹⁰⁸ A dearth of natural resources, the fraudulent practices of the traders and insufficient supplies from the government pushed the Dakota into constant hunger bordering on starvation.¹⁰⁹ In the fall of 1861, the Dakota corn crop failed due to cutworm infestation leaving them destitute and facing starvation during the winter and following year before annuities arrived.¹¹⁰

Dissent within the tribe over changes wrought by missionaries also contributed to the war. The Dakota faced growing social, economic, and political upheavals caused by the treaties, reservation system, breakdown of traditional patterns of subsistence, erosion of kinship ties, and the acculturation program of the federal government which caused distinct divisions among the Dakota.¹¹¹ They were divided into two groups—the “farmer” or assimilationist Indians who had cut their hair and adopted white culture and the “blanket” or traditionalist Indians who tried to retain traditional patterns of subsistence and trade. Traditional Dakota felt that the government agents favored assimilationist Indians with more goods and annuities. Assimilationist Indians were also

¹⁰⁶ Beck, 139; Nichols, 77.

¹⁰⁷ Beck, 128; Anderson, 110; Folwell, 216-217; Blegen, 262; Neill, 724.

¹⁰⁸ Mary Ann Riggs, *A Small Bit of Bread and Butter, Letters from the Dakota Territory 1832-1869* edited by Maida Leonard Riggs (South Deerfield, Massachusetts: Ash Grove Press, 1996): 212

¹⁰⁹ Robertson, 264; Schultz, 6; Anderson, *Little Crow*, 116; Folwell, 228; Blegen, 266; Neill, 724; Flandrau, 729.

¹¹⁰ Folwell, 228.

stigmatized for living as white men. According to Paul Beck, the traditional Dakotas accused the assimilationists of “violating their traditional religious beliefs in the sacredness of the earth by ripping the land apart with plows. For traditionalists or “blanket” Dakota, the only answer to the poverty of the reservations was to leave them in order to hunt, gather, plant, and, at times, to beg in an attempt to survive and retain tribal identity.”¹¹² This conflict over adoption of white ways encouraged by teachers, missionaries, and government agents caused deep divisions among the Dakota as some struggled to cling to traditional ways while others adopted white ways in order to survive the massive upheavals in Dakota society.

War

All of these problems converged on August 18, 1862. The day before, four young warriors had killed a family near Acton.¹¹³ When the four men returned to Little Crow’s village with their story, a heated discussion ensued over what to do because everyone knew that no annuity payments would be made until the perpetrators were surrendered. A soldier’s lodge was called beginning in the band at Rice Creek where the young warriors lived but it was soon apparent that more support would be needed for war. The

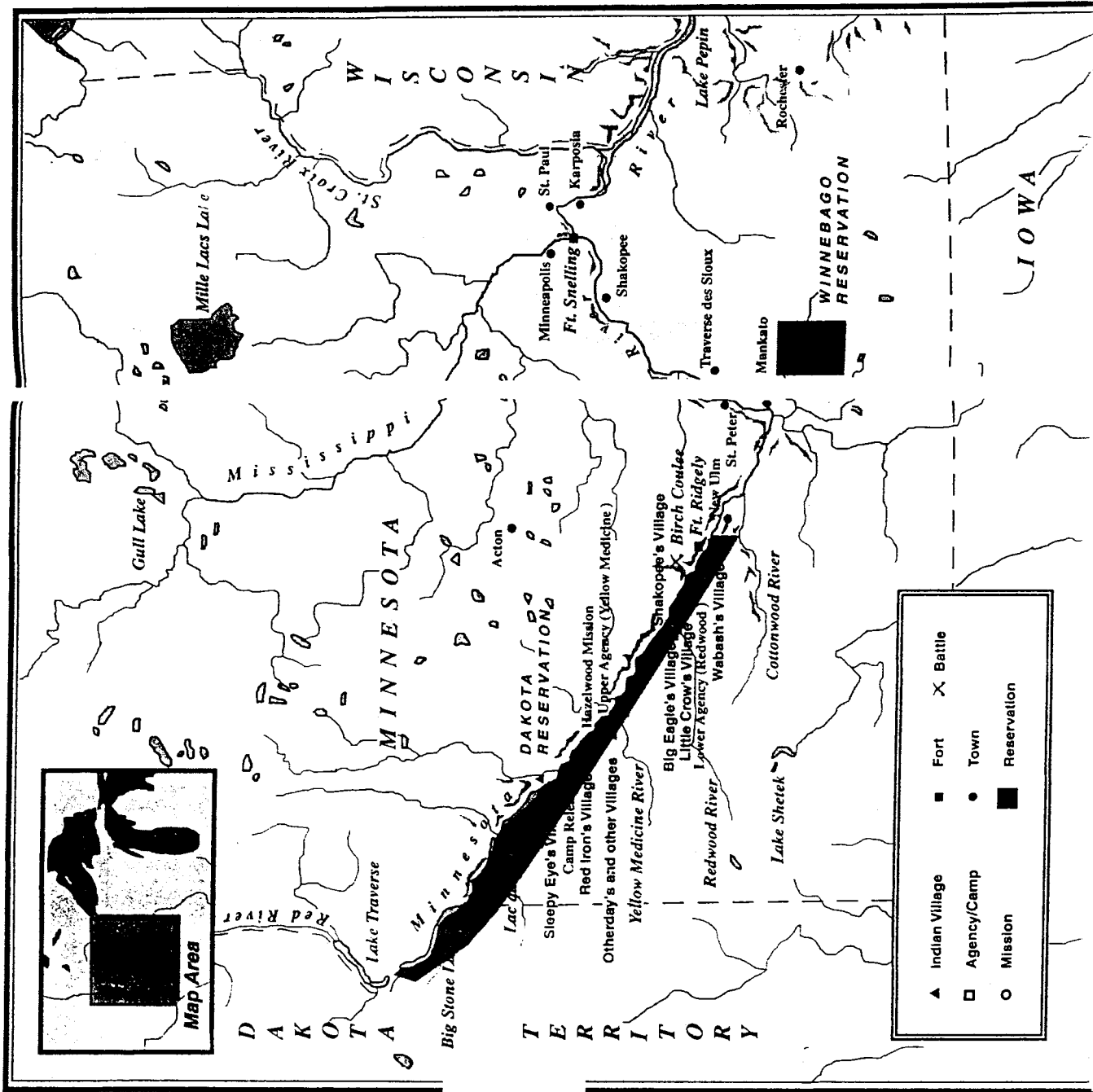
¹¹¹ Folwell, 215-216; Neill, 724; Mackie, 3.

¹¹² Beck, 41.

¹¹³ Blegen *Nicolay*, 50-51; Robertson, 269-271; Schultz, 30-31; Oehler, 4-6; Blegen, 260; Neill, 725-726; Flandrau, 729; Mackie, 5.

War Chronology

- August 17 Four young Dakota killed five settlers near Acton in Meeker County
- August 18 Members of Little Crow's Mdewakanton begin attacks at Redwood Agency, later Yellow Medicine Agency and the surrounding countryside
Captain John Marsh and company ambushed at Redwood Ferry
- August 19 John Otherday led 62 whites to safety from Yellow Medicine Agency
Colonel Sibley appointed to lead volunteer forces against the Dakota
Minor attack on New Ulm
- August 20 First attack on Fort Ridgely
- August 21 Attacks at Big Stone Lake and Eagle Lake
- August 22 Major attack on Fort Ridgely
- August 23 Second attack on New Ulm
Sibley reaches St. Peter from Fort Snelling
- August 25 New Ulm evacuated
- August 26 Redwood Agency Dakota move north towards Yellow Medicine
- August 28 Sibley with 1500 troops reaches Fort Ridgely
- September 2 Battle of Birch Coulee 13 miles from Fort
Attacks spread north and west along the Minnesota River
- September 3 Hutchinson and Forest City raided
- September 18 Sibley's troops begin movement toward Yellow Medicine and large encampment
- September 22 Sibley camped near Wood Lake four miles from Yellow Medicine
- September 23 Battle of Wood Lake begins
- September 24 Little Crow and his supporters being to depart for Canada, Devil's Lake or the western plains
- September 26 White and mixed blood captives surrendered at Camp Release
- Sept. 28-Nov 5 Military commission trials of Dakota begin
- November 7 Uncondemned Dakota men, women and children moved to Fort Snelling
- November 15 Sibley moves condemned Dakota to camp near Mankato
- December 5 Lincoln issues executive order for executions
- December 26 38 Dakota men hung at Mankato
- May 1863 Several hundred Dakota men sent to prison camp in Davenport, Iowa
Other men, women and children sent to Crow Creek Reservation on the Missouri River



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 Edited by June Namias

warriors approached Little Crow, a Mdewakanton chief, to unite the Dakota and lead them against their common enemy. They argued through the night as Little Crow was reluctant to begin war with the whites. Unfortunately the younger warriors prevailed and killing commenced the next morning at the Redwood Agency and spread quickly into the surrounding countryside.¹¹⁴ By 10 a. m., news of the attacks reached Fort Ridgely, fifteen miles away, as the first survivors straggled in. Lieutenant Marsh immediately left the fort with seventy-six enlisted men to put down the trouble. Marsh and his men were ambushed at the ferry crossing with twenty-three dead including Marsh. The rest of the men worked their way back to the fort with the awful news.¹¹⁵ The next day the Dakota attacked New Ulm and the outlying settlements laying waste to the countryside and taking captives.

On two separate instances, August 20 and August 22, Dakota warriors attacked Fort Ridgely but were repulsed both times after fierce fighting due to the fort's heavy artillery.¹¹⁶ The Dakota also fought pitched battles against New Ulm and several other outlying towns but were repulsed at every turn.¹¹⁷ The only battle where the Dakota had much success was at Birch Coulee, where a large detail of soldiers and volunteers were camped for the night. Dakota warriors attacked the encampment at dawn killing over half of the company and almost all the horses and mules.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Anderson, *Little Crow*, 131-132, 139; Kenneth Carley, *The Sioux Uprising of 1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1961): 1; Folwell, 109-111; Oehler, 13; Neill, 726-727; Isaac V. D. Heard, *History of the Sioux War and Massacres of 1862 and 1863* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1865); Blegen, 268; Robertson, 272; Nicolay, 55-56; Flandrau, 729.

¹¹⁵ Beck 140; Nicolay, 57; Robertson, 276; Anderson, 136; Buck, 126-127; Folwell, 112; Blegen, 269; Flandrau, 730.

¹¹⁶ Roberston, 280; Anderson, 144; Folwell, 114; Blegen, 217; Neill, 728, Flandrau, 733-734; Beck 144-148.

¹¹⁷ Nicolay, 57; Anderson, 146; Buck, 114-115; Blegen, 271-272; Flandrau, 732.

¹¹⁸ Robinson, 286; Blegen, 273-274; Neill, 730; Flandrau, 736-737; Mackie, 5-6.

After the war began, more volunteers and troops were sent to the area to reinforce the fort, pursue and capture the perpetrators and rescue the captives. On September 23, Sibley's troops met the Dakota in the Battle of Wood Lake, which essentially ended the war.¹¹⁹ Two hundred fifty six white and mixed blood captives were surrendered on September 26, at Camp Release, located 20 miles above the Yellow Medicine Agency. Over one thousand Dakota surrendered there as well with the remainder fleeing west into Dakota territory under Little Crow.¹²⁰

As the Dakota surrendered their captives, they were arrested and tried by a military tribunal. There was little that was fair about the judicial process for the Dakota as many were accused and tried without eyewitness testimony or defense.¹²¹ Over one thousand Dakota were tried and 303 were sentenced to death. This number was unsatisfactory to President Lincoln who had the records reviewed and ordered that only the thirty-eight convicted of the most heinous crimes be put to death with the rest imprisoned.¹²² On December 26, 1862, thirty-eight Dakota men were hung in Mankato for their crimes during the war and 326 were sent to prison camp in Davenport, Iowa. This was the largest public execution in U. S. history.¹²³ The remaining Dakotas, even those Christian and full blood Indians who had not participated in the war and had protected the whites, were held at Fort Snelling and later removed to a reservation near Crow Creek, Missouri where many died of starvation and disease.¹²⁴ The Dakota were

¹¹⁹ Beck, 149; Nicolay, 67; Buck, 147-161; Folwell, 182; Blegen, 274; Neill, 731; Flandrau, 743-744; Mackie, 6.

¹²⁰ Beck, 149; Nicolay, 68; Anderson, 161; Folwell, 186; Belgen, 275; Neill, 732-733; Flandrau, 746; Mackie, 6.

¹²¹ Folwell, 196; Blegen, 279; Neill, 733-734; Flandrau, 747; Mackie, 8-16; Buck, 220-221.

¹²² Folwell, 197; Blegen, 280; Neill, 734; Flandrau, 747-748; Mackie, 18-25.

¹²³ Beck, 150; Keenan, 80; Anderson, 165; Buck, 267-269; Folwell, 209-210; Neill, 734; Flandrau, 748; Mackie, 26.

¹²⁴ Buck, 222-223; Blegen 279, 281; Neill, 734; Flandrau, 749; Mackie, 27-28.

not the only Indians punished as a result of the war. Anti-Indian sentiment was rampant in the state and white officials used the war as an excuse to remove the Winnebago from fertile farmlands. By March 3, 1863, Minnesota had passed legislature which deprived the Winnebagoes of their land and banished them along with the Dakota.¹²⁵ Most of the Indians in the lower two-thirds of the state had thus effectively been removed from the area and from the path of white expansion by 1863.

Various sources estimated that between four and five hundred whites were killed during the war with some estimates going as high as eight hundred to one thousand. One hundred white women and children as well as about two hundred mixed bloods were taken captive and twenty-three counties were largely depopulated and laid to waste.¹²⁶ In his history, Folwell estimated that, "In all, a region two hundred miles long and averaging fifty miles wide was devastated or depopulated."¹²⁷ Approximately one hundred and fifty Indians were killed in addition to the thirty-eight hung at Mankato.¹²⁸ Immense damage was done to both sides during and after the war, and it took years for Minnesotans to recover—white and Dakota alike.

¹²⁵ Schultz, 280.

¹²⁶ Don Heinrich Tolzmann, editor, *German Pioneer Accounts of the Great Sioux Uprising of 1862* (Milford, Ohio: Little Miami Publishing Co., 2002): 1; Keenan, 17; Beck, 149; Anderson, 139; Buck, 183; Mackie, 6.

¹²⁷ Folwell, 124.

¹²⁸ Beck., 149.

Chapter 3-Eight Captives and Their Narratives

Women and Indians on the Frontier

Each of the eight women studied for this paper grew and defined themselves in terms of nineteenth century Euro-American culture. They were shaped by a cultural milieu that delineated specific roles for women and defined how peoples of other races were perceived. Before turning to the eight captives featured here, this paper will explore some of the larger cultural issues that informed both white perceptions of Indian people and women's identities.

There were two main categories of stereotypes that emerged from white contact with native peoples. First, Indians were seen as inferior, lazy, heathenish, filthy, and degenerate.¹²⁹ Oddly enough, according to Glenda Riley, the Indians were at the same time stereotyped as noble savages who were "pure, virtuous, and gentle" and could be protectors of white women on the frontier.¹³⁰ These two conflicting views promoted a dualistic vision of Indians as either savages who were waiting to rape white women and destroy any hopes of civilized life on the frontier, or as noble, pure and virtuous beings uncontaminated by white civilization. Indian women in particular were stereotyped as squaws and drudges who were oppressed by their men with hard living and strenuous labor they performed.¹³¹ This image was offset by the idea of an Indian princess – a

¹²⁹ Glenda Riley, *Women and Indians on the Frontier, 1825-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1980): 134.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³¹ Riley, 30-34; Sandra Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982): 22-24; Sherry L. Smith, "Beyond Princess and Squaw: Army Officers Perceptions of Indian Women, in *The Women's West*, editors Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987): 60; Rayna Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multi-Cultural Reader in U. S. Women's History* edited by Ellen Carol Dubois and Vicki L. Ruiz: 16-18; Dearborn, 5. Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman, Editors, *Women and Power in Native North American* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

Pocahontas figure – who assisted settlers in their new homes by providing food and shelter.¹³² In “‘The Squaw Drudge’: A Prime Index of Savagism,” David D. Smits noted how negative images of Indians served a specific purpose for nineteenth century Americans:

By the 19th century Indian women and men had been transformed into negative reference groups representing exact counter-images of Euroamericans’ ideal sexual statuses and roles. Contrasting their male and female ideals with their stereotyped views of native men and women, Euroamericans generally concluded that Indians personified savagism. The Euroamerican concept of savagism, associated with a degraded and fierce condition of human life, served as a grand rationale for imperialism.¹³³

By negating the positive aspects of Indian life, some nineteenth century whites deliberately perpetuated negative stereotypes to justify exterminating Indians and appropriating their lands.

Racism on the frontier against the Indians grew out of white fears over the power of the tribes who stood in the way of westward expansion and Manifest Destiny. According to J. Norman Heard, “The type of warfare that emerged between whites and Indians over land was highly racial with each group thinking theirs was a superior way of life.”¹³⁴ Racism fueled a type of warfare where both groups were fighting to preserve their ways of life. Reginald Horsman asserted that by the mid-1800s, differences between the races were seen as based on biology supported by emerging scientific studies instead of environment:

Americans were constantly reminded that the observable differences between the races could be shown scientifically to be based on physical and mental factors which had remained the same throughout recorded history. Many to whom Indian

¹³² Ibid., 49; Green, 19; Smith, 65.

¹³³ David D. Smits, “‘The Squaw Drudge’: A Prime Index of Savagism,” *Ethnohistory* 29 4 (1982): 281.

¹³⁴ J. Norman Heard, *White Into Red: A Study of Assimilation of White Persons Captured by Indians* (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1973): 9.

inferiority, inability to be civilized, and ultimate extinction had long seemed evident now were supplied with scientific proofs.¹³⁵

Scientific support of Indian racial inferiority further justified existing American policies towards the Indians.

Also fueling fear and prejudice against the Indians were the settlers' fears about the sexual vulnerability of white women. According to Dawn Lander Gherman, racist beliefs emerged because the presence of white women activated male fears about Indian men having physical contact with their women.¹³⁶ She also asserted that "not only are class and color prejudice concomitant, but they embrace as well the sexual and . . . the wilderness taboo which alienates white women from the wilderness and identifies them exclusively with civilization."¹³⁷ Men and women both feared that women would be victims of physical violence, especially rape by Indians and this fueled white distrust and hatred. Threatened violation of white women by Indian men became a symbol for the larger threat posed by Indian peoples to the advancement of American civilization.

Women's own roles and self-perceptions also shaped their views about Indians as well. White women lived, worked, and learned to understand themselves within a patriarchal context. White women's views were influenced by weakness and vulnerability they perceived in themselves.¹³⁸ They were seen and sometimes saw themselves as too weak to make it on the frontier. Supposedly they did not have the physical strength or stamina for such a rigorous life. These weaknesses, especially sexual

¹³⁵ Reginald Horsman, "Scientific Racism and the American Indian in Mid-Nineteenth Century," *American Quarterly* 21 (1975): 160.

¹³⁶ Dawn Lander Gherman, *From Parlour to Teepee: The White Squaw on the American Frontier* (University of Massachusetts: Ph.D. Dissertation): 26.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 122-123.

vulnerability, exacerbated women's fears about what life on the frontier would be like.¹³⁹ Once on the frontier women discovered strength and resourcefulness they did not know they possessed. Women learned that they were just as capable as men in meeting the needs of a family on the frontier.¹⁴⁰ This power enhanced women's views of themselves and allowed them to move beyond their homes to explore the countryside and meet their Indian neighbors.

Women defined their identities and roles in terms of a culture of domesticity that upheld certain duties for white women. Ideally women were to be pious, domestic, submissive, and pure; their role was in the home so they could civilize their husbands and children. While this was mainly an upper middle class ideal that few working and rural women achieved, the need for this civilizing presence was especially important on the frontier. A woman in her home was believed to be the last bastion of civilization; she was the one who would preserve white civilization in the wilderness by keeping her family from turning into savages.¹⁴¹ According to Robert Griswold, women's adherence to the ideals of domesticity in the west also gave value to their roles as wives and mothers and provided them a source of power:

The cultural values of domestic ideology had powerful appeal to female settlers. They gave meaning to women's domestic work, made the blurring of sex roles culturally intelligible, helped confirm women's self-worth and fostered bonds of friendship with other women. Domestic ideology, furthermore, legitimated women's efforts to civilize the west and provided a vocabulary with which to define the nature of manhood.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Ibid., 24-26.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 140

¹⁴¹ Riley, 15; Also see Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1988).

¹⁴² Robert Griswold, "Anglo Women and Domestic Ideology in the American West in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *Western Women: Their Land, Their Lives*, edited by Lillian Schlissel, Vicki L. Ruiz and Janice Monk (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988):20.