

A DIFFERENT KIND OF RACE: HOW NATIVE RACIAL PRACTICE AFFECTED
KINSHIP IN THE BORDERLANDS OF THE OLD NORTHWEST, 1778-1813

by

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ABSTRACT
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This thesis discusses changes in native racial practice in the Ohio River Valley and lower Great Lakes from 1778-1813. In this region, Native peoples altered their identities and racial practices in order to navigate an environment where Euro-Americans threatened their way of life and their land. They cultivated a pan-Indian identity in order to fight against westward expansion, making the isolation of “others” a typical function of kinship practices. While recognizing the racial hierarchy of whites, Native peoples created their own racial thought and practices, integrating their beliefs into their kinship structures, daily lives, and identities. As pan-Indianism evolved, “white” took on a new and racial significance for Native peoples. Through this process, they reinvented their kinship practices and the option for whites to have social and cultural hybridity grew more and more rare. The transformation of non-Indians from potential kin to “other” becomes evident through an examination of interactions between Native peoples and Euro-Americans, including both their language and treatment of white captives, allowing for an analysis of the evolving role of race and racial practices in this borderland.

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Introduction and Historiography

William Henry Harrison served as Territorial Governor of the Indiana Territory from 1801-1812. While he held this position, Harrison pledged his allegiance to the ideals of westward expansion and strove to acquire land and ensure the submission of Native peoples in the region. Using tactics such as negotiations and military action, Harrison had great success in achieving his goals, especially due to the assistance of Native leaders who allied with the United States Government. Little Turtle, a Miami chief and acclaimed war leader, played a key role in the Northwest Indian wars of the 1790s, defeating American forces on multiple occasions due to his refusal to recognize the United States claims to land based on the 1783 Treaty of Paris ending the Revolutionary War. Later in his life, he became willing to negotiate with the United States in exchange for goods for his people and benefits for himself, including money, medals, and clothing. He met with three presidents and even assisted in the implementation of an agricultural education plan suggested by Thomas Jefferson. In an 1805 letter to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn that reported land gains through treaty negotiations, William Henry Harrison, Indiana Territorial Governor 1801-1812 noted that:

In pursuance of the President's directions, I have promised the [Little] Turtle fifty dollars per annum, in additional to his pension; and I have, also, directed Captain [William] Wells to purchase a negro man for him, in Kentucky, and draw on you for the amount.¹

When he passed away, Little Turtle willed his property, including his slaves, to his daughters and sons-in-law. There is no documented record of how Little Turtle

¹ Harrison to Secretary of War August 26, 1805 in Logan Esarey, ed., *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison, 1800-1811*. 2 vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 1:164.

received the specific slaves, how he treated them, or what happened to them after his death. What this statement does suggest is that, for whatever reason, Harrison thought Little Turtle would have wanted a slave. Why did Harrison think the gift would be welcome? Weren't Indian societies different than Europeans precisely in their reluctance to sanction private property, including humans? Weren't Native societies centered on kin relationships rather than categorization based on race?

Harrison's gift of a black slave reflects white racial views during this time period, views that relegated non-whites to the lower echelons of society. As Euro-Americans began their triumphal march westward, they integrated Native groups into their racial hierarchy as well, categorizing them as "savages" who impeded their imminent expansion. Despite the fact that racial and ethnic minorities were the objects of racism, they too developed systems of categorization that affected how they treated and interacted with other people. Understanding their perspective is crucial to the study of the entangled worlds of the past as well as previously understudied communities of Native peoples and might help explain why Harrison had a reason to believe that Little Turtle would appreciate the gift of a slave.

In the Ohio Valley and Southern Great Lakes between 1778-1813, Native Americans negotiated kinship opportunities, deciding whom to include and exclude from the cherished rights and protections that kin received. Those kinship opportunities came to be shaped by the racial practice—that is, the enacting of racial sentiments--of considering non-Native peoples "others," which reduced the possibility of them becoming kin. This racial practice bolstered a collective resistance that helped to forge

common bonds among Native peoples. Native peoples had the category of “slave” that was unrelated to the white category of “race”, and because both societies held slaves, Little Turtle could accept a slave from Harrison and consider it a valuable gift. This same bond made it acceptable for Little Turtle to accept a slave from Harrison and apparently to use that slave in similar ways as Euro-American slave owners.²

This project seeks to examine changes in kinship and language practices among Native Americans and explore how these changes related to a transformation of Native racial views in the Ohio River Valley and Southern Great Lakes. The Ohio River Valley and lower Great Lakes (or the Old Northwest) which consisted of the modern states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Kentucky, and Wisconsin. As settler-created states pushed boundaries throughout this region, Native Americans had to wrestle with them in their daily lives. While American Indians and Euro-Americans used terms such as “red” and “white” with varying meanings before 1750, their meanings began to crystallize between 1778 and 1813, spurring pan-Indian identification. Native peoples increasingly identified “whites” as a non-kin group defined by their race, who could not be trusted to cross into the category of kin with the social and political rights and protections that this entailed, and this lack of kinship ties resulted in the elimination of opportunities for inclusion in Indian Country.

Historian John J. Bukowczyk periodizes 1778-1813 as the “Long War” that plagued the Great Lakes from the American Revolution to the War of 1812. 1778 represents the American capture of Cahokia, Kaskaskia, and Vincennes, and 1813 marks the defeat and death of Shawnee leader Tecumseh in the Battle of Thames. Though

² Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous & Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 63-64.

Tecumseh's death was not the end of pan-Indian organization in the southern Great Lakes, it represents the dwindling of support for this particular movement and, thus, it serves as a suitable historical moment with which to conclude this study. Warring in this region, coupled with the clarification of an increasing racial divide between whites and Native peoples as defined by both groups makes the years between 1778 to 1813 crucial to understanding changes within Native American racial thought and practice.³

During this tumultuous time, the relationship between Euro-Americans and Native peoples became one fraught with conflict as Anglo-Americans took over French-metis settlements in the 1780s and the fledgling American government began to concoct plans to settle the lands below the lower Great Lakes.⁴ The constant and often heated interactions between the British, Americans, and Indians in the Ohio River Valley and Southern Great Lakes complicated the daily lives of these peoples and affected both governmental policies and the development of identities and racial thought.⁵ As Native peoples encountered and grappled with settler-created states and boundaries, they demonstrated their ability to unify through increased distinction between peoples, allowing them to resist westward expansion and persist in the Old Northwest.

As Indigenous relationships with colonizing powers developed and shifted, so did their use of racial designations and their treatment of those that they ostracized. The rise of race as a concept and discourse more broadly and the totality of European colonialism changed how Native peoples talked about, interacted with, and treated those they

³ John J. Bukowczyk, Nora Faires, David R. Smith, and Randy William Widdis, *Permeable Borders: The Great Lakes Basin as a Transnational Region, 1650-1990* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ix-x.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

identified as “white.” Rather than simply understanding that these “whites” differed from themselves, Native individuals in the Old Northwest began to explicitly categorize these invaders as a different kind of race, organizing their society into groups marked by skin color that affected how they treated those that were not one of “them.”

The scholars who have included Native racial thought in their work have generally considered the incorporation of Western notions of race into Native society as a negative phenomenon. I will argue that in the case of the Ohio River Valley, the development of a racial consciousness facilitated much-needed Native unification and rejection of white expansion. Though this story is situated in a very violent historical moment during which Euro-Americans largely embraced forced movement of Native peoples, by itself the development of a racial consciousness can be seen in a more positive light, as it allowed Western Native nations to come together explore a variety of strategies to strengthen their position as they fought for rights and land.

The Historiography of Race in North America

The transformation of Native racial thought suggested in this thesis parallels changes noted in the historiography of race in general and of race specifically in Native society. Historians such as Winthrop Jordan, Reginald Horsman, and Edmund S. Morgan began their examination of race by asking questions about white racial views and studying white perspectives of blacks, particularly in the context of slavery; however, the questions that scholars ask have evolved to consider race in more dynamic and complex ways. This has resulted in the consideration of racial views and practices in many contexts, including within Native society. These authors have written about the

coalescing of white racisms, articulating white responses to blacks and Native peoples as well as the formation of these views.⁶ Other scholars such as Tiya Miles and Christina Snyder investigate race as a fluid social concept, employing the approaches of previous studies on white racial views to their work on the development of Native racial views. Many studies of Native racial practice have focused on the southeastern United States, where plantation slavery dominated settler communities and analyze Native peoples' relationship with this "peculiar institution."⁷ The southeastern focus of the historiography on Native American racial views encouraged this thesis, which examines Native the development of racism among the original inhabitants of the Old Northwest/Ohio River Valley, where plantation slavery did not take root.

When race entered into historical discourse, scholars focused on white responses to blacks and Native peoples, often including the cruel realities of American racism. However, the perspective of the individuals that whites discriminated against were often not considered, because these authors fundamentally analyze "the origins of...American rejection of other people."⁸ Although some works mention Native peoples, most works focus on questions of racism in a black/white dichotomy. This focus can be ascribed to the centrality of slavery to the foundation of republican freedom in the United States as well as the struggles of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Much of the rise in scholarship

⁶ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), viii-ix, 48-50, and 83; and Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975).

⁷ Tiya Miles, *The Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2005), and Christina Snyder, *Slavery In Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁸ Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 2.

that discusses this racial binary occurred in response to the fight for Civil Rights that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, forcing scholars to acknowledge and confront the history of racial violence in the United States and the divisions that race fostered throughout the colonial period and America's nationhood.⁹

Earlier works that concern racial practice and change in racial identity had focused on the power of white racial views or on Euro-American responses to blacks, excluding Native peoples' perceptions from their discussions of race. During the 1960s, a few scholars began to include Native peoples in their discussions of race. In his article, "Divide and Rule: Red, White, and Black in the Southeast"(1963), William Willis chronicles how whites forced Native peoples to accept their racial views in order to assimilate into white civilization, and discusses how whites influenced attitudes of Indians towards blacks. Willis focuses on tensions between blacks and Indians, noting how whites created this hostile relationship. However, he does not mention that native peoples developed racial practices of their own and does not include a Native American perspective, but, rather, focuses on white views and how whites forced their views upon others.¹⁰

In "Red Indians, Black Slavery, and White Racism: America's Slaveholding Indians" (1974), William G. McLoughlin also focuses on white actions in Indian-Black relations. McLoughlin notes that whites did not forcibly change the racial practice of Native nations, but still argues that Native peoples "acquired" racism from whites.¹¹ The

⁹ Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*.

¹⁰ William S. Willis, "Divide and Rule: Red, White, and Black in the Southeast," *The Journal of Negro History* 48 (1963): 157-176.

¹¹ William G. McLoughlin, "Red Indians, Black Slavery, and White Racism: America's Slaveholding Indians," *American Quarterly* 24 (1974): 367-385, esp. 370.

main body of his work discusses differences in the treatment of slaves by American Indians and Euro-Americans. While Willis and McLoughlin broke new ground by adding Native Americans to the discussion of race, they still failed to give Indians the agency they deserve in modifying their own worldviews or specifically refer to their racial thought. Native peoples, though mentioned, are not central to their works.¹²

Despite Willis and McLoughlin's broadening of the discussion, Winthrop Jordan's *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (1974) continues to view race largely in binary black/white terms. Jordan tracks the formal and informal responses of whites to blacks, specifically discussing slavery and only sporadically discussing Native peoples. Jordan discusses how American Indians differed from Englishmen and even suggests that they resembled "negroes." He explores the reasons why whites did not enslave Indians as frequently as blacks, explaining that conquering the Indian and conquering the "negro" differed greatly in meaning. Indians symbolized wilderness and a savage nature, and the conquest of this wilderness was essential to the spread of civilization and to westward expansion. Jordan uses Native peoples to contrast white responses to blacks, identifying "whites" and "blacks" as coherent groups while tracing the white man's racial perspective.¹³

In the 1980s, scholars also began to examine how Euro-Americans justified their decisions and actions against groups they considered to be inferior as a result of the formation of a national racial consciousness. *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (1981) by Reginald Horsman tracks the growth of an American ideology that emphasized racial superiority. He discusses how Euro-Americans

¹² Ibid., 369-370.

¹³ Jordan, *The White Man's Burden*, viii-ix, 48-50, and 83.

constructed this superiority, finding evidence within their newly constructed racial identity that encouraged them to expand their land holdings and their control over Native peoples. He links these views to both Anglo-Saxon rhetoric and the American experience of conquest. Horsman includes indigenous peoples in this discussion, explaining how whites justified their policies on and violence towards Native nations as a way to “civilize” and “improve” American Indian lives. One chapter is dedicated to explaining how whites rejected American Indian peoples and society, highlighting that even when whites “civilized” Native peoples, whites still considered them to be ““free citizen(s) of color.””¹⁴ However, following the lead of previous authors, Horsman does not attempt to define or explain Native perspectives within his work.¹⁵

In *Racial Formation in the United States* (1986), Michael Omi and Howard Winant expand upon the existing histories of white responses to others that they deemed racially different by discussing the process of racial formation and the cultivation of an American racial consciousness. Though this study focuses on the 1960s-1980s, Omi and Winant note that race is a “sociohistorical concept,” highlighting its portability to other historical periods and emphasizing the fluidity of race as a dynamic and social construct.¹⁶ Omi and Winant suggest that, “racial order is organized and enforced by the continuity and reciprocity between micro-level and macro-level of social relations.”¹⁷ “Micro-level” relations are described as a person’s individual interactions with others such as family, friends and coworkers, while “macro-level relations” refer to social

¹⁴ Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 190-194.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-6 and 190-194.

¹⁶ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 67

structures, institutions, and generally-accepted ideologies of society itself. These “macro-level” relations often occur in human interactions with businesses, the media, the government, and other bodies that disseminate information regarding cultural and stereotypical beliefs, including those about race.

Despite this structuralist approach, Omi and Winant argue that race is unstable and often transformed by political struggles, resulting in constantly shifting definitions of race and racial views. They suggest that the concept of race developed gradually and was initially used to justify and explain inequalities in property, political rights, slavery, and other types of coercive labor. The views that are commonly agreed upon by the dominant culture result in assigned identities for minority groups, which gives the minorities diminished status and becomes a means by which the dominant culture can control them. Members of the dominant culture (in U. S. history, whites) have used this worldview to differentiate and validate the status of minority groups as free or enslaved in many different spatial and temporal contexts.

Omi and Winant’s identification of racial formation as a social process changed the way that many scholars approached their studies of race, even as scholars continued to focus on Euro-American responses and thought. In *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*, Audrey Smedley and Brian D. Smedley provide an engaging description of the social, theoretical, and historical processes that resulted in the cultivation of popular racial consciousness, a necessary prerequisite for understanding changes in Native racial views, as Euro-Americans and Indians exchanged ideas and adopted and adapted them to fit their specific needs.¹⁸ They trace this cultural invention

¹⁸ Audrey Smedley and Brian D. Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* (Philadelphia: Westview Press: 2012), 24-33.

of race in Europe to about the eleventh through thirteenth centuries, when English notions of savagery developed as a result of their experiences during conquest of the Irish. They apply this earlier encounter to explain how interactions with late-eighteenth century North Americans further developed this line of thought into a worldview centered on biologically-exclusive and permanently unequal human groups.

Smedley and Smeldley then highlight the ways in which race has been continually and socially constructed during various time periods (particularly from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries) and is/was altered based on the needs of various peoples; however, they suggest that by the early nineteenth century, race had developed specific characteristics that were codified in the popular beliefs, legal documents, and scientific thought of the era. The magnification of racial difference resulted in the preservation and perpetuation of racial slavery and the subsequent dehumanization of blacks and others throughout American history.

While Smedley and Smedley complicated the origins and development of racial categories that settlers brought to North America, as other scholars before them, they still failed to address how Native Americans developed their racial views. As the field moved forward, scholars such as Richard White and James Merrell began to include Native American responses to white encroachment and acknowledge shifting Native American perspectives. Authors employed methodologies used in analyzing racial formation in the white world to better understand Native worldviews, language, methods of resistance, and cultural practices. This is especially seen in books associated with the turn to a “New Western History,” a movement that emerged in the 1980s and encouraged the use of concepts/ideas such as race, class, gender, culture, and environment when studying the

American frontier. White's work is also associated with the rise of ethnohistory, which expressly insists on the importance of understanding a given history within its cultural context, including that culture's take on race, class, gender and the environment. These authors considered a more complex, multiethnic past in the United States, including a concerted effort to include Native perspectives.

As scholars began to realize how complicated, and even powerful, Native societies were, the field of American history widened to include questions about their societal organization, traditions and cultural practices, and thoughts on their evolving identities and racial views. Modern struggles over tribal sovereignty, federal recognition, and enrollment have also ignited scholarly debates and discussions about how Native peoples defined and identified themselves with respect to other Native nations and groups of peoples. Within more recent works, scholars such as Nancy Shoemaker and Brett Rushforth focus on how Native American racial thought and practice shifted in response to changes within Native nations and within the United States, emphasizing Native American intentionality, thought, and action.

Works such as Richard White's *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (1991) fit into this new paradigm for histories written about the West.¹⁹ White analyzed Native American/Euro-American reactions in the *pays d'en haut* between 1650 and the War of 1812, and introduced the concept of the "middle ground," which he explains is both a place and a process. This process consisted of many creative misunderstandings in which Indians and Euro-Americans attempted to build a set of mutually understandable practices. This led to a

¹⁹ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), xv.

degree of accommodation and hybridization of European and Algonquian social conventions and encouraged mediation, instead of force, as Native peoples and Euro-Americans conducted both formal and informal affairs. White describes the collapse of the “middle ground” as a result of the defeat of the Iroquois and the French in the Seven Year’s War. This erosion and then collapse occurred when English and American colonial powers grew powerful enough to overcome Native peoples and strip them of their land without sizeable consequences. White shows the extent to which Native ideas about trade, diplomacy, and kinship structured colonial encounters, and shaped Indian notions of race and peoplehood.²⁰

Analyses like White’s of interactions between Euro Americans and Native Americans inspired others to consider Native perspectives and their responses to colonists and settlers. White took ethnohistorical models in circulation since the 1960s, demonstrated their similarity to social history, and brought them into wider acceptance among US historians as a whole. The historical works that followed focus on Indian responses to whites, rather than only detailing white responses to Indians. Many scholars returned to James Merrell’s article, “The Racial Education of the Catawba Indians,”(1984), in which he concludes that the Catawbans only adopted and adapted racial views of relevant groups (whites) because whites became intertwined in their daily lives. Merrell describes how Native Americans needed to and did adapt their lifestyle and racial practice in order to ensure the persistence of their societies, and analyzes how this became a part of Catawba cultural identity. Merrell recommends the continued study of

²⁰ White, *The Middle Ground*, xv. For an assessment and analysis of New Western History see *Trails: Toward a New Western History*, ed. Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991).

Native responses to blacks, slavery, and other aspects of colonial encounters, acknowledging that Native racial practice requires and deserves more attention.²¹

Many authors responded to Merrell's suggestion. In his book, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (1992), Gregory Dowd describes the beliefs, thoughts, and actions of the Delaware, Shawnee, Cherokee, and Creek peoples as they resisted Euro-American forces by organizing themselves into (often-militant) pan-Indian movements. Pan-Indian organizations attracted members from various tribes and were not based on tribal affiliation, but rather on being Native American. He discusses collective resistance based on beliefs associated with rejecting accommodation to Euro-American culture, a unification he calls "nativism." Dowd describes this term as "a Native adaptation to the pressures of an encroaching power" in which Native peoples associated certain traditions and behaviors with "earthly and spiritual salvation, and they rejected the increasing colonial influence in Native government, culture, and economy in favor of Native independence." He further explains that nativism, "sought Native-directed solutions, based primarily upon a cosmology composed by Native Americans, to the problem of European, and more particularly Anglo-American, ambition."²² Dowd provides an intricate analysis of these peoples, their motivations (both religious and strategic), and their unification against westward expansion, while also acknowledging the opposition to this movement for unity.

Dowd's discussion of accommodationist movements compliments his unpacking of the peoples, perspectives, and organization of pan-Indian/nativist movements.

²¹ James Merrell, "The Racial Education of the Catawba Indians," *Journal of Southern History* 50 (1984): 382-384.

²² Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: Indian Struggle for The North American Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xxii.

Accommodationists stood in opposition to unification against Euro-Americans and often allied with the US government. Dowd suggests that pan-Indian movements should be considered “one of many events in the long career of a widespread, often divisive, yet intertribal movement that shook the local foundations of Indian government while spreading the truly radical message that Indians identified as one people.”¹ Rather than focusing on the formations of their prejudices, Dowd centers his study on investigating the reasons why these two groups of Native peoples unified, and also encourages future research on pan-Indian movements in the United States.²³

As scholars continued to engage in the study of Native peoples and their racial views, they largely turned to the examination of the southeastern United States, likely due to the pervasive nature of plantation slavery and its role in both Native and Euro-American life. In his book, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (1999), Claudio Saunt discusses dramatic changes within Creek society in the eighteenth century, highlighting the transformation that made the rise of plantation slavery possible within the Creek nation. He explains how the Creek nation became possessive over power and people, noting how in striving to attain the status of “civilization” set by Euro-Americans, their society fragmented. By 1800, slaves became valued possessions, and force became a more common leadership tactic than past strategies of cooperation and consensus. In order to explain how and why people came to be considered property within the Creek nation, Saunt describes Creek constructions of race and their shifting perceptions in response to Euro-American demands for civilization. Saunt’s discussion of how Creeks restructured their society to navigate a tenuous environment brings Native racial practice to the

²³ Ibid., xvii-xx.

forefront, analyzing how Creeks changed the ways in which they identified themselves and perceived others.²⁴

While continuing to study changes in Native views and societal structures in response to colonialism, in *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (2004) Nancy Shoemaker demonstrates how “Indian and European similarities enabled them to see their differences in sharper relief and, over the course of the eighteenth century, construct new identities that exaggerated the contrasts between them while ignoring what they had in common.”²⁵ Shoemaker acknowledges that both groups used categorization as a way to communicate and navigate society, providing examples of strategies that each group used. She discusses how interactions between Native peoples and Euro-Americans shaped notions of leadership, gender, and diplomacy, as well as race.

Shoemaker’s book also revisits her acclaimed article, “How Indians Got to be Red,” (1997), which suggests that the notion of Indians being red had its roots in Native color symbolism and Native interactions rather than from European origins. She argues that by the 1760s, many Native peoples understood and believed that skin color articulated difference and necessitated differentiating between groups, resulting in the othering of whites. While citing examples of both Native peoples and whites using skin color to organize their thoughts and structure their identities, Shoemaker suggests that Native peoples used skin color as a way for tribes to defend their right to land, even altering their origin stories to assert and establish a racial hierarchy in their favor. She

²⁴ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1 and 111-120.

²⁵ Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3.

connects the construction of these stories to the poor treatment of Native nations by Euro-Americans. Shoemaker's work continues the discussion of Native racial views through her consideration of Southern tribes including the Creek and Chickasaw but also broadens her study to include the Iroquois and northeastern Native nations.²⁶

Building on these works, scholars such as Tiya Miles complicated discussions of Native racial practice in the South by arguing that Native peoples adopted Euro-American notions of race. Rather than focusing on a specific tribe, in *The Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (2005), Tiya Miles highlights the Shoe Boots family, examining the complications that resulted from a family that consisted of a Cherokee man, his slave wife, and their children. Miles employs this family as a lens to "reveal social and cultural meanings in dual national contexts: United States and the Cherokee Nation."²⁷ She studies the relationship between black slavery and Cherokee kinship, as well as black emancipation and Cherokee sovereignty, explaining that due to British and American encroachment and colonization of the Southeast, slavery and racial prejudice were introduced to Native peoples and changed Native racial practice. Miles' book is rich with examples of Indian responses to whites, blacks, and Indians, giving them the agency they deserve in the discussion of racial practice.²⁸

Continuing the study of slavery in the American South, Christina Snyder's book *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (2010)

²⁶ Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*, 3-9 and 131-140, and Nancy Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to Be Red," *American Historical Review* 102 (1997): 624-644.

²⁷ Miles, *The Ties that Bind*, 3-4.

²⁸ Ibid., 3-8.

discusses the shift in Indian slavery from kin-based inclusion to race-based exclusion. Snyder describes experiences of the enslaved, telling the story of captives, elaborating on how captivity changed from the pre-Columbian era through the 1840s, and highlighting how Native nations adjusted their kin practices to relegate blacks to the status of outsiders in Native society. She suggests captivity was not a “static institution” but rather one characterized by “fluidity and ambiguity,” changing over time to meet the needs of Native peoples.²⁹ Until the late nineteenth century, Snyder argues, age and gender more than race affected the fate of captives, but due to the political and economic crises of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Indians racialized slavery and adopted a language of race similar to that of whites. Snyder’s work provides a broader history of Indian slavery and how it changed from pre-Columbian times to 1842, focusing her analysis on Indians notions of slavery, race, and kinship, rather than solely on Euro-American ideas.³⁰

While most scholarship on Native slavery is centered in the American South, Brett Rushforth discusses its beginnings in New France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (2012), Rushforth describes the “dynamic interplay” of indigenous and Atlantic slaves through an analysis of the cultural, legal, and social practices surrounding slavery in New France. Rushforth differentiates slavery in New France from slavery in the Caribbean and suggests that slavery in the *pays d’en haut* was unique in that Native peoples manipulated the system in order to meet and limit French colonialism as well as maintain an alliance with the French. He argues that Native peoples and the French engaged in a century-long negotiation over the nature of slavery and its role in New France, a process that

²⁹ Snyder, *Slavery In Indian Country*, 4-7.

³⁰ Ibid.

transformed both indigenous and Atlantic cultures.

Rushforth's work highlights the critical role of Indian slavery in the development of interethnic diplomacy, trade, and labor systems. He analyzes both French and Native slavery and their divergent understandings and purposes for engaging in this system, and then illustrates how these two systems came together as the French realized the need to legally sanction the enslavement of Native peoples. He highlights Native strategies of manipulation in this dialogue, which allowed Native peoples to control French alliances and limit their westward expansion. His discussion connects alliances in the Great Lakes region to the intellectual history of slavery, the development of colonial cultures, the rise of race, and the even broader discussion of the French Atlantic World.³¹

Although scholars have begun to consider regions other than the south in their studies of Native peoples and race, this issue has yet to be examined in the Old Northwest. Rushforth does examine this region, but his work is centered on slavery, and not necessarily on Native racial views and practices. As Merrell and Shoemaker suggest, there is much work to be done on the history of Native racial practice. My work will add to this discussion by looking at Native racial views in the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes and examining how this change affected kinship practices in this region.

Native/Euro-American Interactions in the Ohio Valley and Lower Great Lakes

The Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes' importance as a hearth of Native resistance between 1778 and 1813 and the intense entanglement of diverse peoples that existed there make it a dynamic place to analyze Native/Euro-American relations and the resulting shifts in identity. This region made up a large portion of the first American

³¹ Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 8-13.

West, an area that ran from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River. The idea of the West permeated the American identity and encouraged dreams of western freedom and limitless expansion, which in turn shaped American cultural values and political ideologies. As a result, moving west became a part of the American experience in the late eighteenth century. This movement of peoples created an entangled place between the more settled East and the “uninhabited” West, a place fraught with complex struggles between Native peoples and settlers. Native peoples did, in fact, inhabit this west and came to be seen as obstacles to imminent Euro-American expansion. This conflict led to opposition from Native peoples, and resulted in incredible violence.

Though the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes experienced much change, Native presence in the region had been constant throughout the colonial period. When Europeans began to advance into the Ohio Valley, the Iroquois Confederacy (Six Nations including the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, Senecas, and Tuscaroras), Delaware, Shawnee, Ottawa, and Mingo nations welcomed them, cooperating with them to help ensure the newcomer’s survival; however, these peoples began to clash, especially as Native peoples realized the intentions of these Europeans to displace them from their land. As more Euro-Americans pushed tribes west, the Miami, Wyandots, Potawatomi, Wea, and Piankashaw peoples joined the already diverse native population of the Old Northwest. Before the late eighteenth century, these tribes became closely associated with the other Native peoples but still maintained their own kinship practices and distinctions. Many of these tribes (excluding the Wyandots and the Iroquois) were

members of the Algonquian language group and lived in multi-ethnic communities throughout the region.³²

Due to a lack of documents produced by Native peoples in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, it is difficult to extract their views and voices from mediated documents. The primary sources generated by the history of Euro-American/Native relations include various documents that surrounded treaty negotiations, including communications between government and army officials, papers and log books of Indian Agents, and the writings of people that attended them, as well as traveler accounts of passing through a “council fire.” These documents appear in various manuscript collections but also are collected in the *American State Papers on Indian Affairs* and the *Territorial papers of the United States*. In terms of the Old Northwest, pertinent governmental and army officials included William Henry Harrison, Henry Knox, William Eustis, Arthur St. Clair, Anthony Wayne, and others, and Indian agents include John Johnston, William Wells, George Morgan, and Charles Jouett. Other primary sources include travel logs written by individuals, mostly men, travelling through the Ohio River Valley or Southern Great Lakes who interacted with Native peoples and recorded their experiences. The documentations, translations, and interpretations of the speeches of Native leaders by Euro-American writers, along with their descriptions of their interactions, are admittedly mediated documents; however, by using multiple sources to understand the developments traced in this thesis, we can draw some conclusions regarding changes in Native racial views and practices in this time period.

Captivity narratives also make up a large portion of the research-base of this project. Serving as first hand accounts of American settlers’ lives amongst the Indians,

³² Chapter 1 will further describe these tribes as well as kinship structures.

captivity narratives explain the tenuous moments in which Native peoples granted or prohibited entrance into their kinship networks. These works provide insight into the lives of captives, presenting personal recollections of their capture, daily routines, monumental events, and ultimately, their release. While these narratives provide a unique opportunity to delve into the lives of captives, there are various factors that must be considered when employing these texts, especially because of their role as a form of popular press. The potential for exaggeration and the limiting nature of individual narratives need to be considered when working with these sources. Additionally, many stories of captivity are inaccessible; some captives never recorded their experiences due to illiteracy or a desire to forget their experiences in Indian Country, and others have been lost. There are also no narratives from those who completed the transition to a tribal identity and stayed in Indian country.³³

It can be said that captivity narratives are only suggestive of the overall experience of captives in the region; however, when taken together, they offer insight as to the complex role of race in captivity, illuminating the shards of Native voices that remain in Euro-American texts. Though these sources are not purely impartial recollections, the voices of these captives should not be dismissed simply because there are not more objective sources confirming their encounter.³⁴

³³ For more on captivity narratives see Gary L. Ebersole, *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Post-Modern Images of Indian Captivity* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1995); Richard VanDerBeets, *The Indian Captivity Narrative: An American Genre* (New York: University Press of America, 1984); and Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, "'The Redeemed Captive' as Recurrent Seller: Politics and Publication, 1707-1853," *The New England Quarterly* 77 (2004): 341-367.

³⁴ John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1994), 76; June Namias, *White Captives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 8, 23, and 81; and Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*, 9-10.

Regarding European claims to hegemony, the French perceived themselves to hold most of the land in this region via alliances with the local tribes until 1763, when the Treaty of Paris following British victory in the Seven Year's War transferred these perceived holdings to the English without including the tribes in the treaty council. From the British perspective and those of her colonists, this treaty gave them control over lands from the Atlantic to the Mississippi River. Despite the fact that the British Proclamation of 1763 forbade settlement west of the Appalachians in hopes of avoiding another Indian war, settlers continued to push into the Ohio Valley which they perceived as their just reward for assisting the British in winning the war, tilting the delicate balance British authorities and Native peoples had attempted to maintain in their interactions. The British took over French forts, although many of the surrounding French residents remained. Eventually American settlers advanced into these settlements. They quickly began to decide how to survey, divide, and sell the lands they had acquired under European law and custom without considering the Native peoples who occupied and claimed sovereignty over the same lands. As long as they survived violent confrontations with Indians defending their lands, settlers enjoyed rapid social, economic, and physical mobility, facilitated by federal Indian policy. Native peoples began to unite and resist this expansion, and in doing so developed new racial views. As a result, the Old Northwest is a place worth analyzing to better understand changes in Indigenous notions of race.

Additionally, the Ohio Valley's location as a border between the northern and southern regions of the United States makes it an interesting place to study race within Native society. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century South, plantation slavery

dominated the economy, and states concretized terms of racial slavery in law, further stripping blacks of their rights and ensuring their status as property. By contrast, the state of slavery was still in flux in the Old Northwest. This is not to say that slavery did not exist in the Old Northwest; Euro-Americans enslaved both Native peoples and blacks in the region, attempting to recreate their previous colonial successes. However; due to the absence of plantation-based agricultural activity, slaveholders and slave sellers often decided that transporting slaves to the Old Northwest would not be as lucrative as placing them in the South or the Caribbean. As the Ohio Valley transitioned to American control, laws began to limit slavery in the region. the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 discouraged the transport of new slaves into the region with mixed results.³⁵

Although they did not bring many slaves, settlers continued to flood the region and displace Native peoples. Eventually this borderland became a Euro-American dominated space, but before this happened, both Euro-Americans and Native peoples had to work out who these other people were, what their motivations were, and how they should they interact with them. While Native peoples attempted to draw Euro-Americans into their pre-existing social categories defined by kinship, Anglo-Americans failed to learn the roles and responsibilities this entailed, and to violate the trust created by these relationships. As this system failed, Native Americans had to engage in a new process of understanding and identifying others leading to practices of categorization and distinction that eventually grew into ideas of race.³⁶

³⁵ Paul Finkelman, "Evading the Ordinance: The Persistence of Bondage in Indian and Illinois," *Journal of the Early Republic* 9 (1989): 21-51, and Paul Finkelman, "Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance: A Study in Ambiguity," *Journal of the Early Republic* 6 (1986): 343-370.

³⁶ R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1996), p. viii-xv. Forward by Walter Nugent and Malcolm Rohrbough.

Outline of the Thesis

This thesis builds on the scholarly conversation concerning the development of a concept of race in Native societies through an examination of how kinship as a category for identifying and classifying individuals transitioned to a Native conceptualization of racial thought between 1778 and 1813 in the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes..

Chapter one provides a history of the Old Northwest in this time period, a description of the Native tribes in the region, an explanation of pan-Indianism during this time, and an overview of Native kinship as well as how kinship related to diplomatic practices.

Chapters two and three present a shift in Native language and captive treatment that helps better understand this shift in Native racial thought and practices. Chapter four describes the rise of racial thinking in the Euro-American world in order to better understand what worldviews the Native peoples of the Ohio River Valley were exposed to through their varied and plentiful interactions with imperial powers and settlers and connects these transformations to the crystallization of white racial views and the nativist movement of Tecumseh and the Shawnee Prophet. The conclusion will describe my overall findings and suggest avenues for future research.

Chapter 1

An Introduction to the Ohio Valley, its Peoples and Native Kinship Practices

The Ohio River Valley and lower Great Lakes were places of uncommon violence, lengthy disputes between Native peoples and European and American forces, and the site of an intriguing mixture of Native peoples confronting and overcoming challenges characteristic of broader patterns of empire and settler colonialism. In 1778, the year that this study begins, the British claimed the region, French settlers remained in the region, and the Americans were fighting the British for control over the region as well as its Indigenous peoples. The Native peoples in the region at the time included the Miami, Shawnee, Delaware, and Mingo nations as well as members of the Wyandot, Kickapoo, Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Piankashaw tribes, among other groups; however, some of these groups had not always resided in this region but had been displaced from their original homelands by conflict with both colonial powers and other Native nations. This chapter examines the history of imperial control, Native movements, and Native societal organization in the Ohio River Valley and lower Great Lakes, and provides an overview of the historical landscape and peoples that interacted and influenced each other in this region in the period from 1600 to 1813, the year my study ends.

The exact date of initial European contact with the Great Lakes Indians is unknown. However, during the early 1500s, Europeans traded with Native peoples of the region, and in the 1530s, Jacques Cartier of France explored the St. Lawrence River, which encouraged the foundation of Quebec and the colony of New France in 1608. With the development of New France, the French quickly realized the importance of a military and economic alliance with the Native peoples of the region. The tribes in the region

were eager to trade with the French, creating fictive kinship and marriage bonds, which allowed for the cultivation of relationships between these groups in the 1600s and 1700s. This included ties built with the Kickapoo, Miami, Potawatomi, Shawnee, and the then more-eastern based Wyandot and Delaware nations. These ties would soon be put to the test.³⁷

In the 1630s, the Mourning Wars broke out in Canada between the Algonquin people and the Iroquois of the upper St. Lawrence River, as they swept into Huronia seeking captives to replace Iroquois dead lost to waves of epidemic disease. These conflicts ignited a chain of battles between Native nations as the Huron's allies in the upper and lower Great Lakes were drawn into the conflict. Native peoples engaged in fur pillaging in order to obtain the necessary resources to engage in the mourning wars. As these conflicts became more deadly, the Iroquois threatened to cut off trade routes in order to prevent their enemies access to European goods. The Dutch supplied their allies, the Iroquois, with more sophisticated European weapons, giving them a great advantage over the tribes of the lower Great Lakes because the French traded firearms on a more limited basis restricting them to those who converted to Christianity. The Potawatomi were not the only tribes displaced by these conflicts; the Wyandot, Mingo, Shawnee, Delaware, Kickapoo, and Ottawa also experienced forced movement westward as a result of Iroquois dominance. This led to the near extermination of the Native peoples in the Ohio River Valley and lower Great Lakes from 1630-1700.³⁸

³⁷ René Chartrand, *The forts of New France: the Great Lakes, the Plains and the Gulf Coast, 1600-1763* (Essex: Osprey Publishing, 2008), 5-33.

³⁸ Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

In the 1640s, the Iroquois attempted to come to an agreement with the Wyandot in order to gain permission to hunt in their territory or to travel through their territory in order to hunt for beaver, which they had exhausted in their own territory. The Wyandot denied their requests and when they did, two thousand Iroquois warriors attacked Wyandot territory and pushed them west. This happened repeatedly with tribes in the region, making many tribes tributaries of the Iroquois and emptying the Ohio Country for Iroquois use. The tribes affected by this conflict included many of the major tribes of the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes including the Kickapoo, Miami, Potawatomi, Ottawa, Shawnee, Wyandot, Delaware, and Mingo nations. These tribes largely belonged to the Algonquian language group, though the more-eastern Wyandot and Mingo nations spoke languages of an Iroquoian origin.³⁹

By 1664, the French stepped in to assist their Native allies, and by the 1690s, the Iroquois began to retreat through the lower Great Lakes region back to their homeland in New York. The Iroquois also became more concerned with English encroachment on their territory and increasingly became willing to ally with the French in order to limit English expansion. The French and the Iroquois signed the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701, which allowed refugee Native peoples from the Great Lakes to slowly return to their homelands. This included the return of the Shawnee, Miami, and Potawatomi among others by the 1740s and 1750s, resulting in the repopulation of the Ohio Valley and a rekindling of tribal traditions and connections to their respective ancestral homelands.

³⁹ Elisabeth Tooker, *An ethnography of the Huron Indians, 1615–1649* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries kinship continued to serve as the central organizing system of Native American life. Amongst the various peoples of the Ohio River Valley, as in the native world more generally, kinship determined identity and also affected Native diplomacy, influencing both the alliances and hostile sentiments during the Mourning Wars. Native peoples considered villages the most important social, political, and economic unit and divided villages into clans that typically consisted of extended families, including those that had married into the clan. Depending on the tribe, membership in a clan passed through the mother or the father. One's position in the clan was determined by age as well as prowess in war. A Native person's clan also determined who would be considered his/her kin. Before more serious colonial encroachments and major land cessions in the region in the 1790s, kinship could encompass both Euro-Americans and Africans via adoption and marriage.⁴⁰

Clans communicated identity and also functioned as important entities both within the village and in relations between the village and other native nations, bonding villages together through ties of kinship. Because native nations relied on networks of reciprocity, they defined themselves based on larger social units such as clans and villages rather than focusing on individuals. These networks of reciprocity helped Native groups to support each other by completing different kinds of work and sharing resources when groups experienced times of plenty to help those that experienced times of need. Economic

⁴⁰ Charles Callender, "Shawnee," in Bruce G. Trigger and William C. Sturtevant, eds., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15 (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1978), 627.

connections between clans increased a village's kinship obligations and connections beyond the people in its immediate vicinity.⁴¹

Native peoples used both flora and fauna to name their clan groups. For example among the Shawnee, clans included Snake, Turtle, Raccoon, Turkey, Deer, Bear, Wolf, Panther, Fish, Rabbit, Loon and Tree. The clan name might indicate the believed ancestor of the clan; however, all tribes did not share this belief in totems, or the notion that namesake of the clan was a common mythical ancestor. Members of the Shawnee held a naming ceremony that signified an infant's official entrance into the clan. At this ceremony, elders of the tribe would give the individual a name that was determined by their assumed clan traits. These traits would be those of the father's clan in the case of the Shawnee since they determined clan identity through a patrilineal system. As seen in the ascription of names, Native peoples supposed that individuals in the same clan had similar traits and skills, which led to the assignment of specific duties to each clan. The Shawnee Rabbit clan was known to be docile; therefore, the Shawnee chose civil leaders from within this clan because they respected individuals who possessed a peaceful nature. Additionally, the Panther clan and Wolf clan played important roles in battle. As a result of these clan duties and traits, the clan system was intended to create an efficient and harmonious community.⁴²

Indians employed familial terms to describe these extended relationships between individuals, clans, villages, and nations. Terms such as "father" and "brother" did not necessarily align with the use of these terms in the Euro-American nuclear family. Many

⁴¹ For more on networks of reciprocity see, Cary Miller, *Omigaag* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010).

⁴² James M. Howard, *Shawnee! The Ceremonialism of a Native Indian Tribe and Its Cultural Background* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), 91-97.

natives who identified as “cousins” considered themselves to be brothers, and natives described uncles as “fathers.” These terms indicated a respect for the other groups as well as closeness, reflecting the importance of reciprocal relationships and interconnectedness in native society. Within the Shawnee nation, and presumably other tribes, this closeness also manifested in competitions, joking, and rivalries between clans. Clans held games and contests that pitted groups against each other, resulting in heckling and teasing during and outside of clan interaction. Through their assumed traits, responsibilities, and practices surrounding clan relations, clan members demonstrated belonging to their specific clan, which then served as an organizing mechanism that had substantial influence on their daily life.⁴³

The significance of reciprocal social relationships in Native society allowed kinship to transcend biological connections. Natives extended kinship to those who partook in gifting, the cornerstone of kinship. Natives established relationships with other natives and eventually Euro-Americans through gift exchange. These relationships were centered on fictive kinship, which allowed for the incorporation of a non-Native individual into a Native community through marriage, adoption, or gift exchange. Records of Indian Agent requests as well as fort letter books document generals, Indian agents, and other Euro-American individuals in Indian country requesting knives, beads, cloth, liquor, and other goods be delivered to them for the purpose of negotiating with or even simply to gain entrance into a native village. Gifting practices also manifested themselves during diplomatic exchanges. Euro-Americans and Indians arrived with belts, wampum, and trade goods to share with the other as welcoming gifts as well as items to

⁴³ Callender, "Shawnee," in Trigger and Sturtevant, eds., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15 627, and Howard, *Shawnee!*, 91-97.

solidify an alliance with or secure an agreement to specific terms. Natives considered social interaction impossible if gifting did not occur, which eliminated the possibility of trade and might have resulted in hostile treatment for the individual or group involved.⁴⁴

Rather than engaging in violence, Native peoples preferred establishing peaceful kin relationships, though these came with great obligations. The gift exchanges that occurred were laden with meaning. If one accepted gifts, natives assumed that the other group agreed with the terms of this exchange, including an obligation for reciprocity and a bond between the two peoples. These bonds could also be created through marriage or adoption. Native peoples formed these relationships on the basis that a trusting relationship would be the outcome: one in which each group cared for the other and assisted them in times of need.⁴⁵

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both Native nations and Europeans were eager to trade with the other and thereby, eager to form kin relationships. They exchanged pelts for manufactured goods such as guns, cloth, knives, and metal cooking utensils and became parts of the same economic system. They increasingly also became involved in the political and military schemes of their European trade partners. By the early 1600s, the French began to enter and trade in the Great Lakes region and Christian missionaries began to preach among the Iroquoian-speaking Native nations of the eastern Great Lakes. As the French presence grew, they traded extensively with Native peoples and began to mediate disputes between Native nations, sometimes to the annoyance of the Native parties involved and sometimes in order to exploit tribal

⁴⁴ Miller, *Omigaag*, 32-33.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 27-39.

connections for their own economic and trade-based benefit. However, as time progressed, relations between groups grew better and bonds stronger, which provided the French with connections to other tribes in the region as well.⁴⁶

In the 1600s, the Ohio Valley was not specifically a region of French settlement but the lower Great Lakes area to the north was, and the Ohio River served as an alternative transportation route through the region. The French became dependent on Indian trade as the basis of their North American economy and hoped to maintain control over the trade and land of the lower Great Lakes and Ohio River Valley, even though they did not settle in the valley region until the 1700s. When tribes were displaced by the mourning wars, they came into the French diplomatic orbit, and carried these ties and traders back with them when they returned to the Ohio valley after the 1701 peace of Montreal, becoming reliant on trade with the French and encouraged merchants to establish permanent posts in the region. The French established trading posts and forts throughout the region, creating spaces for these peoples to interact and trade within, and to make travel trade goods accessible to those traveling throughout the region.⁴⁷

Indian trappers and traders served as skilled negotiators and middlemen between European markets and tribes and facilitated bonds between these two entities. Native nations competed for the role of intermediary between these groups due to the promise of bountiful gains in the fur trade and the important political opportunity to improve and expand one's exchange networks of mutual obligation. Although Native peoples did most of the work hunting, preparing, and transporting furs throughout the lower Great Lakes,

⁴⁶ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 50-93 and in general.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

European traders became intimately familiar with the region and native customs. They began to convert mere trading posts into settlement colonies, expanding the fur trade across northern North America. Because the French did not attempt to settle these lands to the extent that the Spanish and English did their colonies, few French women immigrated and settlers did not dominate the region. The French thus had a much better rapport with Native peoples and continually strengthened their bond through marriage and learning Native languages.⁴⁸

The French relationship with Native peoples was centered on personal relationships with the people they traded with. Historian Richard White suggests that a “middle ground” existed as a place and a process of mutual accommodation. The place, the *pays d’en haut*, included the Great Lakes and the vast areas of Canada that the French had explored and the peoples were largely the Algonquian-speaking Native nations of the region and colonial powers, especially the French. White notes that in order for this “middle ground” to exist, there needed to be a weak state presence, a relatively even balance of power between peoples, and a desire to interact, even if for a specific purpose such as trade. This interaction resulted in mutually understandable practices that took place on both formal diplomatic levels and throughout daily life.⁴⁹

Many French men became members of native communities and often intermarried and had children with Native women. This was largely due to the lack of European women in New France. Villages welcomed the children of Indian women and French men into their families or raised them in fur trading/métis communities. While the relationship between the French and Indians had great economic benefit, it also provided

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Native peoples with advantages in other strategic relationships. In the eighteenth century, the Dutch and English began to compete with the French for control over trade and territory. In the early 1750s, French expansion into the Ohio Valley resulted in conflict between the French and the British. This placed economic, diplomatic, and military leverage on Native peoples as Europeans competed for trade opportunities and military alliances. These alliances and Native decisions became incredibly important during the Seven Years' War. Between 1754 and 1763, the European powers fought in many different theaters including Europe, North America, Central America, West Africa, India, and the Philippines. In North America, this conflict was primarily between the British and the French over control of New France.⁵⁰

In North America, the Seven Years' war was primarily fought between New France and the British colonies, with fighting ranging from Virginia to Nova Scotia. Native peoples in the region became involved through their European allies, but were also spurred by the pre-existing Algonquin – Iroquois enmity with the Iroquois siding with the British and many of the Great Lakes tribes choosing to maintain their alliance with the French. The war ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1763. France lost all claims to Canada and transferred control of Louisiana to the Spanish. In North America, Britain gained New France, Spanish Florida, and some Caribbean islands. The European powers excluded Native nations from this peace settlement.⁵¹

The Seven Years' War changed economic, governmental, and social relations between Britain, France, Spain, and Native peoples in North America. Britain became the

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 23-43, and Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3-60.

dominant colonial power in eastern North America, and as the British eclipsed French power, Native peoples lost a strong ally and obstacle to British expansion. After the Seven Years' war, the Ohio Country became particularly vulnerable to both legal and illegal settlement due to the construction of military roads to the area by the British. As the Indians of the lower Great Lakes and Ohio Valley increasingly began to feel the effects of colonial encroachment, their lives became disturbed by both settlers and colonial policies, which led to various acts of resistance in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁵²

After the Seven Years' War, the British treated the former Indian allies of the French as well as their own allies like conquered peoples, rather than focusing on building relationships with them. Sir William Johnson, British Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the northern colonies, met with members of the French-native alliance in order to learn about the French system of relations with the Native peoples of the region. However, Jeffrey Amherst, British commander in North America, overruled Johnson's plan to maintain relations with Native peoples as the French had done through annual distributions of gifts and ordered his own austere plan devoid of gifts be put into place. Native nations became dissatisfied with British policy and trading practices, which cut back on gifting, ended the credit system, increased the prices of trade goods, restricted the distribution of gunpowder, ammunition, and alcohol, and caused Native peoples to believe that the British intended to subjugate them. The Colonies also competed with one another as they tried to purchase or coercively take land from Native peoples, which

⁵² Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 505-506, 565-6, 617-637, and Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen*, 161-164.

became an additional strain on their relations.⁵³ Colonists, who in part felt they had fought the war for access to western lands, increasingly squatted on Indian lands regardless of British or colony agreements with tribes.

This combination of actions prompted the Ottawa chief Pontiac to organize a group of Native peoples against the British and inspired a larger movement to resist British control. Native peoples had actually begun to call for unification in 1761 in order to drive the British out of the region and revive the French and Indian alliance as inspired by a Delaware prophet named Neolin, who vehemently opposed European cultural influence on Native life. Pontiac encouraged the continuation of this resistance by calling on Native peoples to be “purer in [their] hatred of all Europeans,” which in turn “crystallized long-simmering hatreds into explicit new doctrines of racial unity and racial antagonism.”⁵⁴

Pontiac’s rebellion began in May 1763 when Pontiac gathered 300 followers to attack Fort Detroit. Though they did not take the fort, they laid siege to the fort and were soon joined by more than 900 additional Native peoples from many different tribes. Pontiac’s actions inspired others to become involved in the resistance across the Great Lakes, which ignited widespread attacks on British forts and settlements. Between 1763 and 1765, Indian forces led by Pontiac attacked and captured many British forts, causing eight forts to fall. The British regained control over the region by 1765. Though these defeats did not allow his influence to permeate as many native nations as he had hoped, he retreated to Illinois country where he maintained some influence around the Wabash,

⁵³ Alfred A. Cave, *The French and Indian War* (London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 21-23.

⁵⁴ Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, & the British Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 199, 206, and 228.

encouraging resistance against the British and their way of life. Here, he continued to encourage militant resistance to British occupation and strove to maintain the Native alliance with the French. His influence waxed and waned, though on a more local/regional scale, until his assassination in 1769..⁵⁵

After Pontiac's Rebellion, the British changed their treatment of Native peoples. They gave Native peoples more freedom in running their own affairs and tried to treat tribes as allies rather than conquered peoples. They reestablished the fur trade, the credit system, and increased gifting. In an attempt to reconcile relations with Native peoples after Pontiac's Rebellion, King George III issued the Proclamation of 1763 in October of that year. This included the temporary reservation of lands west of the Appalachian Mountains to Native peoples and was intended to prevent the rising tide of settlers moving west. This proclamation angered colonists of all social classes for many reasons. It closed off the frontier to colonial expansion, excluding the rich Ohio Valley and all territory from the Ohio to the Mississippi from settlement. Land speculators could not be assured of a return on their investments, and settlers were denied land they thought they had earned the right to this land during the Seven Years' War. The British intended these gestures, including the Proclamation of 1763, to calm the fears of the Indians and ensure their future support, which proved to be largely beneficial as many Native nations allied with the British during the American Revolution.⁵⁶

As Native nations negotiated and developed better relations with British authorities, American colonists began to express grievances and organize against that

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Jack Sosin, *Whitehall and the wilderness: The Middle West in British colonial policy, 1760-1775* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961).

same authority. In order to recuperate financial losses obtained during the Seven Years' War, Britain imposed many taxes on their colonies between 1764 and 1767, including the Stamp Act, Sugar Act, and, eventually, the Intolerable Acts. Mass protests in the colonies continued as a result of the Intolerable Acts and united the colonies, despite their differences, against a common enemy. The path to the American Revolution had begun. Native peoples were not involved in the initial declaration of war and in the beginning, neither loyalists nor patriots sought Native support, urging neutrality among all tribes. However, both the colonists and British began to recruit Native allies in the summer of 1776, encouraging Native nations to choose a side to support. Native nations became increasingly invested and intertwined in imperial and colonial policy.⁵⁷

Both American and British forces attempted to involve the Iroquois in the Revolution, but the Iroquois initially resisted and tried to remain neutral. From their perspective, they had no need to be drawn into this conflict; however, as pressure increased from both the colonies and England, the Iroquois realized they had to choose. It became clear to most Native groups in this time that the independent colonists posed a greater threat to their lands and livelihood than continued British rule (rule that currently aimed to restrain Euro-American expansion), so that many Native peoples from the Ohio Valley to the Gulf of Mexico joined the war on the side of the British. That said, the decision of which side to support proved divisive in some communities, and the village-centered politics of Indian country meant that entire Native nations did not often choose to support one side in a conflict.

The most famous example of this during the Revolution, is the split within the

⁵⁷ Edward G. Gray and Jane Kamensky, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), part I.

Iroquois confederacy as the Oneida and Tuscarora sided with the Americans while the Cayuga, Onondaga, Mohawk and Seneca supported the British. . Native societies were not generally centralized, which allowed villages and individual warriors and chiefs to decide their own alliances within a conflict. Southern Native peoples also entered this conflict, with the Choctaw, Creek, and Cherokee nations experiencing similar fractures although most towns threw their support behind the British. Once involvement in the conflict, Native peoples likely expected reciprocity and inclusion in the treaty discussions that followed the war; at the very least, they expected preferential treatment if they joined the winning side. However, their hopes and expectations would be ignored at the end of a conflict, despite their participation with friends and enemies largely treated alike.⁵⁸

The American Revolution ended in 1783 with the Treaty of Paris. The Treaty acknowledged the United States as free, sovereign and independent states and established boundaries between British and Spanish territories and those now held by the United States. Included in the territories held by the United States were the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes. This reversed treaties made with British officials regarding Indian country and enraged Native nations in the region. As they negotiated with Native peoples, American officials argued that by supporting the British, native peoples had lost their rights and were now considered conquered peoples. This status allowed for Americans to claim territory west of the Mississippi and gave the United States nominal jurisdiction over territories it did not actually control, though Iroquois and Indians of the Old Northwest rejected their assertions of possession of their land due to the right of conquest.

The British government maintained a presence in the region by continuing to hold

⁵⁸ Ibid., 234-250.

forts throughout the Old Northwest and to provide trade goods to Native peoples, while the American government forced the Iroquois into signing a treaty in 1784 that resulted in the loss of significant amounts of traditional lands. Those that supported the Americans, including the Oneidas and Tuscaroras, received little compensation for their support of the United States. Regardless of what side they supported, Native peoples did not gain much from their participation in the American Revolution and experienced the disruption of their alliances and cultures as well as the destruction of much of their lands and villages. Americans claimed that the Native peoples of the Old Northwest had lost their land despite the fact there had been no decisive victory over Indian peoples, and despite the tribes general assertions that they had acted as sovereign allies of the British rather than as British subjects. This led the Native leaders of the old North West to refuse to recognize the United States' claim to the land northwest of the Ohio River and to the organization and unification of the Native nations of the upper and lower Great Lakes against American expansion.⁵⁹

After the Revolution, Native nations in the lower Great Lakes and Ohio Valley renewed cooperative bonds and formed the Western Confederacy, which came together in 1785 and agreed to deal jointly with the United States. They confirmed this bond in 1786 at a Wyandot village. The members of the confederacy included members of the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Ottawa, Iroquois, Wea, Piankashaw, Illini, Wyandot, Shawnee, Menominee, Delaware, Shawnee, Miami, Kickapoo, and the Kaskaskia, among others. Despite the lack of political centralization, the extent of village-level cooperation and involvement in the confederacy was phenomenal. The confederacy agreed on the Ohio River as a boundary between their lands and the land of American settlers, asserted that

⁵⁹ Ibid., part III.

no land north and west of the Ohio River could be legally transferred to the United States without the consent of all of the chiefs of each village in the region, and established that the Wyandot were the “fathers” or senior member of the Confederacy. This confederation, while loose, facilitated resistance to American encroachment, as well as to the aggressive and non-reciprocal trade and treaty policies of this new imperial power. Scholars have identified such confederations as “pan-Indian” movements, indicating their promotion of political unity and a common identity among Native nations regardless of tribal or local affiliations.⁶⁰

Despite Native American rejection of the claim that the United States presided over them due to the right of conquest, the US moved forward with its attempts to regulate Native peoples and obtain their land through the passage of laws such as the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance in 1787. Though these measures did recognize that tribes had some rights to their land by virtue of occupancy, they were still attempts to enforce disputed treaties with Native peoples for the gain of the United States. Through the sale of lands in the Northwest Territory, American officials hoped to pay down their war debt and they began their foray into this hopefully lucrative process with the Land Ordinance of 1785. The Land Ordinance allowed the Continental Congress to raise money through the surveying and eventual sale of land that had been divided into townships, sections, and plots. The surveying of land began in the Ohio Valley. The Continental Congress then passed the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which encouraged settlement in the Northwest Territory, an area created by this ordinance that included lands south of the Great Lakes, north and west of the Ohio River, and east of the

⁶⁰ Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xx.

Mississippi River. This ordinance set the precedent that the federal government would expand westward as a sovereign entity through the creation of new states. This was the catalyst for westward expansion and a great provocation to the tenuous relationship between Native peoples and American officials and settlers.⁶¹

Americans did not attempt to cultivate social and diplomatic relationships with Native peoples on their own terms, as the French had done with great success in past centuries. In a council with General Arthur St. Clair at the Miami Rapids in 1793, an unspecified Western nation leader lamented how Western Tribes wanted to keep their land rather than sell it because “money, to us, is of no value & to most of us is unknown...no consideration whatever can induce us to sell the lands on which we get sustenance for our women and children.” In contrast to the French, St. Clair and the other American “white people who first set their feet on this island” failed to cultivate fictive kin relationships or respect native practices of exchange, but instead attempted to negotiate the acquisition of this land by purchase alone. Thus they failed to negotiate on terms meaningful to native peoples or that fit into their worldview.⁶²

As the Americans embarked on these policies after the Revolution, the British remained in the region and continued to maintain their presence in Canada, giving Native peoples hope that the British would win the region back or at least help them stop Americans ardent westward expansion. The Indians continued to maintain political, social, and trade alliances with the British as the American government forced

⁶¹ Paul Finkelman, “Evading the Ordinance: The Persistence of Bondage in Indiana and Illinois,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 9 (1989): 21 and Shōsuke Satō, *History of the land question in the United States* (Baltimore: MD, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1886), 93-112.

⁶² Based on the tribes who signed the written message of the Indians at the council the leader was from the Wyandot, Delaware, Shawnee, Miami, Mingo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, or Munsee nation. R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1996), 272-282.

them to cede additional lands, purchasing it under dubious circumstances from often easily manipulated chiefs or individuals who lacked the authority to engage in the transaction. The United States treated Native nations as wards of the federal government and created a governmental department to oversee Indian policy. In the lower Great Lakes and Ohio Valley, Indian Territory was divided into northern and southern departments, with the Ohio River as the border. The president appointed superintendents to each department in order to supervise tribal business, license traders, and regulate settlement and travel through these regions.

Local Indian agencies were also established, with Indiana's office opening in 1802 at Fort Wayne. Here Indian Agents William Wells and John Johnston were expected to protect Indian rights, control trade, defend Indians in cases of crimes against them, and encourage the "civilization" of Native peoples. Despite these measures, confrontation between Indians and whites occurred throughout the region, which led to great violence and aggravated animosity between these groups. Rather than protecting Native interests, this system facilitated the orderly settlement of the Northwest Territory by Euro-Americans. It enabled treaty making to extinguish Indian land claims, which in turn allowed for a rush of white settlers to populate the region and further the United States' "manifest destiny" at the expense of Native peoples.⁶³

Despite American domination of colonial interactions, many Native peoples in the lower Great Lakes maintained strong alliances with the British and began to fight American expansion in the early 1790s. Between 1790 and 1791, army presence in the lower Great Lakes increased, as did frontier violence, making whites ever-present

⁶³ Francis P. Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

aggressors in the lives of native peoples. In 1790, President George Washington ordered General Josiah Harmar to travel through western Ohio and into the Maumee Valley to subdue Shawnee and Miami Country. Near present-day Fort Wayne, Native forces defeated Harmar. In 1791, General and Governor of the Northwest Territory Arthur St. Clair and his forces assisted in the construction of multiple forts north of Cincinnati, Ohio and were then ordered by President Washington to attack the Native peoples of the region. In a surprise attack known as St. Clair's Defeat, Miami leaders Little Turtle and Blue Jacket and Shawnee leader Tecumseh attacked and defeated St. Clair's forces near present-day Fort Recovery, Ohio in November of 1791. After these disastrous defeats, Washington ordered General "Mad" Anthony Wayne to form a better-trained force and force the united tribes of the northwest into submission. After extensive training, General Wayne advanced his troops into native held territory in 1794.⁶⁴

During the Indian wars of 1794-1795, the Indians of the Old Northwest fought against General Wayne, while British stood back as Americans burned native fields and villages. These wars led to the Battle of Fallen Timbers, fought near present-day Maumee, where Anthony Wayne's legion fought Indian forces consisting 2,000 Native warriors from Shawnee, Miami, Ojibwe, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Mingo, and other Native nations. Wayne's army defeated the Native forces, and the Indians attempted to retreat to Fort Miami only to be shut out of the fort by their supposed ally, the British. The defeat at Fallen Timbers led to the signing of the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, one of the largest land cessions Native peoples in this region experienced.

At Greenville, Ohio on August 3, 1795, members of the Wyandot, Delaware, Shawnee, Ottawa, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Miami, Eel River, Wea, Kickapoo, Piankashaw,

⁶⁴ Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, 120-142.

and Kaskaskia nations ceded almost 2/3 of the present state of Ohio and a portion of Indiana. They also agreed to cease hostilities, return prisoners, and recognize the United States rather than Britain as their trade partner and ally. General Wayne offered goods and established an annuity system, enticing native leaders to give up their lands for stability. Tecumseh, a young Shawnee who fought at Fallen Timbers, refused to sign this treaty, foreshadowing his pivotal role in resistance to whites during the war of 1812. After Native peoples signed the treaty, they continued to reside in the northwestern part of the state, as surveyors, land speculators, and developers began to move into the newly-opened Ohio country and squatters began to encroach on both the land they had ceded and the land they had left. This treaty marked the end of the Northwest Indian wars and essentially opened much of Ohio for settlement, much to the dismay of the Native peoples of the region.⁶⁵

As settlers began to populate the lower Great Lakes and Ohio Valley, more land became necessary to accommodate them. As a result, in July 1803, President Thomas Jefferson proposed the removal of Native peoples farther to the west in order to remove white interference from their lives and to ensure they would never have to lose their homelands again. This instigated many treaties for territories in the future state of Indiana in which Harrison pushed for large land cessions from all tribes, promising payments and annuities as compensation. The many cessions illustrate the magnitude of loss Native peoples experienced, as well as the conniving nature of American officials who continued to exploit Native peoples and strip them of their land.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ US Congress, Stat., vol. 7, 49 and Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 225 and Hurt, *Ohio frontier*, 120-142.

⁶⁶ United States Congress, Stat., vol. 7, 74-81.

During periods of social and economic deprivation, Native peoples often joined with other Native peoples in order to survive, or they followed religious leaders, often known as “prophets”, as a solution to their woes. For example, a Delaware nativist revival occurred in the 1750s and 1760s, and in the nineteenth century, the ghost-dance religion of the prairies suggested that the Great Spirit would allow native peoples to return to happiness and escape white oppression if they purged themselves of white influence and returned to a purified Indian religion. Dowd suggests that pan-Indian movements should be considered “one of many events in the long career of a widespread, often divisive, yet intertribal movement that shook the local foundations of Indian government while spreading the truly radical message that Indians identified as one people.”⁶⁷ The movement started by Shawnee leader Tecumseh and, his brother Tenskwatawa, known as the Shawnee Prophet, was connected to past pan-Indian movements, especially those such as Pontiac’s that had formed to resist colonial power. Militarily and politically minded Tecumseh transformed his brother’s religious revival into a movement dedicated to protecting native land and interests, forming a confederacy against westward expansion during the war of 1812.

Tecumseh was born in 1768 and Tenskwatawa (or Lalawethika, as he was named at birth) around 1775, likely near present-day Springfield Ohio. Their father was Shawnee chief Puckeshinwa, and their mother was likely of Creek descent. As a child, Tecumseh won early notice for his potential as a warrior, which would come to fruition as he grew. Tecumseh’s promise, as well as that of another elder brother, overshadowed Tenskwatawa. The boys’ father died before Tenskwatawa was born and their mother left the family. Thus he grew up without parents and in a tribe that largely disliked him,

⁶⁷ Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, xix.

relying on his siblings to raise him and teach him Shawnee practices and traditions.

Tenskwatawa lost his eye in a hunting accident and because his siblings did not continue to teach him, never learned how to hunt or fight, further ostracizing him and encouraging his turn to alcoholism as an adolescent.⁶⁸

Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa were exposed to warfare throughout their youth, as whites and Native peoples were fighting throughout the region; as American encroachment began, Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa became involved to varying degrees. Tecumseh served as a scout during St. Clair's Campaign in the region and led a small party of Shawnees with great success during the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. Tenskwatawa did not participate in the Indian victories in 1790-91, but is believed to have been present at Fallen Timbers and likely attended the Treaty of Greenville of 1795, despite the fact that Tecumseh refused to attend. Through their experiences in and around war and white encroachment, Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa became angered by purchase of Native land by the United States as well as by increased dependence on trading with Americans. The brothers began to speak out against such dependence as well as white encroachment, advocated for a return to traditional values and practices, and labored to unite Native peoples against the continually advancing frontier.⁶⁹

As they began to voice their concerns regarding settler intrusion and the corruption of Native society, Tenskwatawa experienced a vision that provided Tecumseh with the ideological basis for this nativist movement. In May 1805, Tenskwatawa (then, Lalewethika) fell into a fire while drunk. His family believed that he was dead, though he had really just passed out. He later claimed that during this time a Shawnee spirit known

⁶⁸ John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1998), 20-23.

⁶⁹ Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 38.

as the Master of Life, , had visited him and that he had seen a Great Serpent, an evil power, come from the sea and was informed that the Americans were children of this serpent. Because of this, he said, Native peoples should avoid Americans and give up all of their customs and products, including the guns, metal tools, beads, and alcohol that they had come to enjoy.

Tenskwatawa said that during the vision, he travelled to both heaven and hell, and in hell, he experienced a place where alcoholics and those that did not return to Native ways experienced endless torture. The Master of Life instructed him to tell Native peoples to reject white practices and cooperate with each other and their elders, and in return, the Master of Life would drive settlers from their lands. After this transformative experience, Tenskwatawa vowed to renounce alcohol, return to traditional ways, and share this message with other Native peoples. Many natives were initially skeptical of Tenskwatawa's vision, but it began to permeate through Indian Country. He formed a village for followers near Greenville Ohio and met with tribes in the Ohio and Indian Territory. Here, he called for cultural revitalization, a return to self-sufficiency, and a renewed connection to the land. Both Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa encouraged native peoples to embrace their cultural values and to come together in order to thwart efforts of non-natives to determine the destiny of native peoples. They encouraged peace, but Tecumseh emphasized that Indians must unite and fight to save their land if necessary. Tecumseh connected the Prophet's vision to his own ideas of Native unity and used this as the basis for the pan-Indian collaborations leading up to the War of 1812, forging the path to a broader movement to come.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ White, *The Middle Ground*, 507, and R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1958), 38-40.

Tenskwatawa's following grew even more after he accurately predicted a solar eclipse in 1806. Indiana Territorial Governor William Henry Harrison had declared that Tenskwatawa was a fraud and accused Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa of being pushed to speak out by British agents. He then dared the Prophet to prove his power, which the Tenskwatawa did by predicting the eclipse. Though it is now known that he gained the information that led to this prediction through his brother's connections with American scientists, his successful prediction led to additional followers. Some still remained skeptical, however; they aimed to maintain a peaceful relationship with the American officials and urged cultural adaptation and accommodation with the United States.⁷¹

Between 1807 and 1808, Native peoples from many tribes, including the Potawatomis, Ojibwas, Shawnees, Ottawas, Winnebagos, Kickapoos, Delawares, Wyandots, Menominees, Miamis, and Piankashaws, among others, travelled hundreds of miles to visit the Prophet in Greenville. The influx in Native peoples travelling to this region alarmed American officials, who then sent agents to investigate this movement. Settlers in the region remained hostile to the gathering of Native peoples and due to increasing tensions between these settlers as well as accommodationist chiefs, Tenskwatawa and his followers decided to leave Greenville and relocate farther from American settlement and deeper into Indian Country. In 1808, they established the multi-tribal community of Prophetstown at the juncture of the Wabash and Tippecanoe Rivers. Prophetstown became the geographic central point of the political and military alliance that Tecumseh cultivated, and tangibly linked Tecumseh's confederation to his brother's

⁷¹ Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 48.

religious movement.⁷²

Individuals from many different tribes moved to Prophetstown to support this Indian unification and avoid white ways, as well as to gain spiritual strength. This group grew into the thousands as time passed, reaching around three thousand followers largely comprised of Algonquian-speaking tribes, and making Prophetstown a center of Indian culture and a barrier to westward expansion. Tecumseh travelled to the Six Nations in New York to spread his message and draw others to Prophetstown; however, this visit did not lead to increased membership, and support for the confederacy continued to come from the tribes of the lower Great Lakes and Ohio Valley. Due to the great increase in population, Native peoples at Prophetstown struggled because they lacked adequate arms and provisions to survive. Tecumseh sought out assistance from both the United States and British Indian departments, but they still were not able to feed all of the Indians gathering at Prophetstown and many died of starvation. The sense of desperation created by lack of food and guns as well as the growing frustration of seemingly futile efforts to fend off American advances caused support for the pan-Indian movement to ebb and flow; however, relentless land-grabbing by the United States solidified nativist sentiments of the need unity as well as an enduring loathing of whites.⁷³

The 1809 Treaty of Fort Wayne signed by William Henry Harrison as well as chiefs of the Delaware, Potawatomi, Miami, and Eel River nations resulted in the cession of 3,000,000 acres of Native land. This infuriated Tecumseh, as well as many other

⁷² Sudgen, *Tecumseh*, 4-9.

⁷³ Timothy D. Willig, "Prophetstown on the Wabash: The Native Spiritual Defense of the Old Northwest," *Michigan Historical Review* 23 (1997): 115-158, and Adam Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown: The Battle of Tippecanoe and the Holy War for the American Frontier* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 148-151.

Native peoples and ignited support for the pan-Indian movement. The negotiations surrounding the 1809 treaty were questionable in that the president did not authorize them and chiefs might have been bribed with both subsidies and liquor. At this point, Tecumseh's military and political strategy began to eclipse the Prophet's religious leadership, and Tecumseh emerged as a prominent leader and orator, speaking out against both whites and Native peoples who did not support his cause.

Increasingly Tecumseh and the nativists considered not only whites to be their adversaries but also native leaders who signed treaties and sold land to the United States government. Tecumseh advocated the abandonment and even murder of these accommodationist chiefs and pushed for the nullification of treaties that these individuals had signed either out of desperation or for their own gains. In August of 1810, Tecumseh arrived at Harrison's home in Vincennes, Indiana with four hundred armed warriors to argue this point and emphasize that Indians wanted to be treated as a collective, not as individuals who could sign away land for more personal gains. He stressed the principle of the common ownership of land and the notion that no land could be sold without the consent of all Indians. Harrison refused to nullify the treaty, argued that individual tribes had the right to sell land, and made clear that Tecumseh was not welcome by settlers or the Native peoples of the region. Tecumseh then made clear that if his demands were not met, he would seek an alliance with the British and informed Harrison that regardless of his decision concerning the treaty, he would be travelling to the south to meet with representatives of other tribes in hopes of building a larger alliance. Little did Tecumseh know that this information would lead to a huge setback for his confederacy at the Battle of Tippecanoe.

While away, Tecumseh ordered Tenskwatawa to avoid any confrontation or hostilities, especially with William Henry Harrison; however, based on his intelligence, Harrison had sent 1,000 men marching towards Tippecanoe in September of 1811. On November 6, 1811, Harrison's army arrived outside of Prophetstown, and on the morning of November 7, the confederacy, led by Tenskwatawa, 700 warriors launched an attack on Harrison's camp. After a battle of merely three hours, the Indians ran out of ammunition and fled, their faith in the Prophet shaken and Prophetstown abandoned. The Americans burned down Prophetstown and hoped that this defeat would mean the end of Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa's pan-Indian movement. While the Battle of Tippecanoe was a severe blow for Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa, Tecumseh began to work to rebuild the confederacy. Harrison believed that this victory would lead to the end of the pan-Indian alliance. Though this delayed progress and resistance, natives rebuilt Prophetstown and frontier violence continued.⁷⁴

When the War of 1812 began, Tecumseh and the confederacy threw their support behind the British in response to their hostile relationship with the United States. At the very battle at which the United States won the War of 1812, American forces killed Tecumseh. With his death, the Indian resistance of the lower Great Lakes lost support, and through various treaties, as well as victory in the War of 1812, the United States secured claims over the Ohio Country. The United States continued to push westward and settlers flooded into Ohio, displacing native peoples and eventually leading to Indian removal in the 1830s and 1840s. Tenskwatawa was one of the Indians forced west to a

⁷⁴ Harrison to Secretary of War August 26, 1805 in Esarey, 1:164. For more on Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa see Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*; R. David Edmunds, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984); Sugden, *Tecumseh*; and Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*.

Shawnee reservation in eastern Kansas where he died in 1836.

Though eventually this borderland became a Euro-American dominated space, before this happened, both Euro-Americans and native peoples had to figure out who these other people were, what their motivations were, and how they should they interact with these others.⁷⁵ There were various colonial powers and Native peoples interacting in the region throughout the late 1700s and early 1800s, which resulted in different strategies, relationships, and many misunderstandings. As each group cultivated an opinion and description of the other, they considered their experiences with these peoples, their worldviews, and their current circumstances and best interests. In both the Native and the white world and mind, this led to the categorization of different peoples with a particular emphasis on differences between them. During this process, various questions and strategic decisions regarding alliances and identity arose and intensified the ever-increasing complexity of Native-white relations in the Old Northwest.

⁷⁵ Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, viii-xv. Forward by Walter Nugent and Malcolm Rohrbough.

Chapter 2

Native and White Interactions before the 1790s

Henry Hay, son of a British Indian agent and an English-Canadian trader, spent three months living with the Miami. He described how Indians around the Miami River brought his family a roasted raccoon dinner upon their arrival and picked up the wooden plate after they had continued their travels. Le Gris, a Miami Chief, and his wife often socialized with Hay, John Kinzie, and other Indian traders. They even introduced Hay to their family, including their children and grandchildren, who gave Hay small gifts upon meeting him, initiating their own reciprocal relationships with Hay. They indulged in breakfast and evenings full of conversation and alcohol on many occasions and would exchange gifts before trading goods in order to reaffirm their friendship.⁷⁶

On one occasion in December 1789, Hay wrote about a hunt that Le Gris had gone on: “that this hunt was to bring in meat, for me, and that consequently I should be under the necessity of giving him a small two gallon keg-which I did.”⁷⁷ Hay was obligated to reciprocate with a gift because Le Gris had returned with meat for him. Later, when Hay attempted to venture into Indian country to hunt, Le Gris chastised him for not seeking aid and protection first, demonstrating the reciprocal nature of their bond. The interaction between Hay and Le Gris is an exemplar of fictive kinship: a mutual reliance on each other based on exchange and respect rather than a blood-based relationship.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Henry Hay, “A Narrative of the Life on the Old Frontier: Henry Hay’s Journal from Detroit to the Mississippi River,” M. M. Quaife, editor in *State Historical Society of Wisconsin Proceedings*, LXII (Madison, WI, 1914), 222.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 215-216, 220-231, and 241-242.

These encounters demonstrate that kinship based on gift exchange was the defining element of Native interactions with whites. By examining kin relations between Euro-Americans and Native Americans, one can better understand how Indians perceived “the other” as well as how they described themselves in relation to that other and vice versa. Changes in Native American and white language use and the experiences of Euro-American captives help illustrate a transformation of kinship practices as the development of a race concept begins to limit access of “others” to Native American kinship structures in the lower Great Lakes and Ohio Valley. Through an examination of treaty negotiations and travel logs as well as captivity narratives, details about kin relations can be identified and examined in order to gain a deeper understanding about the dynamic and complex interactions and insights of the Native peoples of the Old Northwest.

Before this change in racial distinctions, kinship had been flexible, allowing for non-Native peoples to enter a tribe and gain privileges that Native individuals bestowed only on relatives. Kinship influenced internal hierarchies and authority, impacting how Native peoples decided upon leadership positions and ascribed respect. Members considered themselves to be related, conferring kin responsibilities and possessing kin rights. These responsibilities included taking care of one’s relatives in various ways and participating in rituals, and the rights bestowed upon kin included inclusion, protection, and access to basic necessities. Kin networks facilitated complex relationships between Euro-Americans and Indians, and within this intricate framework, both strangers and enemies had the opportunity to become kin. Kinship defined all relationships that native

peoples had as well as how those relationships functioned, making it a key aspect of Native life to analyze in order to understand their relationships with others over time.

Language

Both Native and white descriptions of interactions provide insight into the complicated nature of kin relationships. Treaty negotiations served as an important site of contact where Native groups and whites defined alliances and relationships through discussions and speeches. Each group described their relationship to the other as well as the terms that they used for the other. These terms are reflective of the distinctions each group made and how they viewed the other. In the middle of the eighteenth century, many of the terms Native peoples used to identify Euro-Americans were simple descriptors; their language in both speeches and letters, relayed information about gifts, rather than highlighting terms that suggested distinction or outsider status. However, over time, both Native peoples and whites became more insistent on acknowledging the difference between themselves and the other group. This was reflected in their language.

Moments in time where whites and Native peoples interacted produced records of both groups using terms to identify and describe groups they othered. In the Old Northwest, these included treaty negotiations, councils between tribes that interpreters witnessed and speeches delivered by one group to the other, typically by Indian agents, government officials, or Native leaders. Between 1750-1780, the speeches of many Native individuals and whites referred to Euro-Americans as “Christians,” or by their typical national identification such as “French,” “British,” “Americans,” “Virginians,” or

“Long Knives.”⁷⁹ However, as time moves forward and different groups of “whites” began to invade the west with more fervor, Native individuals expressed their views in a different manner, and the racial term “white” gradually replaced these descriptors. Admittedly, Euro-American writers provide documentation of the speeches of Native leaders, making them mediated documents; however, by using multiple sources to understand this change, we can draw more meaningful conclusions regarding changes in Native racial views and practices in this time period.

In earlier documents, Native peoples used national descriptors to indicate whom they spoke about, rather than terms that explicitly indicated their skin color. In a September 1779 speech at a conference at Fort Pitt, Nonycondat Chief of the Wyandots spoke to American officials. He said:

Brother, listen to me! Brother, it grieves me to see you with the tears in yr[sic.] Eyes & I know they are occasionally by my Father the English. Brother- I wipe away all those tears & smooth down your Hair which my father the English & the folly of my young men has ruffled...Brother- As it is God who puts all our hearts right, I give thanks to God Almighty to the American Chief, to my old Father the King of France & to you Brother, that we can now talk together on Friendly terms & speak our Sentiments without interruption....Brother- I now tell you that I have forever thrown off my Father the English, I will never give him any assistance...⁸⁰

Though this speech was clearly meant to appease the Americans and assure them of the Wyandots’ intentions of peaceful relations, Nonycondat’s use of varied national descriptors indicated the Wyandot nation’s relationship with each group, rather than to

⁷⁹ Virginians and Long-Knives both refer to Americans.

⁸⁰ “Detroit Correspondence 1779,” Murray Papers, Richardson Papers, Selkirk Papers, Can Mss A. Masson Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, 409.

imply innate difference or highlight distinction.⁸¹ American Official Maghengine

Kaschuch then responded:⁸²

Brother-the chiefs of the Wyandots have lived too long with the English, to see things as they ought to do...they must have heard that the English are growing weaker & the Americans stronger & that a few flattering words would with giving up our Prisoners, secure to them their lives, the lives of their women and children & their lands...Brother- I however thank you for wiping away the Blood & burying the bones of our young men & for casting off that bad Father the King of Britain over the Great Lake. ...Brother, I will now tell you what I conceive to be right and will leave it to all the world to judge it. I think the nations you mention & wish me to receive into friendship, ought to send Hostages to me...& return whatever they have stolen from their brothers...& on every occasion join us against our Enemies.⁸³

Kaschuch continued, explaining that if these conditions were met, “they & their Posterity may live in Peace & enjoy their property without disturbance from their Brothers of this Island as long as the sun shines on the waters run.”⁸⁴ As seen in this exchange, both Native peoples and whites employed these national descriptors to identify the groups they spoke of and to clarify allegiances.

These terms were also used when interacting with those groups Native peoples considered among their kinsfolk. In a speech from the Delaware to the Wyandot, Ottawa, and Ojibwe, and Potawatomi nations in March of 1777, a Delaware leader stated:

Uncles, You have come to us again a few days ago & told us that you hoped we would take care & let you know what we hear from the Big Knife...We are now

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Though the document does not explicitly refer to him as an American Official, from the context of the folder as well as the Native speech to him as well as his response, it can be inferred that he was working with the British in some capacity regarding Indian affairs.

⁸³ “Detroit Correspondence 1779,” Murray Papers, Richardson Papers, Selkirk Papers, Can Mss A. Masson Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, 409.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

come to tell you what our Brothers the United States are doing & that we hear every thing from them that is good.⁸⁵

In both of these passages, Native leaders use words such as “cousins” or “uncles” to describe their relationships with their allies, implying that they considered the other allied Native Nations to be kin. In this quote from the Delaware leader, they refer to “our Brother the United States,” also suggesting a kin relationship, and therefore alliance, existed with this group.⁸⁶

Differing from “English” or “French,” one term that Native peoples used had a particular connotation, indicating a person who encroached on Native society and life. “Virginian” was this term, and its applications in Native language suggested either a national identity, a type of behavior, or both. Delaware leaders Captain White Eyes and John Killbuck described an incident between the Ojibwe and Americans, to George Morgan, a merchant, land speculator, and United States Indian agent during the American Revolution. The Delaware leaders reassured Morgan that relations between Native peoples and the United States would improve and that they were strong in their alliance to The United States. The leaders continued, describing how a chief of the Ojibwes had “reproved [young men in the tribe] for their folly that they had joined in taking up the Hatchet against the Virginians.”⁸⁷ Captain White Eyes and John Killbuck used this term to identify what people the Ojibwe had attacked. The Delaware leader used “Virginian” as a national descriptor in this context.

⁸⁵ Morgan, Letter book 2, 126.

⁸⁶ Miller, *Omigaag*, 12-20.

⁸⁷ Morgan, Letter book 3, 86.

Moravian missionary David Zeisberger recorded an interaction between Wyandot leaders and Delaware leaders as they discussed and established the terms of their relationship with the United States. In a November 1776 speech from the Half King of the Wyandot nation to the Delawares, the Wyandot leader stated:

Cousins, We have now very troublesome & fearful times, it looks cloudy and dark all over, I acquaint you that the back Nations spoke to me in very sharp terms & have obliged me to do what I was not very willing to do... some parties will set out to scout against the Virginians.⁸⁸

While this statement simply demonstrates the use of the term as an identifier, as the conversation continues, the meaning of the term “Virginian,” as well as its slight change in meaning, becomes clear.

Zeisberger stressed that the Wyandots still harbored suspicions and intended to send out scouts to gather more information regarding the movements of the Americans. The Wyandots inquired, “how [the Delaware] are inclined” and Delaware leader John Killbuck responded:

When you gave us this land & the Council fire was kindled here you told us to hold fast to the Chain of Peace & Friendship not to listen to any thing but Peace. Our Brother the Virginians have told us likewise we shall sit still & be quiet, though they were at war with the English we should not lay our hand to it, nor did they want us to help them but said we should leave the whole matter entirely unto them; so we have done. & so we will continue, that their Heart was the same with our Chief who desireth[sic.] nothing but Peace & of that mind we are yet.⁸⁹

Killbuck also explained how the Delaware allied with the Six Nations and Western nations in making this decision for cooperation and peace. The Wyandot leader was

⁸⁸ Morgan, Letter book 1, 20.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

pleased with this response, and Zeisberger noted that “they[the Wyandots] watch the Virginians very close.”⁹⁰

Zeisberger wrote that the Half King of the Wyandots continued to speak, expressing his reservations, contemplating the possibility that the Delawares might deceive them due to their alliance with the Americans, and explaining the consequences of this deception. Zeisberger described a hypothetical interaction between the Americans, Delaware, and Wyandots, stating:

As John Killbuck [Delaware leader] knew of an Army which was to march out against the Indians I would have them not to tell it, but they thought not proper to conceal it, as they would soon be found out that they had not been upright, & be look’d[sic.] upon as Virginians.⁹¹

In this passage, Zeisberger notes the potential for a Native person or group to be considered a “Virginian” if they had betrayed their allies by not informing them of the advance of an American army. “Virginian” labeled those that betrayed or took advantage of allies as well as those that joined Americans in these types of practices, even if they were Native peoples. The use of this term also allowed for a distinction to be made between the British and rebels during the Revolution.

In a later entry, Morgan described how the Northern and Western Native nations had a hostile relationship with the United States and detested those Native peoples who maintained amicable relations with American officials. Morgan stated:

The Northern & Western Nations of Indians will take possession of Fort Pitt & cut off all the Inhabitants of the United States....the Delwares[sic.] shall share the same fate because they are now become Virginians-that if any other Indian Nations join with the United States they shall also be cut off....That if the

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Delwares[sic.] persist in their attachment to the Virginians, they are to be treated as such by all nations.⁹²

In each of the interactions and descriptions above, Native and white authors/speakers used terms such as “Virginians,” “Big Knives,” and “English.” They distinguished between and identified groups without delineating a clear line between white/Euro-American and Indian, especially considering the flexible nature of the term “Virginian.” In various speeches before 1790, Native peoples differentiated between their British, French, and American allies, and these groups made similar distinctions in their own discourse, though the word “white” entered into Euro-American discourse earlier than it did in Native society.⁹³

Although Euro-Americans often used words similar to those of Native peoples when describing themselves, in the second half of the eighteenth century, descriptors such as “red” and “white” entered into speeches that Euro-Americans presented to Native nations in the Old Northwest. George Morgan recorded a speech from U.S. Commissioners to the Ottawas, Ojibwes, Delaware, and Mingos. In September 1776, they stated:

Brothers, We have been here above forty days a great many Miles from our Wives and Children, but tho' we are very desirous of going home, we would not remove from hence until we renew our ancient friendship with the red people.... we hope & expect you will employ your time in the good work of Peace, this will contribute much to the good of the red & white people.⁹⁴

⁹² Morgan, Letter book 3, 96.

⁹³ Murray Papers, Richardson Papers, Selkirk Papers, “No. 8 Copy of a Council held at Fort Pitt the 17th & 18th of Sept. 1779”. Can Mss A. Masson Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; “Copy of a written message delivered by a deputation of the Indians July 30th, 1793” Graff Broadside box 4/ Graff A 5086, Newberry Library.

⁹⁴ Morgan, Letter book 1, 55. Also page 59 speech to the Shawnee. Other examples of this: “Message to the Miami Indians 15 March 1791,” St. Clair's Journal, Box 1 Folder 32, Indiana Historical Society, and “Speech to the Indians,” James Wilkinson Papers, Folder 1, Newberry Library.

Additionally, in a March 1777, Morgan drafted a speech for Robin George to give to the Shawnee and Mingo nations. Morgan stated, “You are to tell them it is our desire that they sit still & not interfere in the Quarrel between the British Nation & the United States but to treat all White Men without distinction kindly wherever they see them.”⁹⁵ In the speech, the U.S Commissioners pitted “white” and “red” against each other, suggesting that the two disparate groups needed to come together to form a lasting peace. Though native peoples continued to make distinctions between groups, they adopted “white” to describe them collectively. In Morgan’s script, the U. S. Commissioners labeled both British and American people as white, collapsing ethnic descriptors for these groups. The authors of these passages employ the word “white” in different ways, but use “white” nonetheless, making a clear distinction between the group speaking and the people to whom they spoke.

While Native peoples use of terminology had varied between national descriptors and “white”, Native use of terminology began to regularize around notions of “white” and “red.” During the colonial and into the early national period, the British and the French both interacted with Native peoples in the region. Though these two powers opposed each other, Native peoples still needed means to differentiate between them. As Euro-Americans moved west into Indian Country, Native people’s lives changed and their language began to change as well. In a speech delivered on behalf of the Wyandot, Potawatomi, Delaware, Ottawa, Shawnee, Miami, Ojibwe, Mingo, and Munsee nations in July of 1793, the word “white” enters into a typical discussion of the honing and maintenance of a kin relationship. The Native speaker stated:

⁹⁵ Morgan, Letter book 1, 87.

Brothers- you say the U.S. wish to have confirmed all the lands ceded to them....and in consideration thereof, the U.S. would give such a large sum in money or goods as was never given at one time for any quantity of Indian lands, since the white people first set their feet on this island. And because these lands did every year furnish you with skins & furs with which you bought clothing & other necessities; the U.S. will now furnish the like constant supplies. And therefore, besides the great sum to be delivered at once, they will every year deliver you a large quantity of such goods as are best fitted to the wants of yourselves, your women and children...Brothers- money, to us, is of no value & to most of us unknown. And as no consideration whatever can induce us to sell the lands on which we get sustenance for our women & children; we hope we may be allowed to point out a mode by which your settlers may be easily removed & peace thereby obtained.⁹⁶

These Native groups explained that they understood the terms their “Brothers” wanted accepted in regards to possession of their land; however, they countered by describing their perspective, hoping to negotiate a peace that allowed them to maintain their relationship with their land and with their allies.

The speaker emphasized the resources the land provided and how by removing settlers, peace was possible. The speaker continued:

We only claim particular tracts in it as before mentioned & the general right granted by the King as above stated, & which is well known to the English and Americans, & called the right of pre-emption, or the right of purchasing of the Indian Nations, disposed to sell their lands, to the exclusion of all other white people whatever disposed to sell their lands, to the exclusion of all other white people whatever.⁹⁷

Here, the Native speaker demonstrated his understanding of the different groups that settled on Indian land and explained that other than the particular tracts they were willing to cede, they hoped for “the exclusion of all other white people whatever,” again describing both the English and Americans as white.

⁹⁶ Copy of a written message delivered by a deputation of the Indians July 30th, 1793” Graff Broadside box 4/ Graff A 5086, Newberry Library.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

The Delaware nation, specifically headmen John Killbuck, Captain Pipe, and Captain White Eyes, mostly used “Virginians” or “Big Knives” as descriptive terms, rather than using the word “white” as a term of distinction.⁹⁸ In contrast, the Western Nations, which included the Shawnee, the Miami, Wyandot, Ojibwe, and Ottawa among others, seem to have begun to experience a more drastic linguistic transformation. The Delaware Chief White Eyes and a cousin of headman John Killbuck described Americans as “white people” when they relayed the sentiments of these Western tribes.⁹⁹

As the French began to fade from the region due to their defeat in the French and Indian War, the English began their attempt to cultivate a relationship with Native nations in the region while dismantling Natives’ impressions of and relationship with the French. Though it is known that they did not have the success that the French did in the region, Native peoples began to relay their expectations for goods to the British, garnering some positive outcomes from interacting with them, and began to replace the term “white” with “British” as their relations improved. The selection of the word “white” in this case is not a racial choice, but one that Native peoples use to differentiate between groups based on how that group treated their tribe and as an indicator of their good behavior. This suggests that Native peoples associated “whiteness” with the group that wronged them the most. This connection became much more explicit as time moved forward in the Old Northwest.

⁹⁸ Letter to George Morgan from David Zeisberger, November 21st, 1776 in Morgan, Letter book 3, Wisconsin Historical Society, 20.

⁹⁹ “A Message from the Delaware Council to Colo: George Morgan at Fort Pitt- From Coochocking[sic.] Febr’y 26th. 1777,” and “A Speech from the Delawares”, in Morgan, Letter book 3, 68, 81-83, and 126.

Captivity

Captivity narratives provide insight into how Native peoples treated Euro-American captives brought into Native society. Captives often describe their capture, the emotions surrounding that moment, and their escape; however, in the middle of their narratives and during the more normalized part of their captivity (when it seems they have settled into their new routines), they describe their daily lives. These moments, where native peoples and captives interacted, illustrate how one perceived the other and provide insight as to how native peoples treated captives and understood their relationship with Euro-Americans. Examining differences between narratives allows for differences in captive treatment to be analyzed but also differences in relationships to be understood. These documents coupled with letters and travel logs that describe Euro-American/Native American contact as well as Indian agent reports, requests, and letter books, allow for a better understanding of interactions between these two groups in the Old Northwest.

As native nations warred indiscriminately in the Old Northwest, Native peoples took captives from both colonists and other native nations. Prior to the American Revolution, race did not serve as a relevant trait in terms of captive selection; Native peoples took sex and age into greater account preferring to abduct women and children. Throughout the colonial era and for many years before, native peoples did not consider race to be a component of their identity. Further, they did not consider other tribes or colonists to be racial groups. As these views changed, so did captive treatment. What began as a process laden with the ideals and benefits of kinship, a system that allowed for native peoples to develop the relationships and obligations to others that would

incorporate them into the community later became a permanent status defined by racial boundaries.

Captivity served both cultural and practical purposes in native society. As June Namias explains, “Capture was rarely an act of caprice. Rather, for many indigenous peoples...it was a major strategy of warfare used against all enemies, regardless of race...”¹⁰⁰ The act of taking captives allowed men within the tribe to advance themselves socially, spiritually, and economically, as well as adhere to customs related to manhood and masculinity. Warfare, along with smaller raids, allowed men to fight as well as obtain prestige goods, which included captives. After they gained these spoils of war, warriors returned to the village to display their achievements, and the women of the tribe gathered to decide how to use these captives in order to fulfill necessary ritual obligations as well as accomplish necessary tasks in their village.¹⁰¹

When tribes needed resources, they ransomed these Euro-American captives for a financial gain. When their populations dwindled or a loved one died, they adopted captives into their families. When individuals from ones’ clan or tribe had been killed, those responsible had to be tortured and killed in order to avenge the souls of the dead. Native peoples treated captives of European or African descent the same as they treated a captive of native descent, incorporating them as kin, assigning them work, ransoming them, or sacrificing them to complete a ritual. Native peoples consulted the needs of the community rather than the race of the captive when making these decisions, which

¹⁰⁰ June Namias, *White Captives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 7.

¹⁰¹ Namias, *White Captives*, 4; Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 4; and Christina Snyder, *Slavery In Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 76.

explains why they considered gender and age when taking captives and assigning them to particular roles.¹⁰² In many ways, kinship shaped captivity. When a Native family adopted a captive, they entered into the kinship structure and the tribe then welcomed them with open arms as a member while also assigning duties to their new kinsperson. The linking of kinship and captivity meant that native nations accepted new people into this cherished realm as well as into their families. This allowed them to fill emotional and economic voids created by the death of family members, whether due to sickness or murder and created growing networks of people and connections. These captives engaged in rituals that connected them as well as their native kin to the spiritual realm and provided for their families in times of need; these captives became integral parts of native life and society.

When in need of additional laborers, Native communities repurposed captives as Indian slaves. Indian slavery and racial slavery are worth distinguishing. Many native peoples did not link slavery and race during the colonial era, and, thus, an “Indian slave” was merely a captive who enriched a captor’s livelihood through their labors, but could be adopted or ransomed at any time, in contrast to Plantation style slavery, which by the time of the American Revolution had evolved into a race-based permanent state. Indian slaves had the opportunity to integrate themselves into native society via kinship through marriage and adoption. As historian Christina Snyder stated, Indian slavery was a, “mutable, transitory state without basis in phenotype.”¹⁰³ Fluidity and ambiguity characterized both Indian slavery and captivity with a broad range of kin statuses and roles that could be filled by various outsiders.

¹⁰² Snyder, *Slavery In Indian Country*, 4-11, 30-59, and 81-99.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 161.

As westward expansion persisted, more and more Native peoples began to think of whites as invaders of their lands rather than those who potentially could be accepted into their village and kinship structure. Also, as racial attitudes hardened among whites, white captives were more resistant to incorporation into the community, and Anglo-American authorities became more insistent that their captives be returned. The treatment of white and black captives illustrates this change. Racial formation and practice did not have obvious effects on captivity until the late eighteenth century. Initially, captives had the same opportunities to enter the kinship structure of native nations, regardless of their skin color.¹⁰⁴

In 1777 near the Ohio River, for example, Mingo families captured and adopted Elizabeth Hicks, a young woman from Virginia, and Peggy, a black woman who the Hicks family likely enslaved. During the adoption ceremony, a Mingo man, who she referred to as her “uncle,” placed a large wampum belt around her neck, indicating that he adopted her. This happened to others taken captive, including Peggy. The man who had placed the wampum around her neck had lost a niece, and the tribe selected Hicks to replace her; her captor renamed her “Mary” in her memory. Hicks provided no further details about Peggy’s captivity other than that a Mingo family adopted her; however, the fact that the Mingo adopted both of these women demonstrates that natives designated roles and bestowed the rights of kinship to captives regardless of race. The stories of Mary Nealy, Elizabeth Hicks, Jonathan Alder, and William Biggs highlight

¹⁰⁴ R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1996), 28-29; Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 5, 44, 82-83, and 146; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 261; and Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 43-56.

characteristics typical of the lives of earlier white captives, including those that natives adopted, and are worth delving into with more detail.¹⁰⁵

The story of Mary Nealy, taken captive in 1780 by a Shawnee people, reveals how Indians ascribed kinship as a result of labor necessity and skill. After being taken captive, Nealy had to choose between marrying a Shawnee chief or becoming the servant of the chief's eldest wife. Ultimately, she chose the role of slave. While the Shawnee did not explicitly include her in rituals or cultural traditions, her family cared for her and cherished her because of her great skill in sewing. They quarantined her and prepared medicine when she fell ill and defended her when her life was in danger. On one occasion, the men had left the village to hunt, and after they had left, a deer began to circle the encampment. The chief's wife told Nealy that she should shoot and kill it. She hesitated because the chief had informed the tribe members that the firing of a gun indicated an enemy was approaching and signaled to the men that they should return to defend their women and village. Nealy shot and killed the deer at the insistence of the chief's wife, despite her own belief that she should not disobey the chief's orders. The chief came back and raised a tomahawk over Nealy, but the chief's wife defended her actions and prevented her death.¹⁰⁶

If the chief, his wife, and the other natives considered her to be a marginalized individual not performing an essential function, she would have been killed. Nealy's integration into a family and her description of her role as an Indian slave confirms that

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth Hicks, *Elizabeth Hicks, A true Romance of the American War 1775-1783*, Abridged from her own manuscript by her daughter Fanny Bird, Completed and Edited by Her Granddaughter Louisa J. Marriott (London: William Hardwick, 1902), 41-45. The Newberry Library, Chicago, in the Ayer Collection.

¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth Ellet, *Mary Nealy* (New York: 1868), 350. The Newberry Library in the Ayer Collection, extra illustrated copy, Detached from Harper's New Monthly Magazine, v. 36, no. 213, February 1868, 349.

the Shawnee captured her for reasons of utility. Though the Shawnee considered Nealy a valued member of their tribe and cared for her, natives did not include her to the same degree as an adopted member of the tribe. However, by her own choice, she could have married in with full rights and privileges.¹⁰⁷

A Mingo war party captured Jonathan Alder in 1782 while he hunted with his brother, intending him to replace a chief's son who had passed away. He received benefits associated with the son of a chief as well as expected ritual responsibilities and labor duties. The Mingo completely accepted Alder into their lives and included him in their cultural practices and ritual traditions. While residing with his Mingo family, Alder socialized in the evenings and listened to hunting stories. Mingo children cherished their time with Alder, and his native sister treated him to various luxuries such as comfortable bedding and sumptuous breakfasts, further illustrating his kin status and cherished position in the chief's family. After leaving captivity, Alder stated "I could now lie down without fear, and rise up and shake hands with both the Indian and the white man."¹⁰⁸ Alder reflects the positive nature of his experience as a captive; a positive experience due to the benefits of kinship that the Mingo granted him as they adopted him into their society.¹⁰⁹

The Kickapoo took William Biggs, a thirty-three year old man, captive in 1788 while traveling to Cahokia, Illinois. The Kickapoo initially sent Biggs to another tribe; this exchange might have occurred in order to maintain peace between Native nations,

¹⁰⁷ Namias, *White Captives*, 17, and Ellet, *Mary Nealy*.

¹⁰⁸ Jonathan Alder, *Captivity of Jonathan Alder* (Chillicothe, Ohio: Private Press of Dave Webb, 1847). The Newberry Library in the Ayer Collection, 1-3.

¹⁰⁹ Alder, *Captivity of Jonathan Alder*, 1-3, and William Biggs, *Narrative of the captivity of William Biggs among the Kickapoo Indians in Illinois in 1788* (New York: C. F Heartmann, 1922), 7-24.

replace a member of the other village that had been killed, or encourage an alliance.¹¹⁰

While with this unspecified tribe as well as after his return to the Kickapoo, he experienced times of great pleasure. After being adopted, his Native family granted him many privileges. Biggs dined and socialized with his captors regularly. During these conversations, they even offered him consolation, assuring him that he would return to his family someday. One night, Biggs conversed with an Indian man who asked him if he was French, British, or Virginian.¹¹¹ Biggs understood what the man was asking, but chose to sarcastically answer “no” to each question. When the man asked again, he replied, “yes” to each question. Biggs then rose to his feet and spoke in each of the mentioned languages, mocking the incessant inquirer. The other Indians laughed at their fellow tribe member who had been fooled by Biggs. The fact other Indians did not punish or even mildly chastise Biggs for his flippant actions illustrates his inclusion in the tribe, as did his involvement in tribal feasts and various rituals.¹¹²

In his narrative, he stated, “they...said I was a Kickapoo,” and the experiences he had with natives during his captivity indicated that the Kickapoo and the other natives he encountered fully immersed him in their world and kinship structure.¹¹³ Each of these individuals eventually left captivity. Whether through release in the case of Alder, escape in the cases of Nealy and Hicks, and ransom in the case of Biggs, the role natives assigned to captives determined their treatment. Natives fully included some captives in

¹¹⁰ Brett Rusforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous & Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 63-64.

¹¹¹ This is an interesting use of language as well since the native speaker uses national designations in order to learn of his origin rather than categorizing him as “white.”

¹¹² Biggs, *Narrative of the captivity of William Biggs*, 10-22.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 19.

their society, ransomed some for material gain, and appreciated and cared for others due to their skills in labor. These captives typify varying differing levels of integration and degrees of belonging granted to non-natives up until about 1790 and highlight the spectrum of kinship offered to captured whites within this region.

Before the 1790s, native descriptors of themselves and others served as just that, terms used to identify groups rather than to emphasize a racial distinction between them. Additionally, natives often included captives in their kinship realm or relegated them to specific roles that resulted in economic gains for the tribe. During this time, native/white interaction relied upon reciprocity and traditional practices; however, this would change. Conflict and othering was never inevitable in the Old Northwest, but as a result of settler colonialism and violence, both of these processes transpired and changed the literal terms used by and types of interaction that occurred between natives and whites.

Chapter 3 Native and White Interactions 1790-1813

As support for pan-Indianism grew in the Old Northwest, allied groups of Native peoples became fictive kin, and because they regarded the violence against their land and people as behaviors not characteristic of kin, Native nations no longer granted the right of kinship to those they classified as whites. The racial views and practices of many Indians of the lower Great Lakes transformed between 1790 and 1813 as they began to collectively resist the actions of whites. These changes become most evident after 1790.¹¹⁴ Wyandot Chief, Sa-wagh-da-wunk, expressed his distress with whites that crossed onto Indian lands, explaining that the Wyandot, Delaware, Shawnee, Miami, Mingo, Potawatomi, Ottawa, Chippewa, and other small bands disapproved of this trespassing. Many of these individuals aligned themselves with the pan-Indian movement led by Shawnee leader Tecumseh and his brother, Tenskwatawa or the Shawnee Prophet.

Native peoples and whites experienced frequent raiding and warring in the 1780s. This likely occurred due to the breaking of kinship ties throughout the Ohio River Valley and lower Great Lakes. In 1789, as he reported the tenuous nature of relations in the west to President George Washington, Robert Johnson, Lieutenant of the County of Woodford, Kentucky, noted various murders, captures, and raids Native peoples conducted against both whites and “negroes,” both men and women. He described encounters where Native peoples killed families and destroyed entire settlements, pillaging for both goods and

¹¹⁴ Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 8 and 43, and Christina Snyder, *Slavery In Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2010), 5-6.

livestock.¹¹⁵ Indian agents and militia leaders noticed the hostility and “enthusiasm for war” among the Native nations of the Ohio River Valley and lower Great Lakes and prepared for the Indian wars that dominated the region during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As a result of these wars and land encroachment, Native individuals developed their own views that distinguished “white” and “red” and changed their actions accordingly, treating captives, militiamen, and whites in general as outsiders to their kinship realm.¹¹⁶

Language

As the American Revolution approached, the British and the Americans were the major colonial powers in the lower Great Lakes and Ohio River Valley. In their communications with the Indians of the Old Northwest, Americans used racialized

¹¹⁵ Johnson does not specify whether the “negroes” were slaves. Robert Johnson, Lt. of the County of Woodford, to the President of the United States, August 22, 1789, District of Kentucky in *American State Papers*, Indian Affairs 1: 84. There were other situations where natives killed and captured whites and blacks including: Colonel Benjamin Wilson to Governor St. Clair, October 7, 1789 in *American State Papers*, Indian Affairs 1: 85; Certificate of Robert Lemen, Jacob Steulan, and William Price, March 1790 in *American State Papers*, 2 vols, Indian Affairs 1: 89; and Hay, 247-248. For a description of villages in Kentucky that natives destroyed between 1787-1791 see Dorothy Burne Goebel, *William Henry Harrison: A Political Biography* (Indianapolis: Historical Bureau of the Indiana Library and Historical Department, 1926), 20-24. See an additional example of frontier violence in John Hardwusky to Isaac Shelby May 5, 1795 in Isaac Shelby Papers Folder 3, Filson Historical Society.

¹¹⁶ Thomas J. Dalton, “Piankashaw Council.” in Gilbert Imlay, *A topographical description of the western territory of North America; containing a succinct account of its soil, climate, natural history, population, agriculture, manners & customs* (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1969), 359-360; July 30; “In Council at Captain Elliot’s, near the mouth of the Detroit River” in *American State Papers*, Indian Affairs, 1: 325-356; Goebel, *William Henry Harrison*, 20-35, Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 3-4; Snyder, *Slavery In Indian Country*, 44, 55-56, 161-162, and 180-181; Description of Joseph Barnett, taken before Michael Campbell, June 8, 1790 in *American State Papers*, Indian Affairs, 1: 90-92; Charles Jouett to the Secretary of War, August 22, 1807 in Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States*. 26 vols. (Washington, D.C, 1939), 7: 427; Letter from General Rufus Putnam to the Secretary of War, July 5, 22, and 26 1792 in *American State Papers*, Indian Affairs, 1: 238; and “The Fort-Wayne Manuscript,” box 197, Indian Documents, 1811- 1812, Chicago History Museum. According to William Heath, “Although the [“Fort Wayne Manuscript”] was printed without attribution to an author, an advertisement in the back of the volume suggested that the piece was written by early nineteenth-century Indian agent William Wells.” William Heath, “Re-evaluating the ‘Fort Wayne Manuscript:’ William Wells and the Manners and Customs of the Miami Nation,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 106 (2010): 158-188.

language that identified themselves as “white,” and often Indians as “red.” Secretary of War Henry Knox 1791 delivered a speech from President George Washington to the Miamis, he stated, “The white men and the red men inhabit the same country, and ought to be good friends.”¹¹⁷

American officers even integrated Native beliefs into their speeches. In 1791, Arthur St. Clair, Governor of the Old Northwest Territory, described what would happen if Indians resisted peace:

If they will not listen to him their blood be upon their own heads—the United States will be justified before the Great Spirit who loves all his children red as well as white, and to all the world, in bringing that destruction upon them which they have merited long ago.¹¹⁸

Referencing Native religious beliefs surrounding the Great Spirit, St. Clair attempts to explain the spiritual implications of defying the United States, employing the Native American belief that if the Great Spirit was not satisfied, there would not be order in the spiritual or temporal world. Due to the intimate connection between the spiritual and physical world, the destruction St. Clair suggests could have been a possible consideration in the Native decisions process. Though they attempted to adapt their speeches to fit Native American worldviews, American government officials and military leaders made sure to distinguish between red and white.

Whites began to collapse racial categories, describing Americans and British individuals as “white,” though the French maintained their national identity, being addressed as “Canadian” or “French”. While describing the aftermath of an attack at the Miami Rapids in 1794, General Anthony Wayne stated:

¹¹⁷ “Message from the Secretary of War,” St. Clair's Journal, Box 1 Folder 32, Indiana Historical Society.

¹¹⁸ Arthur St. Clair, St. Clair's Journal/ Governor St. Clair's Message, Indiana Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 32.

the savages being driven at the point of the bayonet near three miles in the course of one hour thru' a thick brushy wood, when they abandoned themselves to flight, leaving the ground strewn with their dead bodies intermixed with Canadians & other white men painted & dressed like savages.¹¹⁹

Within this dichotomy, white peoples began to identify all Native peoples as being “red” and the British and Americans as “white,” further engraining these terms’ use in diplomatic discourse.¹²⁰ At an Indian Council in 1799, Henry Burbeck, a US army officer, stated:

As peace was agreed to...between you and the white people and the hatchet buried all further disputes are at an end with white people, your friends....you the chiefs ought to instruct your young men and particular your young boys...that after a peace is made with the whites that no further revenge is sought.¹²¹

Burbeck emphasized the distinction between Native peoples and whites and his recurrent use of the term helped to solidify its use in Native society. As a result, Native leaders began to use this term more frequently to describe Americans.

Within these speeches, the word “white” largely replaced and was synonymous with “American,” due to their commanding presence in the Old Northwest. In an 1806 speech by Shawnee leaders including Blue Jacket and Tecumseh published in the Virginia Argus newspaper, the leaders stated:

Governor- We have been distressed that some of both the white people and Indians have, since the last fall, been constantly stirring up mischief and reporting that we were preparing for war. It appers[sic.] that [American officials] have been endeavouring[sic.] to excite a way by inventing and spreading malicious lies...They could come and tell the Indians that the white people were preparing to come and destroy all the Indians, and then they would go and tell the white people that the Indians were assembling in bodies and were preparing to make war upon them, and thus they tried to keep both sides in an uproar, and it seems

¹¹⁹ Letter from Anthony Wayne dated September 9, 1794, M 367 Northwest Territory, Typed copies and historical information, 1792-1794 Box 2 folder 3, Indiana Historical Society.

¹²⁰ “Speech to the Indians,” James Wilkinson Papers, Folder 1, Newberry Library, Chicago.

¹²¹ Henry Burbeck, Speeches [manuscript] 1797-1799, Newberry Library, Chicago.

that their malicious conduct and lies have extended all the way to Detroit and caused an alarm there.¹²²

While the leaders did not use “red” in opposition to “white”, they did collapse all tribal distinctions into the single category of “Indians.” Blue Jacket and Tecumseh chastised American officials for causing trouble between Americans and Indians and mainly used “white” in this description. This indicates the clear establishment and acceptable use of the term “white” to describe Americans as well as Native peoples’ use of the term as a purposeful distinction from “red.”

At a council held between the Choctaw and Shawnee leader, Tecumseh in 1811, Tecumseh gave a speech describing the views of the Western Indians in hopes of expanding his pan-Indian alliance to the south. As transcribed by H. S. Halbert, he stated:

The white race was a wicked race and the red men ought never to consent to live at peace with them. Since that day, when the white race first crossed the great waters, they had never ceased to inflict wrongs upon the red men. The hunting grounds of the red men were fast disappearing under their encroachments. Year after year, they were driving the Red Men father and farther to the west. Of all the tribes, none had a more beautiful country than the Choctaws, the fame of which was known far and near. Would they be willing for this country, the gift of the Great Spirit, to become the possession of the pale face? Yet such would be the result if the power of the pale face was not forever crushed. The Shawnees once owned domains far to the east. But the pale face came and drove them across the Ohio. Now again the pale face coveted their new hunting grounds. Would their[sic.] be no limit to their encroachments? The mere presince[sic.] of the white man was a source of evil to the red man. His whiskey was destroying the bravery of their warriors and his lust corrupting the virtue of their women. The only hope for the red men was in a war of extermination against the paleface.¹²³

While he could have simply explained that the Indians had rights to the land and that tribes had lost ground to the Americans, Tecumseh took the opportunity to establish the

¹²² “Tecumseh & Shawnee- Aug. 1806 From Va. Argus Sept. 6th, 1806” in Lyman C. Draper Manuscript Collection: Tecumseh Papers, Mss YY, vol. 4, Wisconsin Historical Society, 60.

¹²³ H. S. Halbert, Crawfordville, Council Between Tecumseh and Pushmataha (Choctaw leader), in Lyman C. Draper Manuscript Collection: Tecumseh Papers, Mss YY, vol. 4, Wisconsin Historical Society, 75.

distance between red and white, a division that had been solidified throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Though Native peoples created bonds with each other that transcended typical notions of kinship, this did not prevent them from building strategic relationships with whites. Individuals maintained relationships with those that treated them well or offered them some advantage. This is apparent in their language and interactions with each other. Native peoples crafted and strategically invoked racialized thought as relationships with colonial powers transformed. To put it simply, as an Indian man said to George Coffinburg, an Ohio frontiersman, in 1809, “The white man has abuse my people, he has killed my warriors, but there are some good white men. I like good white men.”¹²⁴ Throughout this time period, some settlers still treated Native peoples as they did in the past, allowing them to stay in their homes and providing them with food and trade goods as available, and some Native nations maintained strong and peaceful relationships with colonial powers. Rather than being a sweeping and immediate change in social assumptions and categorization of those defined as “others”, racialization occurred as relationships soured between Native peoples and those they then deemed “whites.” Those that mistreated Native peoples did not have opportunities for kinship. This links the loss of kinship to the othering of individuals, a process that Native peoples adapted from the very people that they excluded.

However, for whites that Native nations had already built kin relations with or who would aid in their political or economic advancement, mutually beneficial

¹²⁴ Lyman C. Draper Manuscript Collection, Tecumseh Papers, Mss YY 5YY, 33-35. Wisconsin Historical Society.

interactions, especially, in the realm of trade remained possible. In a speech by Blue Jacket, Tecumseh, and another Shawnee chief in 1806, these Native leaders express how they wanted to renew the relationship between the Native peoples and the whites (in this case Americans). They stated:

When we are settled at our new town at Greenville, if bad reports come either from bad Indians, or bad white people (for there is some bad ones on both sides) we will pay no attention to them any more but we will mind our own affairs and live quietly—We now call you brother, and we assure you we now talk to you in good truth and that we will never as long as the Shawneys[sic.] live, be other than brothers and friends we desire that you will let all your white people on the frontiers know, that we have been to renew our friendship with you, and that you will give us a few lines to shew[sic.] both our people& yours when we go home, that we have been to see you, and that peace and friendship are renewed, to be broke again no more forever.¹²⁵

The distinction between “good” and “bad” whites and Native individuals became meaningful as both groups clarified and solidified differences between each other but also needed to rely on each other on the frontier.

Due to the nature of these relationships, when native peoples spoke of these “good whites” or “bad whites”, they often referred to them by simple descriptors, rather than by terms that racialized or purposefully distinguished them from the Native speaker. A faction of the Delaware nation that included Chief White Eyes, Captain Pipe, and John Killbuck avoided the use of the term “white” when describing their own relations with Americans. This is evident in their letters and speeches as well as their sentiments as recorded by whites, including Moravian missionary David Zeisberger. In one letter to George Morgan, Zeisberger described how Indians of the Western tribes had killed “whites” and the fears of the Delaware that the “Virginians will be defeated if they don’t

¹²⁵ “Tecumseh & Shawnee- Aug. 1806 From Va. Argus Sept. 6th, 1806,” in Lyman C. Draper Manuscript Collection, Tecumseh Papers, Mss YY 3YY, 60.

come with a sufficient force” against the Western Indians.¹²⁶ Zeisberger used different terms depending on whose sentiments he expressed.

This is similar to how Delaware Native speakers made the distinction when describing the hostile outlook of the Western Tribes versus their own, more sympathetic views. Delaware leaders identified “bad” whites as well as good whites, allowing their actions to dictate the bounds of their increasingly racialized relationship. Their use of language could be explained by a desire to have Euro-Americans understand them or not feel alienated from them as they attempted to construct (ideally) mutually beneficial and reliable relationships.

Overall, these examples differ greatly from earlier statements in their use of the term “white.” “Whites” used this term to identify themselves to Native nations. Euro-American speech began to change a bit earlier, and Native patterns of speech and identification followed, both with larger implications for the identities, organization, and survival of each group. Captivity narratives of the time reflected both changes in language and treatment of white individuals that entered into Native society. Charles Johnson, taken captive in 1790 by the Shawnee, stated:

It is their practice, on such occasions, to repeat the injuries which have been inflicted on them by their enemies the whites; their lands taken from them—their villages burnt—their cornfields laid waste—their fathers and brothers killed—their women and children carried into captivity.”¹²⁷

A discussion of the experiences of captives compliments a discussion of Native language in understanding this change in categorization practices in Indian country.

¹²⁶ Morgan, Letter book 3, 20.

¹²⁷ Charles Johnston, *A Narrative of the Incidents Attending the Capture, Detention, and Ransom of Charles Johnston* (New York: J & J Harper, 1827), 51. The Newberry Library, Chicago, in the Ayer Collection.

Captivity

As the nineteenth century approached and Euro-American presence increased in Indian country, Native peoples increased their use of torture and enslavement for white captives and deemed integration into families unacceptable for those without kinship rights. Torture, enslavement, and death often replaced adoption and the role of Indian slave in native society. However, remnants of captivity based on the ability to become kin remained.¹²⁸ The story of Charles Johnston helps locate a transition point in the change that captivity underwent between 1778 and 1813.

A member of the Shawnee nation captured twenty-year old Charles Johnston in 1790 as he travelled on the Ohio River, heading west to collect depositions for a Virginian law firm. Moments of necessity and care as well as belittlement and abuse can be seen in this narrative, highlighting the shifting nature of this native practice.¹²⁹ The adoption of Charles Johnston into native society emphasizes the necessity of his capture. A Shawnee man, Meeshawka adopted Johnston, ensured his safety and fed him. However, Johnston referred to this man as his “master,” showing the insertion of the language of slavery into narratives as the nineteenth century approached.¹³⁰ Johnston described the caring nature of his master, despite this title. One evening, another man took custody of Johnston and bound him very tightly because he complained of discomfort. Meeshawka arrived and alleviated the pain, chastising the others for hurting Johnston. Despite their adopted place, the Shawnee did not comment on Johnston’s kin

¹²⁸ Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 55, 103.

¹²⁹ Johnston, *A Narrative of the Incidents*, 7-8.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 41-42.

status as they had for earlier captives, nor did they treat Johnston as kin as other experiences in their captivity demonstrate.¹³¹

The insertion of the language of slavery into Johnston's narrative suggests a shift in native racial practice, and his treatment further corroborates this transition, emphasizing the change in the sentiment of Indians towards "others." The Shawnee assigned Johnston tasks normally relegated to women, such as cooking, and forced him to partake in physically and mentally taxing activities for the betterment and entertainment of the tribe. They made him travel with an unruly cow and often commanded him to carry loads that they normally used horses to transport. The Shawnee also isolated Johnston during tribal activities. He described how the natives "necessarily subjected [him]... to frequent and severe suffering," including not being treated for injuries and being forced to jump over a roaring fire in order to amuse his captors. The strenuous labor demands and endless mocking that the Shawnee forced on Charles Johnston demonstrate the changes in captive experiences. Regardless of his adopted status, the Shawnee did not treat Charles Johnston as kin.¹³²

The roles assigned to Johnston by the Shawnee was often not clear, showing the beginnings, but not yet the completion, of this shift in racial thought. Through the words of Charles Johnston, an indication of a shift to slavery becomes clear. He states, "I further understood that there are a number of Americans who have been made prisoners by the Indians, ...languishing under slavery and all its bitter appendages."¹³³ As Johnston indicated, Native peoples began to treat white captives as if they had no kin status.. The

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., 34 and 55-59.

¹³³ *American State Papers*, 2, Indian Affairs 1: 87-91.

reality of this assertion becomes clear in the narratives of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, as nativism reached its zenith.¹³⁴

Matthew Bunn's time with the Miami in Ohio further illustrates this change in captive treatment; his experiences differed greatly from those that natives accepted and adopted into their society. In 1791, a Miami hunting party captured a nineteen-year-old soldier, Matthew Bunn. The Miami did not treat him as a human: they deprived him of food, water, shelter, and other basic necessities. While the men hunted, Bunn's master's wife controlled him and his food intake, and when he gathered his own food to try to obtain some sustenance, his mistress took it away from him. Despite his own efforts, his status as a slave allowed for consistent deprivation from basic human needs without consequence.

Throughout his time in captivity, children belittled Bunn, highlighting his lower status and his role as a marginalized slave in the Miami village. When he arrived in the village, he met an Indian chief who introduced him to a young boy, giving this child complete control to use Bunn as he pleased. He stated that he "had more of a dog's life than that of a Christian," and, ironically, he often watched meat that he intended to consume being tossed to the dogs.¹³⁵ Bunn's treatment by children is a prime exemplar of his lack of kinship rights within the Miami tribe. Due to his treatment, Bunn decided to escape, and on his second attempt, he regained his freedom. Bunn's place as an "other"

¹³⁴ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 391.

¹³⁵ Matthew Bunn, *A Journal of the Adventures of Matthew Bunn* (Providence, 1795), 10. The Newberry Library, Chicago, in the Ayer Collection.

suggests that natives had begun to exclude whites from their kinship structure as their racial practice changed in the late eighteenth century.¹³⁶

Henry Bird's narrative also speaks to this change in captive treatment. Rather than being taken by complete strangers, Bird was captured by Indians that he knew from interactions in his new home in the Sandusky region of Ohio. Big Captain, a Shawnee Chief, had spent the night in Bird's home on multiple occasions. In 1811, a Shawnee band led by Big Captain, killed Bird's entire family, as well as a few other families that he lived with at the time. After the attack, the Shawnee left assuming they had killed everyone present. When they returned to the site of the attack to loot the homes, they were surprised to find that Bird had survived, though barely due to an agonizing leg injury. Upon finding him, the warriors wanted to kill him; however, at that moment, Big Captain stepped in and protected Bird. Though the Shawnee spared his life, natives still treated Bird like an outsider to their people. Bird became a slave, and Big Captain became his master.¹³⁷

As soon as Bird could hobble around on crutches, Big Captain expected him to fetch him water and complete other tasks. While out getting water, he met some American women who described themselves as "slaves to the Shawanese." Members of the Shawnee tribe, who heard Bird and the women talking, assumed that they were plotting an escape, and the tribe interrogated each of the individuals involved. When Bird did not divulge a getaway plan, Big Captain ordered that his thumbnails be twisted off. Once Bird regained full mobility, he began to quietly ponder and plan his escape.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 3-24.

¹³⁷ Henry Bird, *Narrative of Henry Bird* (Ann Arbor, MI: William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, 1971), 3-4. The Newberry Library, Chicago, in the Ayer Collection.

Throughout Bird's captivity, Big Captain harbored suspicions of his intentions to run away and pestered him for confirmation that he wanted to stay. His badgering compelled Bird to lie and exhibit his excitement about being "the slave of such a great warrior" and how it was better than living in his old home "among the white men."¹³⁸

Soon after the interrogations surrounding the alleged escape plan, Bird escaped, and Big Captain sent out three hundred warriors to find him. The warriors succeeded in re-capturing him, and the Shawnee decided that he would be burned for his transgressions. As approximately three hundred native spectators gathered around Bird, Shawnee men tied him to the stake and branded him at regular intervals. As the war dance began and the Indians chanted "expressions for contempt for white men", Bird believed his life would end. However, a Scottish trader, Randall M'Donald offered a gallon of rum for the life of Henry Bird. He recovered for a time at M'Donald's home, and then, with M'Donald's help, he returned to his extended family.¹³⁹ This sentiment and their blatant disdain for these captives because they considered them to be "others" illustrate the completion of this native racial project. Native peoples modified their racial practice to respond to the loss of land and livelihood that they attributed to these outsiders, ostracizing any non-natives from their esteemed kin connections.

Native exclusion of captives from cultural traditions and ritual practices further emphasizes the shift from captivity to necessity to slavery. After he decided to run away from a celebration on July 4, 1792, a Shawnee war party captured the young Oliver Spencer. The Shawnee did not include him in their rituals or activities, isolating him as an outsider. Spencer described their "cruel treatment and...their continued inhumanity,"

¹³⁸ Ibid., 3-5.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 6-7.

crying to himself as he suffered from dysentery.¹⁴⁰ Later in Spencer's captivity, he became the "property" of a Maumee Indian. He observed their rituals and sports, noting their description of the anger of the Great Spirit with the "palefaces."¹⁴¹ Like Spencer, neither Bird nor Bunn indicate anywhere in their narratives that they participated in traditions or ritual practices,, indicating how far natives removed these individuals from actual tribal life. Having no role in the tribe other than "other," non-native captives had no place in the clan system or kinship realm. They had no role and thereby no rights. Slavery had shifted from a temporary state from which one could transition to tribal membership to a permanent state.

As a result of the shift in native racial practice, captive treatment changed, illustrating the culmination of this native racial project and the labeling of these captives as marginalized "others." This becomes clear through the absence of adopted captives in narratives dating after 1790 from the lower Great Lakes and Ohio Valley. This shows the loss of the potential for kin status for Euro-American or African captives as nativism grew. Through his experience with the Miami nation, Indian Agent William Wells observed that by 1811, a close male or female friend of the deceased Indian would assume the vacant role, not considering white or black captives as acceptable individuals to be incorporated into native life.¹⁴²

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Indians belittled white captives and treated them as outsiders and people with no kinship status and embraced a

¹⁴⁰ Oliver Spencer, *The Indian Captivity of O. M. Spencer*, ed. M. M Qualfe (Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1917), 67-68.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 103.

¹⁴² "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript," box 197, Indian Documents, 1811- 1812, Chicago History Museum.

collective identity as a red people.¹⁴³ As they began to focus on white Americans as their common enemy, native peoples largely ceased taking one another captive. Clans rejected white women and children as potential family members and sought ransom for them instead. As captive taking became a largely economic pursuit, African Americans of both sexes and all ages became the prime targets.¹⁴⁴

Captivity and slavery began to become similar states as racial thought solidified in native society. In his seminal work, Orlando Patterson introduced the concept of “social death” as a devastating component of the institution of slavery. He explained the powerlessness of a slave and how slavery served as an alternative to death. Patterson describes the role of the slave master as a ransomer; he states:

What he bought or acquired was the slave’s life and restraints on the master’s capacity wantonly to destroy his slave did not undermine his claim on that life. Because that slave had no socially recognized existence outside of his masters; he became a social nonperson.¹⁴⁵

A part of this status as a “social nonperson” included natal alienation or becoming a “genealogical isolate” and “ceas[ing] to belong...to any legitimate social order.”¹⁴⁶ As Patterson describes:

Slaves differed from other human beings in that they were not allowed freely to integrate the experience of their ancestors into their lives, to inform their understanding of social reality with the inherited meanings of their natural forbears, or to anchor the living present in any conscious community of memory.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ “The Fort Wayne Manuscript,” and Bunn, *A Journal of the Adventures*, 8-9.

¹⁴⁴ Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 180-181.

¹⁴⁵ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 5.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

Captives experienced this “social death” as natives disconnected them from their communities and committed acts of violence to ensure their submission, facilitating a master-slave relationship through force. Patterson notes, “What was universal in the master-slave relationship was the strong sense of honor the experience of mastership generated, and conversely, the dishonoring of the slave condition....a person without honor and that there simply is nothing that can be done about it.”¹⁴⁸ As slavery progressed, a “we-they” dichotomy formed around the impossibility of these blacks being a part of “the same community of Christian, civilized Europeans,” and, similarly, this dichotomy formed between natives and whites in the lower Great Lakes, with captives losing the possibility to become a part of the tribe and destined to be considered and treated as outsiders.¹⁴⁹

Connecting Kinship, White Racial Development, and Native Racial Thought

Many breaches of trust between Native peoples and whites encouraged Indians to change their views and practices. These breaches included many acts of violence and colonialism, which plagued this region throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Americans also began to establish trading houses throughout the Old Northwest, and settlers moved into the region seeking land and prosperity. Many settlers took matters into their own hands, attacking Indian villages or travelling parties in order to eliminate Native peoples from *their* frontier. The fact that Native groups reacted hostilely and displayed greater unity against whites is not surprising. In the Old Northwest, this led to the resurgence of pan-Indianism, or the joining of many tribes,

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 11-12.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 7.

regardless of affiliation, due to a common interest or against a common foe. Changes in Native racial thought are directly related to the alteration of Native hierarchy, suggesting that Native peoples cultivated a more complex distinction between individuals 1778-1813.

This change in Native thought cannot be attributed solely to the consequences of colonization and widespread ignorance of Native culture; rather, a change in and adoption of racial views serves as a more accurate descriptor of the transformation that occurred in the Old Northwest. In order to understand the adoption and adaptation of white racial views in Native society, one needs to understand the origins and components of those racial views. Native peoples not only altered their racial practice due to American expansion by itself, but likely also as of *white* encroachment in every aspect of their lives, including their thoughts on race. As ideas of “whiteness” crystallized in the white world, Native individuals better understood white racial views, which gave them a model they could adapt as their own, and alter their treatment of whites.

The word “race” or its equivalent appears in the languages of all European settlers. It was used to refer to a “race” of animals, or animals with common origins or features, when describing the breeding of a certain line or stock. The distinction gradually became used for humans (when?), but aristocrats mostly used the term to describe the purity of their family’s lineage or bloodline, or the seeds of the family tree. In the sixteenth century, the Spanish used the word “race” (*raza*) to distinguish themselves from the indigenous peoples of the Americas and to group these “barbaric” people together, and the English likely adopted the use of the term to describe groups of people at this time as well. In the seventeenth century, “race” came to be employed by the English as a

technical term for a human group with similar inherited traits and temperaments. These beginnings of differentiation and categorization instigated early modern notions of color segregation, a precursor to what is now identified as racial thought.

By the latter half of the eighteenth century, race became a major mode of differentiation, largely applied to non-European groups or European groups that were considered to have never developed the qualities of a “civil” society. This is seen in the distinctions made between the Irish and the English as well as the Spanish and the indigenous peoples of the New World. As the English and other Europeans moved to the North American colonies, these views developed into a complicated and distinct worldview that assumed the existence of highly rigid and exclusive racial groups, and advocated the exclusion, isolation, and abuse of those that were not of their own “race.”¹⁵⁰

Plantation slavery and black slaves held in bondage provided another strong motivation for whites to define themselves in opposition to racially, and assumedly biologically, different individuals throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of these easterners moved west and with them moved the racial terminology and hierarchical practices that had evolved as the white world collided with both the “red” world and the “black” world of slavery.¹⁵¹ As Americans and British individuals began to refer to themselves as white and their colonialism began to dramatically impact Indigenous societies, “white” took on a negative connotation to many Native peoples,

¹⁵⁰ Audrey Smedley and Brian D. Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* (Philadelphia: Westview Press: 2012), 35-39, and Carl H. Nightingale, *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 72-73.

¹⁵¹ Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 125-140.

who then replaced their previous descriptors of “whites” for one that described both the color of the skin as well as the content of their character.

The emergence of the idea of race in North Atlantic society arose from a complex system of distinction that considered a variety of human differences. Racial thinking initially emerged from the dichotomy of civilized versus uncivilized, and stemmed from English and Spanish encounters with the Irish and indigenous peoples of the New World respectively, as well as changes in the structure of European societies. The rise of capitalism altered English perceptions of property ownership, increasing the importance of material property and linking the level of any civilization with the amount of property it held.¹⁵² The increasing importance of individual property rights affected how the English interacted with non-English and non-European groups; property became more important than the rights of indigenous peoples, slaves, and others who did not uphold English standards of civilization.¹⁵³

One result of this change in views of property was the development of English ideas of difference regarding the Irish. English/Irish relations began in the twelfth century when the English began travelling into Ireland. When Henry II took control of the English Crown, he sought to conquer Ireland in order to gain control of Irish land. England gained control over the island until the 1300s, when the Irish gained back most of their country through a series of battles. This was only the beginning of a fraught relationship between the two nations.

¹⁵² Land ownership and material property had long been an indicator of rank in European societies; however, the rise of capitalism revitalized these sentiments and made possession and perceptions of property even more important.

¹⁵³ Smedley and Smedley, *Race in North America*, 52.

After the Irish regained control of most of their country, England attempted to regain control over the Emerald Isle. They implemented procedures to transfer Irish land to English settlers in order to drive Irish people out. From the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries, these sentiments continued to intensify, the Irish continued to revolt, and the English codified their hostility and abhorrence towards the Irish into law. The Statutes of Kilkenny (1367) defined Irish society as “the erosion of civilized culture” and forbade Englishmen to dress, speak, or marry with the “wild Irish.” After England became Protestant in the sixteenth century, English hostility was expressed in religious as well as ethnic terms. Laws put in place in the late 1600s decreased the abilities of Catholic individuals to hold property, gain access to education, or own weapons.¹⁵⁴ These laws emphasized English ethnocentrism and underscored the dichotomy between civilized and uncivilized that became central to English (and later British) worldviews as they continued to strive for gains in wealth and property and would eventually evolve into ideas of racial difference.

The sociopolitical experiences of Europeans drastically affected their views of other peoples as well as how they identified themselves, and encouraged the development of the official category of “white,” which emerged in the late 1660s. In the early 1600s, Spanish and Portuguese officials occasionally used the word “white” but typically identified themselves as “Christian” or used a national identification to describe themselves in official settings. Other Europeans used these terms as well, and prescribed to a spectrum of categories where “negro” was considered the lowest and European national designations remained at the top. The use of “white” as a political category likely began in the sugar colonies of the British West Indies. This trend is seen in

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 53-54.

censuses from 1661 that universally used “white” and “black” as designations as well as slave laws that prohibited misogyny.¹⁵⁵

By 1700, “white” became an official category that Europeans used widely, especially in their colonies. Historian Carl Nightingale suggests that this happened as a result of political conflicts in Europe regarding class, religion, and nation, and occurred in response to the codification and formalization of slavery in Britain’s North American colonies. This was also encouraged by the conversion of Africans to Christianity, which made “Christian” a designation that could be used for Europeans and Africans. The adoption of “white” as a term for those who were free created a political consensus between Europeans of different classes and beliefs. As slavery became central to the imperial project of Britain, “white” became a necessary term of distinction and one that allowed for a more simple and clear divide between those that were enslaved and those that were not.¹⁵⁶

As these categories developed, the Irish continued to resist English encroachment and attacks on their culture and livelihood. The English believed that the Irish “capacity for civilization [was] stunted” and considered them to be heathens due to their Catholic beliefs. The English increasingly viewed the Irish as less than human.¹⁵⁷ As these views intensified among the English, they began to receive reports about groups of indigenous peoples from the Spanish and the Portuguese. The Spanish and Portuguese described these foreign peoples as “barbarous,” “uncivilized,” and fit for perpetual servitude. In the English mind, these opinions were reminiscent of their own views towards the ever-

¹⁵⁵ Nightingale, *Segregation*, 67-71

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Smedley and Smedley, *Race in North America*, 57-58.

barbaric “wild” Irish, and their views of the Irish and New World peoples began to coalesce.¹⁵⁸ This led to the creation and defining of the category of “savage,” which fostered the conditions for the emergence of race in white society.

Europeans used “savage” as an ethnocentric term to describe those they identified as uncivilized and not Christian, and the existence of this category supported Europeans’ sense of their own superior identity. The fact that many Europeans deemed groups of people to be “too savage to even undergo redemption or conversion” encouraged the perpetuation of this dichotomy and the exploitation of those deemed “savage.”¹⁵⁹

Smedley and Smedley describe the British conception of “savage” in this way:

[A] savage was first of all a “heathen,” a godless and immoral creature, “wicked, barbarous, and uncivil.” He was lazy, filthy, evil, and superstitious; he worshipped idols and was given to lying, stealing murdering, double-dealing, and committing treachery. His nomadic tendencies and presumed lack of social order and laws were the antithesis of the habits of civilized men, who were sedentary and bound not only to the land but to other men by laws. The savage was a cannibal whose lust and licentiousness never yielded to the structures of self-control, of which he was totally lacking.¹⁶⁰

The category of “savage” included many groups, including indigenous peoples in the New World, the Irish, and other groups placed in this category because of perceptions of their ways of life, religious beliefs, or other factors. “Savage” was opposite of English behaviors, laws, and values.

The notion of “savage” was carried over to the New World with European colonists, and used to their advantage. This idea would be manipulated there as well, especially as the idea developed that the only way to control and civilize savages was to

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 59.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 80-90.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 60-61.

enslave them. “Savage” would be part of the methods of differentiation, marginalization, and exploitation used by colonial powers, and play a part in developing notions of “race” in the colonization of North America.¹⁶¹

When English people travelled to North America, ideas surrounding notions of savagery versus civilization came with them. These ideas were:

further strengthened, fertilized, and given vastly expanded meaning in the context of English interaction with the Native peoples of North America. It was no longer a question of just the one group of savages, the “wild Irish”; now there was emerging in English minds a generic, even more monolithic category of savages made up of many groups.¹⁶²

The existence of this category allowed individuals to consider themselves as higher due to their place within the superior group of the “civilized”, and to view indigenous peoples and black slaves as lower status.

In the North American colonies, the idea of ranking peoples according to English cultural standards of civilization and Christianity began to blend with a categorization based on skin color and other bodily differences into a notion of “race.” Though there were different stages in this process, rudimentary elements of racial thinking begin to emerge in the American experience in the late seventeenth century, and provided a justification for exploitation.¹⁶³

As colonists became more restless, eager to push westward and expand their nation and their opportunities, they carried with them the idea that those below them could justifiably be exploited. As they moved into what was later called the Old Northwest in the eighteenth century, English settlers marginalized and categorized others

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 60-70.

¹⁶² Ibid., 90.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 73.

based on class and religion in order to gain social mobility as well as land and wealth. But race began to surpass all other modes of categorization. European settlers increasingly grouped indigenous people and Africans into a group they considered to be different and inferior, and grouped themselves into “the white people.” This would soon become a part of public discourse. European settlers and their descendants began to use the word “white” to identify themselves in discussions that dealt with or involved Native peoples. They did this in order to clearly make a distinction between these two groups.¹⁶⁴

As historian Peter Silver states:

The idea of “the white people” may have helped some people to feel greater sympathetic identification with other Europeans...and drove up negative feelings toward all Indians. This, to be sure, has the shape of a quintessential American paradox: increased toleration for one group can nearly always be found tangled together with increased intolerance towards another.¹⁶⁵

This division did not include clear connections between physical characteristics/biology and inferiority, and no causal link existed between features and cultural behaviors, but this was the beginning of the comprehensive ideology known as race. As Audrey Smedley and Brian D. Smedley explain, race would have the “capacity to inform all understandings...about the nature of human groups everywhere...it obscured all possible perceptions of similarities among groups...by the early nineteenth century, racial determinism was a dominant ideology; it had become the central key to the interpretation and explanation of all human achievements and failures.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 114-117.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

¹⁶⁶ Nancy Shoemaker, “How Indians Got to Be Red,” *American Historical Review* 102 (1997): 625, and Smedley and Smedley, *Race in North America*, 80-90, 161-4, and 171-173. Quote from 171-173.

Racial thought became a tool that Euro-Americans used to their advantage. Euro-Americans began to rank groups according to their cultural standards, and, as a result, divisions between groups became greater and were integrated into a set of beliefs that would provide the necessary land and labor to increase the wealth and power of those who were deemed worthy according to the creed of progress and civilization. When whites needed assistance from Native peoples, whites described Native peoples as primitive but helpful; however, when whites wanted to erect permanent settlements to expand their budding empire, Indians became savages. Questions about slavery also began to emerge in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century that fostered the acceptance of the perceived natural inferiority of the black slave as well as the “red” Indian, influencing social thought in North America and Europe, and solidifying existing presuppositions about human difference into a nascent racial worldview.¹⁶⁷

By the early nineteenth century, race in North America had five “ideological ingredients” that included “a universal classification of human groups as exclusive and discrete biological entities,” “[an] imposition of an inegalitarian ethos that required the ranking of these groups vis-à-vis one another”, “[a] belief that the outer physical characteristics of human populations were but surface manifestations of inner realities,” “the notion that all of these qualities were inheritable”, and “the belief that each group (race) was created unique and distinct by nature or god, so that the imputed differences, believed to be fixed and unalterable, could never be bridged or transcended.”¹⁶⁸ Within this system, all human groups could be sorted into a racial category that could then be

¹⁶⁷ Smedley and Smedley, *Race in North America*, 73-77 and 159-160.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 25-26.

manipulated and exploited depending on the objectives of those that established the classifications. Once this hierarchy was established, race became socially meaningful.

The institution of slavery only helped to solidify and further magnify the stratification of human difference, perpetuating and intensifying notions of savagery and dissimilarity that allowed for uninhibited brutality against the black and Native populations.¹⁶⁹ Black slaves held in bondage provided another strong motivation for whites in North America to define themselves as a group of individuals who were racially distinct. As easterners moved west, they carried with them the racial terminology and hierarchical practices that had evolved as the white world collided with both the “red” world and the “black” world of slavery.¹⁷⁰

As whites formed a coalition, they began to believe that race served as an explanation for all human accomplishments. Therefore, individuals of an inferior race lost the ability to achieve any kind of social, economic, or political advancement. These rankings based on race began to crystallize in the white mind and shaped both laws and science, resulting in policies that led to Indian land treaties and eventually removal. This system became official policy, and the scientific schemes became unquestioned assumptions about the nature of the world. Law and science further solidified racial thinking, and whites integrated these beliefs into religious thought, making race a part of folk culture, tradition, and the natural order of human beings.¹⁷¹

The development of schemas to differentiate and categorize peoples developed all

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 90 and 163-167.

¹⁷⁰ Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*, 125-140.

¹⁷¹ Smedley and Smedley, *Race in North America* 73-77 and 159-160.

over the world, whether in the dichotomy of civilized/uncivilized or through the belief that people had innate biological difference. In the Ohio Valley, settlers and their descendants brought European ideas about race, which percolated into Native society as a result of the entangled world that existed in the lower Great Lakes. Euro-Americans and Native peoples exchanged ideas, cultural practices, religious beliefs, and practical advice, and this exchange included ideas surrounding peoplehood and race.

Some of these exchanges took place at treaty negotiations, where Euro-Americans gave speeches identifying themselves as “white” and made clear distinctions between themselves and the Native peoples to whom they spoke. Interactions with missionaries that attempted to eradicate Native culture and practices might have also made it clear that Euro-Americans believed themselves to have a superior culture and viewed Native individuals as lesser people. As Euro-Americans exposed different Native nations to their ideas of color segregation and eventually racial thought, Native peoples began to understand Euro-American notions of difference and began to adopt and adapt these to their own needs. Through interaction these ideas were shared, reinterpreted, and put into practice, resulting in a transformation of Native racial thought in the late eighteenth century.

As Euro-Americans solidified their means of categorizing people and justifying westward expansion, Native peoples debated how to integrate whites into their worldviews and societies as well. Initially, Native peoples considered behavior, dress, and kin affiliation rather than biological distinctions in determining outsiders; however, they made greater distinctions as they began to recognize phenotypical differences and

examine bodies as a means of understanding the rift between Native and white culture. While it might be assumed that whites unified first under a broad identity defined by physical traits, historian Peter Silver suggests that Native peoples might have been the first in North America to construct an identity in this way, though not in the language of “red.” He suggests that Native claims to distinct divine creations, avoidance of Euro-American goods, and attempts at pan-Indian coalitions indicate that peoples united in a similar way to whites, placing their grievances in a new context, one that was positioned against those whites that encroached on their lands.¹⁷²

As notions of race solidified, allied groups of Native peoples began to find a new unity in racially defined pan-Indian identity within which kinship remained the basic means of social and diplomatic interaction. Within Tecumseh and the Shawnee Prophet’s alliance, Native individuals redefined and expanded their political and social identities, reaching beyond clan or village association to include all Native peoples. Violence by the Prophet and his followers increased as the nativist movement’s influence spread. As William Henry Harrison described, Tecumseh, “openly and positively avowed his determination to resist the encroachments of white people.”¹⁷³

As the Prophet attempted to gain more followers among the Western tribes, he explained to Harrison, “that he was commissioned by the Great Spirit of the Indians (who himself was an Indian and different from the Great Spirit of the Whites.”¹⁷⁴ In this

¹⁷² Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, xx-xxi; Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 159-160; and Claudio Saunt, *The New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 114-115.

¹⁷³ Harrison to the Secretary of War June 6, 1811 in Logan Esarey, ed., *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison, 1800-1811*. 2 vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 1: 512-517.

¹⁷⁴ Harrison to Secretary of War June 26, 1810 in Esarey, 1: 433-438, and Harrison to the Secretary of War August 1, 1810, June 6, and September 1811 in Esarey, 1: 453-435, 512-517, and 588-592.

statement, the Prophet doesn't only acknowledge the distinction between Indians and whites, he acknowledges different cosmologies, further differentiating "white" from "red" and encouraging the perpetuation of newly created native categories of race. Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa's pan-Indian alliance attempted to circumscribe Euro-American kin designations due to their repeated acts of violence against Indian communities. This violence, while increasingly limiting the access of those groups perceived as white to Indian communities, conversely increased the bonds ethnic Indian communities recognized with one another.¹⁷⁵

Despite their evolving racial views, Native peoples still interacted with Euro-American officials. Tribes such as the Delaware and the Potawatomi declared their allegiance to the United States, explaining that they would "bury the tomahawk" and ignore the actions of their young warriors who followed the Prophet. Other native leaders including Laprusieur, a Wea Chief, and Osceneut, an Ottawa Chief, denied their engagement with the Tecumseh and the Shawnee Prophet and claimed they discouraged their people from joining. Little Turtle declared to the Miami that the treaties they had agreed to, especially Greenville, were fair and that they should not follow the Prophet.¹⁷⁶ Many native chiefs and tribe members also interacted with the British, to whom they declared their allegiance to in exchange for goods and guns. Despite the many "friends" (or chiefs) that the United States had, Harrison continued to threaten Tecumseh as the Prophet's party attacked and raided throughout the Old Northwest, warning that he would

¹⁷⁵ Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xviii-xxii.

¹⁷⁶ Speeches delivered by the different Miami Chiefs in council at Fort Wayne September 1811 in Esarey, 1: 570-575.

withhold annuities and commence violence against those who attacked the white people in Indian country.¹⁷⁷

A strategic relationship between the British and Tecumseh and his pan-Indian movement highlights the fact that shifts in racial thought did not affect the decisions of Native peoples to ally with those that would assist them in achieving their ideal outcomes. As Americans grew to be the dominant colonial power in the Old Northwest and the most threatening for its Native peoples, the British became a valuable ally. In an 1811 Council with the Choctaw, which aimed to encourage their solidarity with the Western Tribes, Tecumseh spoke against the whites, labeling them as a “wicked race;” however, he later noted the “great nation across the waters who was coming to their help.”¹⁷⁸ Rather than identifying the British as another group of white people coming to help, Tecumseh referred to them in a positive light, and throughout the American Revolution, Tecumseh encouraged his followers to support the British cause. Despite changing views and practices of categorization, the native peoples of the Old Northwest still made meaningful and tactical decisions when interacting with whites, not allowing the distinctions they drew to affect their potential to gain resources or their chances of survival.

“White”, then, seems to be a term that shifted between groups based on who presented greater benefit or ensured the survival of Native peoples. Many Indians strategically invoked racial thought when it was in their best interest to unify against a

¹⁷⁷ Harrison to the Secretary of War June 26, 1810 in Esarey, 1: 433; Harrison to Tecumseh June 24, 1811 in Esarey, 1: 522-524; and Extract of a letter from Governor Harrison to Mr. Johnson Indian Agent of Fort Wayne in Esarey, 1: 583-584.

¹⁷⁸ Crawfordville, Council Between Tecumseh and Pushmataha, Draper Manuscript Collection: Tecumseh Papers, Mss YY, vol. 4, Wisconsin Historical Society, 75.

shared threat; however, when the occasion to bring forward grievances about these “whites” arose, the discourse surrounding that specific people seemed to change. The physically white people that most frequently imposed on Native society seem to be the ones that many Native peoples racialized and the ones they described as “white” in their speeches. Despite the relationships that Native peoples and whites formed and maintained, racial views within each group continued to solidify.

Conclusion

Serving as territorial governor, William Henry Harrison attempted to enforce American policy in the Old Northwest and indicated that if Native peoples did not report hostilities taken against whites to the Americans, “the innocent will frequently suffer for the guilty” and a war might break out between all tribes and the United States. He implied the impending demise of Native nations if they did not comply with the American government.¹⁷⁹ However, these Native peoples claimed no fault for their actions against whites. As Chippewa Chief Mash-i-pi-nash-i-wish stated during the Treaty of Greenville negotiations in 1795, “I was not disposed to take up the hatchet against you; it was forced into my hand by the white people.”¹⁸⁰

As the nineteenth century approached, Indians began to distrust Americans, adopt Euro-Americans ideologies of race, and adapt them to justify their struggle for nationhood, power, and sovereignty. While kinship previously dictated relations between Native peoples, nativists encouraged a broader acceptance, allowing Indians to unite against the Euro-American land invasion. Unless they presented a united front and changed certain cultural practices, their people risked destruction. Race did not have a large bearing on affairs in this highly entangled world until whites began to strip Native peoples of their ancestral homelands, their customs, and their way of life. As the nineteenth century approached, “whites” became outsiders to the Native kinship realm and lost the ability to become a part of Native culture. The opportunity for social and cultural hybridity that had existed became more and more rare.

¹⁷⁹ John Johnson, (1810). Reel 125, “John Johnson Papers.” Ohio State Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

¹⁸⁰ John Johnson, *Recollections of 60 Years on the Ohio Frontier* (Findlay, OH, Millstream Press, 2005), 12-13; “The Fort-Wayne Manuscript,” box 197, Indian Documents, 1811-1812, Chicago History Museum, Black Hawk, 54-58; and *American State Papers*, 2, Indian Affairs 1:572.

Rather than considering white and Native racial thought formation as separate entities, it is important to consider the effects that one had on the other. Rather than each group cultivating their own racial views, both whites and Native peoples crafted a language of race shaped by their interactions, especially violence and betrayal between groups. Each group influenced each other as their terminology evolved in meaning and their treatment of the other changed over time. Both groups assisted in creating the others' identity, and, ironically, each group created an identity opposed to the other based on their own motivations and needs.

Native reorganization and the assertion of a racial identity helped Native nations challenge Euro-American claims to power and persist in the Old Northwest, evoking racial ties in order to promote resistance. Native peoples might have constructed this concept on their own, or they might have incorporated and adapted Euro-American concepts of race that they had encountered through their engagement with Euro-American peoples and cultures, resulting in their own strategic invocation of racial identity and practice. The need for pan-Indian alliances and a persistence strategy against westward expansion drove Native peoples to cultivate a broader "red" identity in order to unite against colonialism and westward expansion, broadening their kin networks and embracing those that they considered to be allies, enemies, and strangers alike. "Red" served native peoples by giving them a term to identify with that represented a fissure between Indian and Euro-American interests. These alliances were not unique to the nineteenth century but had existed and remerged throughout the history of the Old Northwest.

Fundamentally, kinship facilitated the process of racial formation and the alteration of racial practice. In kin-based societies, patterned behaviors affect and become a part of habitual social practice. In need of a new strategy of resistance to white encroachment, Indians initiated a shift in their racial views to protect themselves from western expansion. Within kin-based societies, changes in behavior occur in order to retain “symbolic capital,” including honor, prestige, respect, or authority. The deep connections that many of these tribes had with other native nations allowed for the formation of racial views that crossed tribal lines.

As time moved forward, Native peoples became increasingly likely to see whites as others: strangers to their world and practices and individuals who wanted to destroy their society. This occurred as concepts of whiteness crystallized in both Indian and Euro-American discourse. This shift is apparent in their treatment of white captives, the changes in native and white language, and William Henry Harrison’s gift to Little Turtle. In 1805, Harrison might have had some reason to think a slave, someone a native would consider a racial “other”, would be a welcome gift to this native leader, one that would even be welcomed in exchange for compliance in the acquisition of the peace and land that the “whites” so desired.

In order to continue the work begun in this thesis project, additional research should be done to examine Native language and the meanings and origins of words dealing with kinship, particularly if sources in Native languages can be referenced. Also, further opportunities to analyze Native interaction with Euro-Americans exist within Christian missions throughout the *pays d’en haut*, making the documents of these

missions, including journals as well as materials give out and referenced during the teaching and evangelizing, useful in examining Native/white interaction. These interactions can also be examined in the context of the fur trade, examining trade relationships and how they were structured between 1778-1813. They could then be studied to see if a change in kinship practices or racial views affected economic interactions. This project could also be expanded to include a discussion of mixed-race individuals and consider their treatment, roles, and identities within the lower Great Lakes. The place of mixed-race individuals would provide valuable insight and further complicate this understanding of Native racial views and kinship structure.

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