Captive Chronology—Mary Butler Renville

1859	Moved to Minnesota with her husband to teach at the Hazelwood mission
August 18	Heard of the outbreak and went to camp of friendly Indians
August 19	Williamson arrived in camp, they occupied the mission houses with the friendly Indians
August 21	First journal entry
August 22-Sept. 1	Lived with the friendly Indians in the mission houses
September 2	Letter from Paul to Governor Ramsey
September 3	Mrs. Decamp with her three children at the camp
September 4	Left houses and moved into tents, Mrs. Newman and her children also there
September 5	Camped near Rush Brook
September 7	Hostile Indians burned the church, now about 40 people in Lorenzo's camp
September 8	Mrs. DeCamp and her children hid in the swamp all day, her husband returned
September 10	Major B's tent
September 11	Moved to Pettijohn's house and had to do her own work despite frail health
September 15	Another letter from Paul
September 16	Moved to Red Iron Village
September 21	Friendly Indian camp, sees Carrothers, White and Adams
September 22	Another letter from Paul negotiating with Sibley about the captives
September 23	Letter from Riggs to Renville captives
September 24	Rebels fled from Sibley
September 25	Learned Sibley was five miles away at Red Iron Village
September 26	Delivered to Camp Release at 2 p.m.

The dates referring to movements of Sweet noted here do not correspond with Sweet's own chronology.

The first word they received about the outbreak at the Redwood agency came at 6:00 p.m. on August 18 when two men warned them:

> We had just arisen from the table when two men came in, and with the most intense feelings expressed in their countenances, begged us to hasten for our lives, in the meantime given a brief account of the massacre. People became so accustomed to Indian stories that they are not willing to believe any reports, no matter how they come; so it was with us; we did not even go to our nearest neighbors to tell what we had heard, but remained quiet; we were soon aroused by our friends calling again, and with authorative tones told us to hasten away or we would certainly be massacred."[278]

Only with this second warning did Renville and her husband take action by fleeing to the camp of the Christian Indians for protection. Renville was spared the initial horrors of attack and capture faced by the other captive women because she and her family immediately joined the friendly Indians. Renville still considered herself a captive, though, because she and her family did not have freedom of movement and would have been killed or taken captive by hostile Indians without protection.

After the first few days of captivity, the friendly Dakota decided to occupy the mission buildings at Hazelwood to accommodate more people, be better protected, and gain access to gardens for food. Renville was devastated by what she saw there, "It was impossible to describe the desolation, confusion and destruction that had been made at these houses, and the feelings that took possession of us when we thought of the many families that had thus been driven from their homes."[279] Renville struggled with the destruction of the houses and the violation this symbolized. By going to war, the Indians were not only attacking people but the symbols of white culture as well. Renville recognized this violation through the destruction of homes and scattering of families, and it moved her to tears:

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[278] Ibid., 6.

> When the supper hour came we seated ourselves at the long table, which we had to often seen filled with happy children and loving teachers. We could hardly refrain from weeping while the blessing was being asked, and as soon as we could be excused we went to our rooms, where for the first time, we permitted our tears to flow, somewhat to the relief of our aching heart.[280]

Renville did not cry until she saw the violation of the missionaries' homes. Suddenly the war and her captivity seemed much more real because those symbols of white culture were destroyed.

On September 4, the friendly Indians and their captives left the buildings at the mission and moved to tents. Renville bemoaned this:

> We are now living for the first time in a tent. This P. M. we went with Mr. R. to take a last look at the Mission buildings. He went with the intention of getting some boards, for making a shed over our cooking stove near the tent, determined to keep this vestige of civilization as long as possible. We really enjoy the large rocking chair, and could have good times if we were with a company of chosen friends, on a pleasure excursion, instead of being afraid of ones life every moment.[281]

After being forced to leave first her home and then the mission buildings, Renville struggled to hang onto her stove and chair—both very powerful signifiers of the white female culture and civilization that were being destroyed around her. Shortly after they moved to the tents, hostile Indians began firing the mission buildings and homes.[282] The most trying day for Renville came on September 7, when the hostile Indians disrupted their makeshift Sunday service and burned the church. "The day has been truly a sad one; rebels, as if to show as much disregard as possible to all sacred rights of Christians, burned the church in the forenoon."[283] The last bastion of Christian civilization was now gone. After this, the friendly Indians were forced to join the larger camp of hostile

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[279] Ibid., 12.
[280] Ibid., 13.
[281] Ibid., 22.
[282] Ibid., 22.

Dakota. Renville related her sense of loss and her final alienation from civilization as a result of this removal:

> Mr. R. driving the cattle, while we drove the team, and carrying our darling Ella in our arms, clinging closer to her fearing she might be torn from us in any new freak of the enemy. To realize in the least what our feelings were, place yourselves in imagination in the same condition, leaving the last vestige of civilization, not even daring to wear a bonnet or hat to protect your eyes from the blazing sun as you rode across the broad prairie.[284]

With this final remove, Renville's tethers to civilization were destroyed.

On September 26, Renville and her family were surrendered with the other captives to General Sibley at Camp Release. "At two o'clock P. M., Gen. Sibley, accompanied by his staff, came to our camp. Paul and some others made brief speeches, and the captives were formally delivered up by those who had protected them."[285] After the detailed description in the rest of her narrative, Renville's description of her release seems anticlimactic. Renville and her family were free but she noted it only briefly in one small paragraph. Also, she never said what happened to family once they left Camp Release.

Renville published her narrative a year after the war in 1863. Besides Sarah Wakefield, Renville was the only other female captive to publish quickly. Renville wrote her narrative for very specific reasons that were informed by her strong religious beliefs and moral convictions. Renville's narrative was written in the format of a journal, some of which she kept during her captivity with portions added as she learned more about the war and fates of the other captives.[286] One of the reasons she wrote was to provide a captive's account of the war, "So much as been said about the Indian War that it may not

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[283] Ibid., 24.
[284] Ibid., 25.
[285] Ibid., 43.

be uninteresting to glean a few leaves from the Journal of one who was a captive during the late trouble."[287] In the first paragraph of the text, Renville gave herself authority to write based on her experience as a captive. A second reason she wrote was to show how the work of the missionaries prevented the war from being much worse:

> We might speak at length of their abundant labors, in connection with their co-workers, the fruits of which we have witnessed during our captivity. Had it not been for the gospel which had been planted by these true worthies, the massacre would have been more terrible and awful than it was, and the suffering captives have found no relief from their hated capture, as some of them did during the last few days of their captivity. Dear reader, please bear this in mind when you are contributing ot the Mission cause, for you know not what the fruits of your labor may be.[288]

Renville reminded her readers that the missionary work was so important that it needed financial support because one never knew what good effect such important work might have. Finally, Renville wrote her narrative to defend the friendly Indians who protected the captives but were wrongfully punished along with the hostile Indians:

> The friends even that protected the suffering ones, are doomed to an exile almost as cruel as that which the captives suffered, for they had long had the opportunity of hearing the gospel before they were taken captives; and if they were Christians the rebels could only destroy the body but could not harm the soul.[289]

Punishment of the friendly Indians was unfair and cruel as these Dakota had no part in the war. It was unfair to deprive them of Christ's teachings.

Renville criticized the government for mistreating the friendly Indians after the war by exiling them with the hostile Indians. She went on by further stating that war could happen again if the government did not handle its Indian affairs more carefully:

> May God guide the people of Minnesota, who have suffered deeply, to act wisely in the present instance, and not drive even the friendly Indians to homeless

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[286] Ibid., 9.
[287] Ibid., 5.
[288] Ibid., 11.
[289] Ibid., 43.

> desperation by driving or sending them among the warlike tribes, to dwell upon their wrongs and talk over the injuries inflicted upon them by those they supposed their friends, until the warriors will not heed the course of the older ones, and rise in one mass, with all the tribes, and commence a war more terrible than has yet been recorded in history.[290]

If the government failed to be fair and just in dealing with the friendly Indians, the discord caused could spark another, much larger conflagration than the last.

Renville's narrative was unique because of its strong religious overtones. Throughout her narrative, she used religious rhetoric as a paradigm for interpreting her experiences in captivity. Her main concern during the early days of the war was the whereabouts and well being of the Williamsons, who had been missionaries to the Dakota for thirty years. "But let us return to our Missionaries again, for too many pleasing associations of the past and anxiety for their present safety, will not permit us to be silent."[291] She worried further when Dr. Williamson refused to leave mission ground, "For this the spirit of the world may censure him, but those who have the spirit of Him who said, 'go preach the gospel to every creature,' certainly must admire the self-sacrificing man, willing rather to die if needs be."[292] Renville also emphasized gatherings to pray, sing hymns, and hear sermons which bolstered her faith during her captivity: "A chapter was read, a hymn sung and a word of exhortation given to the early faithful few. It reminded us of early times, when it was not safe to go to the house of God without weapons of defense."[293] She compared her trials and captivity to that of the early, biblical Christians who were persecuted for their beliefs. In this way, her narrative harkens back to that of Rowlandson. Like Rowlandson, Renville understood her

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[290] Ibid., 44.
[291] Ibid., 8.
[292] Ibid., 11.
[293] Ibid., 13.

captivity in biblical terms. In this way, her narrative is closely linked to the early captivity narrative tradition, which began with Mary Rowlandson. Like Rowlandson, Renville's narrative was religiously motivated outlining both her sufferings and the larger lessons to be learned from Indian captivity. Throughout her narrative, Renville turned to God for comfort when the ministrations of friends and family failed to comfort her. Renville also believed that it was the Christianization of Indians that ultimately led to them protect captives, "The praise is all due that gospel which makes the savage heart become humane and man respect the rights of his fellow man."[294] Renville ascribed goodness on the part of the friendly Indians to their learning the gospel. Renville's religious beliefs buoyed her spirit during the trials of her captivity and provided her with a firm ground from which to make sense of her experiences.

Sarah Wakefield

Sarah Brown was born on September 29, 1829 at Kingston, Rhode Island and married John Wakefield in Jordan, Minnesota on September 27, 1856. She had two children, James age five and Nellie age twenty months at the time of the war.[295] Wakefield and her family initially lived in Shakopee where Dr. Wakefield treated Dakota wounded in a battle with Ojibwa.[296] In 1861, Dr. Wakefield was appointed as the physician for the Yellow Medicine agency. Shortly after that, the Wakefields moved to

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[294] Ibid., 23.

[295] Sarah Wakefield, *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity* Edited and Annotated by June Namias (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997): 43-44. In *White Captives*, June Namias also extensively discussed Wakefield and her narrative. I make many similar assessments to Namias based on Wakefield's narrative and instead of footnoting every one, which would be exhausting, I want to acknowledge her contribution to my work and give her credit for a much better analysis than what I have conducted. Her work has been a guiding influence for my own and I appreciate and acknowledge her contribution.

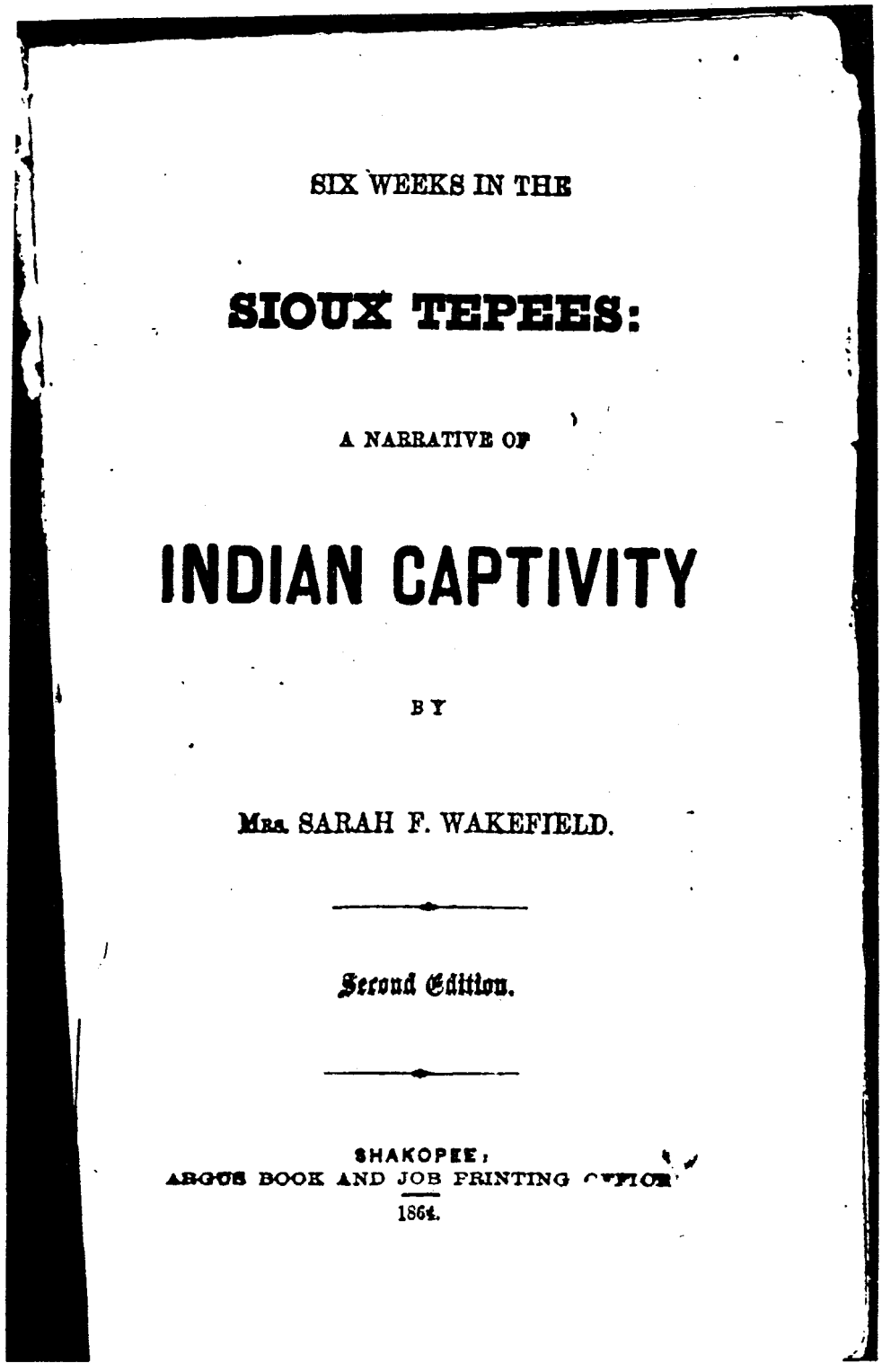
[296] Ibid., 44.

Sarah F. Wakefield, date unknown. Courtesy of *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and James Orin Wakefield II.

Reprinted from *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees* edited by June Namias

Chaska, ca. 1860. Photo, C. A. Zimmerman, Minnesota Historical Society [E91.1C/r8]. Because the name Chaska means "first-born son" and because there are potentially thousands of men with this name and many more with variations of this name, it is impossible to say with accuracy that the photograph used here is the Dakota man Chaska who was Wakefield's "protector," but it appears plausible that this is the Chaska in question.

Reprinted from *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees* edited by June Namias



SIX WEEKS IN THE

SIOUX TEPEES:

A NARRATIVE OF

INDIAN CAPTIVITY

BY

Mrs. SARAH F. WAKEFIELD.

Second Edition.

SHAKOPEE:
ARGUS BOOK AND JOB PRINTING OFFICE
1864.

Title page, Sarah F. Wakefield's *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity* (1864). Photo courtesy of the Newberry Library.

Reprinted from *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees* edited by June Namias

Captive Chronology-Sarah Wakefield

1861	Arrived at Yellow Medicine Agency with her husband
August 5, 1862	Went to Lower Agency for a week
August 11	Returned home to Upper Agency
August 18	2:00 p.m. left for fort with Gleason, Gleason killed, taken captive with two children by Chaska and Hapa
August 19	Taken to Chaska's mother's home, received Indian attire, hidden overnight in swamp
August 20	Chaska's mother retrieved her from the swamp
August 21	Chaska left to attack fort, taken to his grandfather's house for protection
August 22	Hidden in a haystack by Chaska's grandfather for the day
August 23	White woman shot in camp
August 24	Taken to Chaska's aunt's tepee for protection
August 25	Chaska and his mother retrieved her from there
August 26	Camp moved to Yellow Medicine Agency, saw Gleason's body on the prairie
August 27	Sees her home burned on the way through the area
August 28	Taken again to Chaska's aunt's tepee for protection
August 29	Taken to Bit Nore's camp for two days
August 31	Returned to Chaska
September 1	Taken to Bit Nore's camp for about a week
September 6	Returned to Chaska
September 8	Moved to Red Iron's village-Remained there until near the end of the war
September 23	Taken to Renville's then to Chaska's tepee to wait for Sibley
September 26	Surrendered at Camp Release by Chaska
September 27	Remained at Camp Release for two weeks to testify on Chaska's behalf
October	Traveled to Shakopee
October-Nov.	Spent eight weeks at Red Wing
November	Visited St. Paul and then moved to Shakopee
November 1863	First Edition of *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees* published
1864	Second Edition of *Six Weeks* published
1866	Third child, Julia born
1868	Fourth child John born
1874	Dr. Wakefield dies at their home in Shakopee
1876	Wakefield and her children move to St. Paul
1897	Son James dies
1899	Wakefield dies in St. Paul

the Yellow Medicine agency and took up residence there.[297] Wakefield learned to enjoy living at the agency and the company of Dakota women who worked in her home.

> The first year of our stay was comparatively quiet, the Indians, after they were paid leaving us for their homes far away, with the exception of those who were farmers, and were living near us as neighbors. And I will state in the beginning that I found them very kind, good people.[298]

Wakefield trusted her Indian neighbors and felt comfortable in her new surroundings. Wakefield recognized that tensions mounted during the next summer as the annuity payments were late and many of the Indians were starving. She blamed the traders and corrupt whites for cheating the Dakota and denying them food:

> They have no way of keeping accounts, so the traders have their own way at the time of payment. . . . I was surprised that they would allow such cheating without retaliation, but it came, all in God's own time, for at the Traders was the first deathblow given in the awful massacres of August, 1862. All the evil habits that the Indian as acquired may be laid to the traders.[299]

Wakefield noted that after the Dakota had gathered for annuities, many suffered from starvation because the agent and the traders would not give them food until payment came:

> What dried meat they brought was soon eaten, and in a few weeks they were actually starving; the children gathering and eating all kinds of green fruit, until the bushes were left bare. They had several councils, asking for food, which they did not get. Many days these poor creatures subsisted on a tall grass which they find in the marshes, chewing the roots, and eating the wild turnip. They would occasionally shoot a muskrat, and with what begging they would do, contrive to steal enough so they could live; but I knew that many died from starvation or disease caused by eating improper food.[300]

The starvation of their families combined with the duplicity of the traders and the ineptitude of the agent caused the war and capture of white women and children.

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[297] Ibid., 55.
[298] Ibid., 61.
[299] Ibid., 61.
[300] Ibid., 63-64.

On August 18, Wakefield's husband decided to send her and the children to Fort Ridgely, about forty miles from their home at the Yellow Medicine Agency. Wakefield and the children traveled with George Gleason, who was a warehouse clerk at the Redwood Agency.[301] Neither Wakefield nor Gleason realized that they were traveling into the center of violence that began at the Redwood Agency near the fort. On the road to the fort, Gleason and Wakefield were overtaken by two Indian men, Hapa and Chaska:

> As the Indians passed the wagon, I turned my head, being suspicious, and just then one of them fired, the charge striking Mr. Gleason in his right shoulder, whereupon he fell backward into my lap, crushing my baby against me. He did not speak, and immediately the savage fired again, striking him in the bowel as he laid across my lap.[302]

Gleason was shot once more and his body was left on the prairie. After this Hapa, the Indian who killed Gleason, and Chaska disputed about what to do with Wakefield and her children. "After a long time, Hapa consented that I should live, after inquiring very particularly if I was the agent's wife. He thought I was; but Chaska knew to the contrary for he had been at my house in Shakopee many times."[303] Wakefield and her children were taken into captivity.

Wakefield spent most of her captivity in the tepee of Chaska's mother where both the older woman and Chaska protected her and her children. Many times during her captivity, Wakefield and her children were saved by the older woman hiding them from warriors threatening violence, "We sat in this way a long time, until his mother said he had passed away from the teepee, when she tore up the back part of our teepee, and taking Nellie on her back we again fled to the woods. She found a good place, covered

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[301] Ibid., 65-66.
[302] Ibid., 67.
[303] Ibid., 68.

us up with boughs of trees, and left in a hurry, not saying when she would return."[304] There were several other occasions when Chaska's mother hid Wakefield and her children to protect them from death threats.

About half way through her captivity, Wakefield learned that her husband was alive:

> He also said that Paul had told him that my husband was alive; they had all made their escape from the Agency the morning after I left. What glorious news was that for a wife who had mourned for her husband as dead. I laughed, cried, and acted like a wild person. I could have danced for joy; my body as well as mind felt lightened. I felt now as if I must live and try to save my children. A new impulse was given me from that hour.[305]

All her suffering and despair evaporated when Wakefield learned her husband was alive. For the first time in her captivity, she had hope that her family would be reunited and her former, comfortable life restored. But despair was never far away as the white soldiers were slow to rescue the captives, "I assisted at all these operations willingly, for I thought I might save my children from starvation on those plains, where we were bound, for I had given up all hopes of being rescued by Sibley."[306] Wakefield and her children were surrendered with the rest of the captives at Camp Release on September 26.[307]

Wakefield spent two weeks at Camp Release before she moved to Fort Ridgely with some of the other captives. She was reunited with her husband:

> My little boy exclaimed, 'There is my father!'—and so it was. There was my husband mourned as dead, now living—coming toward me. I was happy then, and felt that I would have died then willingly, and said, 'Thy will not mine be done.' For I knew my children had a protector now.[308]

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[304] Ibid., 82.
[305] Ibid., 90.
[306] Ibid., 103.
[307] Ibid., 111.
[308] Ibid., 121.

Wakefield's sense of relief was palpable at their reunion because she could finally relinquish some of her worries to him. After their reunion, she and her husband retuned to Shakopee, then to Red Wing for eight weeks before visiting St. Paul. While in St. Paul, she learned from Reverend Stephen Riggs that Chaska had been hung on December 26 with the others.[309] This outraged Wakefield and may have been the catalyst for her to write her story. It is unclear where Wakefield and her family moved after St. Paul, but she did have two more children after her captivity, Julia born in 1866 and John in 1868. Dr. John Wakefield died at their home in Shakopee in February of 1874 and Wakefield moved to St. Paul in 1876 with the children. Her oldest son James, who had been in captivity with her, died in 1897 and Wakefield herself died two years later in 1899 at the age of 69.[310]

Sarah Wakefield published the first edition of her narrative November 25, 1863. In 1864 she published the second, revised edition, which is used in this study. Her narrative was the longest and most controversial to come out of the war for a number of reasons. First, she had a specific agenda for writing her narrative. Second, she ardently defended Chaska and the Dakota for going to war. Third, she stridently defended her own actions while in captivity and afterwards as she tried to keep Chaska from being prosecuted. Finally, Wakefield attacked Sibley for failing to capture the real perpetrators and being slow to rescue the captives. At a time when anti-Indian sentiment was rampant in the state, Wakefield took very unpopular positions. She did not write a traditional narrative to justify destruction of the Indians. She wrote instead to explain herself and why she befriended and protected an Indian man at the expense of her good name. In her

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[309] Ibid., 121.
[310] Ibid., 46-47.

introduction to the annotated version of Wakefield's narrative used for this paper, Namias noted six reasons for Wakefield's publication of her narratives: as a record for her children; to discuss the mistreatment of the Dakotas; to clear her name; to make peace with Minnesotans; to clear her conscience after Chaska's death; and finally to sell her story.[311]

In the preface to her second edition, Wakefield asserted her reasons for publishing a second edition of her narrative. She allegedly wrote so that her children would have a record of their captivity, "First, that when I wrote it, it was not intended for perusal by the public eye. I wrote it for the especial benefit of my children as they were so young at the time they were in captivity."[312] She further asserted that she gave the public a true account of her captivity and its aftermath in order to quell the rumors circulating about her affair with Chaska: "a *true* [her emphasis] statement of my captivity: what I suffered, and what I was spared from suffering, by a Friendly or Christian Indian."[313] Her third reason for writing seemed most honest, "Thirdly, I do not publish a little work like this in the expectation of making money by it, but to vindicate myself, as I have been grievously abused by many, who are ignorant of the particulars, of my captivity and release by the Indians."[314] In the wake of the censure raised by her first narrative, Wakefield felt she had to set the record straight about her captivity and reasons for defending an Indian man. Those who read her narrative and the other captives had judged her harshly for her behavior during and immediately after her captivity. The fact that she defended Chaska was unpardonable to white society. At the same time,

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[311] Namias, *Six Weeks*, 28-31.
[312] Ibid., 53.
[313] Ibid., 53.
[314] Ibid., 53.

however, Chaska and then his mother were angry with her for failing to protect him. Wakefield was in a difficult position and sacrificed her reputation to help him. She felt very bitter when her selflessness failed and he was hung in Mankato. Wakefield used her narrative to both defend her actions and assuage some of the guilt she felt for failing him.

Wakefield's narrative was also unusual because she wrote extensively in defense of the Dakota for going to war. Early in her narrative, Wakefield discussed the starvation and how it drove the Dakota to war:

> People blame me for having sympathy for these creatures, but I take this view of the case: Suppose the same number of whites were living in sight of food, purchased with their own money, and their children dying of starvation, how long think you would they remain quiet? I know, of course, they would have done differently, but we must remember that the Indian is a wild man and has not the discrimination of a civilized person. When the Indian *wars,* [her emphasis] it is for blood. They felt as if all whites were equally to blame.[315]

Wakefield was careful to classify the Indians as uncivilized, thus using the labels of white society, but she still justified their war as caused by white malfeasance. Later in her narrative, she firmly blamed the whites for causing the war through their mistreatment of the Dakota:

> That our own people, not the Indians were to blame. Had they not, for years, been suffering? Had they not been cheated unmercifully, and now their money had been delayed; no troops were left to protect the frontier and their Agent, their 'father,' had left them without money, food or clothing, and gone off to the war. I often said to the Indians that if they had let innocent people alone, and robbed us all they would never have been blamed. But they knew no justice but in dealing out death for their wrongs.[316]

The Indians turned to violence because justice could be had no other way.

During her captivity, Wakefield lived in the teepee of Chaska, his mother, his half sister Winona, her son and Hapa, his brother-in-law, who had killed Gleason and taken

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[315] Ibid., 64.
[316] Ibid., 100.

Wakefield captive. Throughout her captivity, Chaska protected her and she tried to preserve his good works in her narrative. "My life was again saved, and by him. Had not God raised me up a protector among the heathen? Have I not reason to bless His name, and thank the man and his family for all their goodness towards me and mine? For my little children would now be motherless if he had not taken care of me."[317] Wakefield drew upon her religious beliefs and role as mother to defend Chaska, who seemed sent by God to protect her and her children. Wakefield emphasized his role as protector when Chaska prevented Hapa from raping her, "My father could not have done differently, or acted more respectful or honorable; and if there was ever an honest, upright man, Chaska was one. He suffered death, but God will reward him in Heaven for his acts of kindness towards me."[318] Chaska had the opportunity to sexually abuse her as well, but he did not. He was worthy of her praise and should have been worthy of praise from white society as well for protecting her from a "fate worse than death."

The problem for Wakefield came when many other captives accused her of being Chaska's wife and enjoying her life with the Indians. These were unforgivable acts in the wake of the war and Wakefield tried to defend herself: "I always took particular pains to speak in favor of the Indians, many times upholding them in their undertakings, because I knew it would all be repeated again to the Indians; and my sole object was while there to gain their friendship so as to save my life."[319] She acted friendly and helpful strictly to save her own life, not because she enjoyed the Indian lifestyle but other captives censured her for what they perceived as bad behavior. After she was released from captivity, Wakefield testified before various soldiers and the military tribunal that Chaska had

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[317] Ibid., 77.
[318] Ibid., 84.

saved her and her children several times.[320] Her testimony did not help as Chaska was convicted of being an accessory to Gleason's murder. After this, she condemned the military commission, "But I soon discovered that the commission was not acting according to justice, but by favor; and I was terribly enraged against them."[321] When Wakefield's defense of Chaska failed, she instead tried to defend herself. Wakefield openly refuted the accusation that she and Chaska had been lovers because of how she acted towards him during captivity and after the war, "I never could love a savage, although I could respect any or all that might befriend me, and I would willingly do everything in my power to benefit those that were so kind to me in my hour of need. I have strong feelings of gratitude towards many of them."[322] She still labeled the Dakota as savages even though she felt grateful for their help, especially Chaska's. Wakefield failed to understand the level of animosity that existed towards the Indians after the war and by so strongly defending Chaska, called both white and Indian doubts about her honesty into question.

Wakefield's narrative was also unusual because she bitterly attacked General Sibley and the soldiers who failed to rescue the captives quickly, let Little Crow escape, and unfairly meted out justice to the Indian perpetrators. She was especially angry with Sibley because he was slow to rescue the captives:

> How we blamed him for making us suffer as we did, for we expected death every instant. The second night we waited for him, an Indian came in saying that they had only traveled eight miles, and it was now thirty-six hours since he got our message, and they had camped for the night, spending hours to entrench themselves. An army of over two thousand leaving us, a little handful of persons, with only about one hundred men to protect us! . . . but God watched over us, and

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[319] Iblid, 83.
[320] Ibid., 113, 115.
[321] Ibid., 116.
[322] Ibid., 116-117.

> kept those savages back. To him I give all the honor and glory; Sibley I do not even thank, for he deserved it not.[323]

She was even more critical of his failure to capture Little Crow and his followers who did not surrender at Camp Release:

> Why did he not push on and capture those murderers? Instead of so doing, the whole command stopped, and spent days and weeks trying men who had willingly given themselves up, leaving their chiefs and bands. I, as a woman, know very little about war; but I know Little Crow and his soldiers might have been captured last fall, but now it is very doubtful if he is ever overtaken. But I suppose the troops were fatigued, if the marched all the way from St. Paul as fast as they did from Yellow Medicine—taking over fifty hours to travel twenty-five miles.[324]

Wakefield's sarcasm is evident as she found it intolerable that Sibley and his men traveled only five miles a day pursuing Little Crow and collecting the captives, who were surrendered willingly by the Dakota, instead of pushing on to capture and punish the truly guilty Indians.

Sarah Wakefield was a Christian woman with a firm moral grounding combined with a passionate and outspoken nature which drove her to write a narrative that moved far beyond the bounds of traditional captivity narratives. She wrote as a Christian and a mother combining earlier elements of religious righteousness and outraged motherhood while at the same time inverting the narrative structure to suit her own needs. Wakefield defended Chaska and herself and made accusations of negligence and shirking against Sibley. Her narrative contained no justification for exterminating or relocating the Indians; instead it called for clemency for the Dakota who protected whites. At a time when anti-Indian sentiment was rampant in the state, Wakefield was one of the lone voices praising the Dakota and calling for mercy. It cost her dearly, but even in her second edition, Wakefield firmly stood her ground.

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[323] Ibid., 108.

These eight women shared the experience of Indian captivity during the Minnesota Indian War of 1862. As individual captives and narrators, they provided personal insights into the war and their own captivity experiences. At the same time, they were also representative of Minnesotans as a whole that had a variety of responses to Dakota aggressors. Just as each woman struggled to come to grips with her captivity experience and re-acclimation to white society, so too did Minnesotans struggle to rebuild in the wake of war.

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[324] Ibid., 114-115.

Chapter 4

Dakota Men and White Women in Captivity

White women and children entered a new world once the Dakota took them captive. During captivity these eight women became immersed in Dakota life and culture on a previously unknown scale. As new members of Dakota camps, each woman took on new roles among the Indians as slaves and servants; wives and mothers; adopted kin; and even cultural critics that were defined by Dakota culture. Captive women's identities were challenged as they moved through multiple roles during Indian captivity.

Prewar Contact

As white settlers moved into frontier Minnesota and became acquainted with the Indians, Dakota men and white women came into casual contact. Dakota men often stopped at the homes of settlers to see men about guns, livestock, and goods to trade, especially food. Settler women knew Indian men and could deal with them if their husbands were absent. Women became familiar enough with these men that they did not fear them as when they first came to the area. Janette DeCamp Sweet, whose husband ran the mill, had daily contact with the Indians:

> For more than a year we had lived among them on terms of friendly intimacy, if I may so describe it. They were daily visitors to our home-not always welcome ones, it is true...It was not a pleasant life among them, but we tried to make the best of it while we were there. The Indians, with few exceptions, were kind and peaceable, and after a few months I grew so accustomed to their presence that no thought of fear ever entered my mind.[325]

Sweet acknowledged the fact that relations were peaceable and that she was comfortable with the Indians. Even though she was a child at the time, Minnie Buce Carrigan recalled her parent's interactions with the Indians: "The Indians from across the Minnesota River

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[325] Sweet,: 355.

to the south of us visited us nearly every day and were always very friendly."[326] She also noticed when the Indians became less friendly during the early summer of 1862: "At about this time the conduct of our Indian neighbors changed toward us. They became disagreeable and ill-natured. They seldom visited us and when they met us passed by coldly and sullenly and often without speaking."[327] Many of the captives discussed prewar relations in this fashion. The settlers' families often had daily contact with their Indian neighbors and, while they admitted to friendly relations, often seemed ambivalent about the amount and type of contact.

This is not to say that white women and Indian men were not friends. The narrative of Helen Mar Tarble revealed a close relationship between herself and the Dakota who lived near her home in Beaver Creek. As a young wife often left alone, Tarble befriended the Indians; she spoke their language and moved freely about their camps just as they moved freely in her home.[328] This relationship became even more evident when she and her newborn baby fell into the river during a winter crossing:

> Thanks to the influence of the medicine man, the Indians came every day, bringing me game, milk, corn and doing everything they could for my comfort. The squaws chopped and carried in wood for my house was very cold and I had to sit close to the stove with my baby wrapped in a blanket which one of the squaws gave me.[329]

Even before the became adopted kin which meant that the Indians would feed her and help her just as she had done for them in the past, and as she would be expected to do in the future. When tensions in the area escalated in the summer of 1862, Tarble

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[326] Carrigan, 6.
[327] Ibid., 7.
[328] Tarble, 19.
[329] Ibid., 20-21.

acknowledged this adopted kin relationship as the reason she was unafraid, unlike the other settlers:

> I was practically an adopted child of the Sioux and had the special protection of their great medicine man. Then, too, I had nursed them in their sickness, dwelt with them in their camp, ate with them, smoked with them, and supplied them with meals when they came hungry to my house. For months when I first came among them I must have starved but for their bringing me food."[330]

Tarble could clearly be defined as a transculturated woman even before her captivity due to her close relations with her Dakota neighbors.

Tarble's relationship with the Dakota medicine man was most intriguing. After she fell into the creek, her husband called the Dakota medicine man to care for her. Out of this meeting, a close relationship developed between the Dakota man and Tarble as he cared for her during a medical crisis:

> He had become interested in me, a pale face, able to talk to him in his own language. He used to take me with him to gather roots and herbs and wild flowers and barks, and he would explain their medicinal qualities. I was a ready and willing pupil. Remember, I was there in the wilderness without books, papers, or even people of my own race. I was delighted to learn from him, and he seemed to take great pleasure in instructing me in the mysteries of how to select and how to use the herbs, etc., and how to compound the remedies he used, and which certainly were wondrously effective.[331]

This quote illustrates a number of points. Her relationship with the medicine man was unusual as it transcended boundaries of gender and race for them to have what seemed to be a sympathetic relationship. At a point of continued westward expansion along the frontier, white settlers were anxious about the safety of frontier women and particularly the threat posed by Indian men. These perceived threats combined with white women's domestic roles meant that Tarble should not have had a relationship with him. The fact that she was tramping through the woods with him shows both her level of trust and her

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[330] Ibid, 22.

disregard for the assumptions of white society. Tarble justified friendship with him by saying that there was no one near her of her own race. If she did not want to remain isolated and lonely, Tarble had to befriend whoever was available. But that justification was hollow because she had befriended Indian women as well. Obviously Tarble enjoyed his company and being his student. As a fifteen-year-old mother, often left alone, Tarble was starved for male companionship. Her relationship with the medicine man filled this void as he spent time with her when her husband would not. On the other hand, it was extremely rare for an Indian medicine man, whose knowledge and duties were sacred, to teach anyone his skills, especially a white girl. Of course, since she was an adopted member of the tribe and still a child, he could have cared for her as part of a kin network that gave her a place in the tribe. No matter what the reason, there must have been a powerful bond between them that transcended prejudices of both cultures.

Attack and Capture

Initial reactions to Indian men who attacked and killed were horror, intense fear, and hatred. Seven of the narratives describe the horror these women felt as they saw men, women, and sometimes children murdered before taken into captivity. Urania White related the details of Indian attacks on her group:

> Then commenced a flight, a run for life, on the open prairie, by men, women, and children, unarmed and defenceless, before the cruel savages armed with guns, tomahawks, and scalping knives. Imagine, if you can, the awful sight here presented to my view, both before and after being captured.[332]

White also witnessed Mrs. Henderson and her two small children beaten and burned as well as the death of her own sixteen-year-old son Eugene."[333] She was taken captive with

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[331] Ibid., 20.
[332] White, 399.
[333] Ibid., 399-400.

her five-month-old son and fourteen-year-old daughter, Julia. Minnie Buce Carrigan related the deaths of her family members and her capture as a child of seven:

> He then leveled his double-barrel shotgun and fired both barrels at him [her father]. He dropped the baby-she was killed-and running a few yards down the hill, fell on his face dead. The same Indian then went to where my mother had sat down beside a stone with little Caroline in her lap, reloaded his gun and deliberately fired upon them both. She did not speak or utter a sound but fell over dead. Caroline gave one little scream and a gasp or two and all was over with her. That cry rang in my ears for years afterward.[334]

Carrigan was ten feet away from her mother when she was killed and fled thinking she would also be killed. She lost both parents and three sisters in a matter of minutes during the initial attack. Minnie, her brother August, and sister Amelia were taken into captivity.[335] Mary Schwandt was not living with her family when the attacks began. She was taken captive with two other teenaged girls:

> Mary Anderson was shot in the back, the ball lodging near the surface of the groin or abdomen. Some shots passed through my dress, but I was not hit. Miss Williams, too was unhurt. I was running as fast as I could towards the slough, when two Indians caught me, one by each of may arms, and stopped me. An Indian caught Mattie Williams and tore off part of her 'shaker' bonnet. Then another came, and the two led her back to the wagon. Then I was led back, also. Mary Anderson was probably carried back.[336]

When the warriors commenced killing and taking captives, white women became victims of Dakota male power that they did not understand.

Women were especially horrified by the way warriors killed their victims. During the attacks, warriors killed whites in the same ways that they killed their traditional Indian enemies – with the tomahawk and gun but also by dismemberment, scalping, burning, and bludgeoning their victims. The killing of so many white woman and children was an aberration, however, because it was usually not part of traditional

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[334] Carrigan, 9.
[335] Ibid., 9.

warfare. Women and children were generally taken into captivity en masse and then separated once the Indians moved out of the immediate area. Helen Tarble narrated one of the most horrific killings: "Another red fiend caught up the nine-months old baby girl, and holding her by one foot, head downwards, deliberately hacked the body, limb from limb, with his tomahawk, throwing the pieces at the head of Mrs. Henderson [the mother]."[337] They then proceeded to burn Mrs. Henderson alive. These men were bent on killing as many whites as possible for retribution of trader fraud and white encroachment. How much of this the white women understood is hard to guess, but it must have become very clear once they made it into the Indian camps.

Initial attacks and capture reshaped the ways white women viewed Indian men. Before the attacks, white women had varying levels of interaction and trust of Dakota men. After the initial days of the war, this trust was destroyed as power shifted from white settlers and the U.S. government back to the Dakota. Throughout the war, Dakota reasserted their own power, culture and lifestyle, which the captives would come to know through life in the Indian camps.

Early Captivity

In the confusion of the first days of the war some women regained their trust when Dakota men who protected them from death. In the first hours of her captivity, Janette DeCamp Sweet was protected at different times by two Indian men:

> He [Wabasha] said that I was a good squaw, and called them cowards and squaws for wanting to kill women and children. They were very angry and determined; but, after a long speech, in which he told them that he would not be accessory to what had been done and that he should protect and defend the whites as long as he could, they mounted their ponies and rode off . . . Seeing we were still so much

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[336] Schwandt, 14.
[337] Ibid., 29.

> frightened, told us to follow him. We entered a house near, in which he said we would be safe.[338]

Wabasha was the first Dakota man to save her life that day. Later in the day a different Sisseton man took her down to the Indian camp where she was not safe. Here Wacouta rescued her: "I saw Wacouta (the chief who had lived near us) approaching as if he were seeking someone. I went immediately to him and asked his protection. He said, 'Come with me. You are in danger here,' and lifting my little boy in his arms he rapidly led the way out of camp."[339] During the initial days of captivity, Indian men acted as protectors of white women and their children. Wabasha in particular operated within the context of traditional Indian warfare sparing women and children for ransom or adoption.

Interaction in the Indian Camps

The situation among the Indian men and white women changed once they returned to Indian camps. The captives were taken into various Indian households, sometimes into households of the men who killed their families. Minnie Buce Carrigan was adopted by the man who killed her family: "The family I lived with consisted of an old squaw and her eighteen-year-old son, a young squaw and an eight-year-old son, and an old Indian. I think they were both his wives. He was the very Indian who killed both my parents."[340] Sara Wakefield also lived in the teepee of the man who had killed her escort the day of the outbreak: "I learned that Chaska [was] still absent; that he and his mother were living with Hapa and his wife, she being a half-sister to Chaska."[341] Urania White also noted the man who took her and her children in, but he was not responsible for the loss of her family: "It happened to be my lot in the distribution of the prisoners to

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[338] Sweet, 359.
[339] Sweet, 361.
[340] Carrigan, 11.

be owned by Too-kon-we-chasta (meaning the "Stone Man") and his squaw."[342] Carrigan, Wakefield, and White were all quickly adopted into Indian families thus establishing kinship ties to Dakota families early in their captivities through new roles. Urania White revealed how traditional kinship ties created in the Indian camps through adoption could protect a captive: "they called me their child or 'big papoose.' Their owning me in this manner saved me probably from a worse fate than death."[343] Mary Schwandt also recognized how kinship worked, "Maggie and her mother were both very kind to me, and Maggie could not have treated me more tenderly if I had been her daughter. Often and often she preserved me from danger."[344] Each woman clearly understood that relationships with the Indians protected them from unwanted advances and secured their place in the tribal network. It is not incidental that Carrigan, White, Wakefield and Schwandt after her adoption were also treated fairly well for the duration of their captivities.

Life in the Indian camps was still tenuous for the captives despite ties to Indian families. In all of the narratives used in this study, women noted constant threats made against them by the Indian men. Captive Mary Schwandt reported such a threat from Little Crow himself:

> I shall always remember Little Crow from an incident that happened while I was in his village. One day I was sitting quietly and shrinkingly by a teepee when he came along dressed in a full chief's costume and looking very grand. Suddenly he jerked a tomahawk from his belt and sprang toward me with the weapon uplifted as if he meant to cleave my head in two . . . He brandished his tomahawk over me a few times then laughed and put it back in this belt and walked away.[345]

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[341] Wakefield, 75.
[342] White, 404.
[343] Ibid., 404.
[344] Schwandt, 20.
[345] Ibid., 19.

Minnie Carrigan noted her abuse at the hands of an older Indian boy, "His big boy took particular pains to abuse and torment me. One evening he was sitting in the tent throwing corn cobs at me, while his old mother was keeping up the fire and laughing at me."[346] Sarah Wakefield also noted the threats made against captives during the course of her captivity. The following is only one such instance: "He said an Indian was drunk in the next teepee, and was going to shoot all the white women in our camp."[347] Mixed blood captives were threatened as well as Nancy McClure noted: "While the Indians were away fighting at Wood Lake, I and others of the mixed-bloods could have gone away from the camp; but Little Crow said if any of us did so those who remained should be killed; and so I thought it better to stay."[348] Women were threatened to keep them unsure about their situation in captivity.

Captive women noted how constant threats of physical violence unsettled them and kept them afraid. Mary Renville, a relatively safe captive of the friendly Indians, noted how constant threats of violence and the ensuing fear took their toll: "We laid down upon our couch in a kind of exhaustive despair. Worn out with the excitement, fatigue, and exposure, we laid in a kind of stupor till nearly daylight."[349] Sarah Wakefield described the emotional strain of continued threats as well: "Every few days, as the Indians would come in, we would hear the cry, 'White women to be killed now very soon; they eat too much; we are going away and they cannot travel; they had better die at once.' This, of course, kept our minds in a perfect state of frenzy."[350] Dakota

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[346] Carrigan, 15.
[347] Wakefield, 82.
[348] McCLure, 458.
[349] Renville, 25.
[350] Wakefield, 92.

warriors used psychological manipulation to keep the captives feeling vulnerable. Sarah Wakefield noted that this manipulation indeed worked:

> I remember one day, while I was still at Redwood, that a half-breed said there had been a council, and that all the whites would be killed very soon. I sent for Shakopee, the chief of the Band I was with, and when he came, I asked him if I was to be killed. I told him if he would only spare me that I would help kill the other prisoners. I also promised never to leave his Band, and that I would sew, chop wood, and be like a squaw. I was so frightened that I really did not know what I was saying, nor did I care; for all I thought of was, if I can only live a little while longer.[351]

Wakefield was so affected that she would do anything, including killing her fellow captives, to survive. Captive women reacted to these threats in different ways. DeCamp Sweet and Tarble escaped, McClure lived with Dakota relatives and the rest of the women remained with their captors until surrender at Camp Release. Captive women vacillated between being victims of Dakota aggression and adopted members of the tribe moving through two very different roles during the course of their captivities.

Captive women also noticed Dakota men's roles in camp. Urania White noted that Indian men were often absent returning to camp only to regroup, escort the tribe when camp was moved, and to prepare for battles. "The warriors were away all the time we were in Little Crow's village. They came back in time to escort us when we moved."[352] Moving camp was a momentous event for captives and all but two noted this in their narratives. White noted the role of Dakota men as camp was moved:

> We had a train three miles long. On either side of our procession were mounted warriors, bedecked with war paint, feathers, and ribbons; and they presented a very gay appearance galloping back and forth on each side of this long train. Their orders were to shoot any white prisoner that ventured to pass through their ranks. This was done, of course, to intimidate the prisoners.[353]

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[351] Ibid., 86.
[352] White, 408.
[353] Ibid., 409.

Indian men asserted their power during these moves as they directed the train and kept prisoners from escaping. Minnie Carrigan commented on the spectacle of it as well, "All day I studied new styles and for awhile forgot all my troubles. I was completely carried away by the wild scene. Even the Indians with their guns pointing at me did not frighten me."[354] Captive women noted war preparations made by Indian men in their role as warriors. They conducted councils, soldier's lodges and dog feasts in preparation for battle. White noticed how they prepared their persons for battle:

> Others would paint their faces red, and then apply a bright coat of yellow, which gave it a sunset hue, after which a blue flower was usually painted on each cheek. Some of them would daub their faces with something that looked like dark blue clay, and then would make zigzag streaks down their faces with their fingers, leaving a strip of clay, and—well, a streak of Indian. . . . After the warriors had completed the work of painting to their liking, they gathered in small squads, seemingly for consultation. They presented a very frightful appearance. Soon they began to gather in larger parties and start off in different directions, for the purpose, as I supposed, of victimizing some innocent settler.[355]

White closely observed Dakota men preparing to fulfill one of their roles in the tribe.

During movement to and from Indian camps, captives also described the destruction of white homes at the hands of the warriors. Early in her captivity, White carefully noted how white homes were ransacked:

> The Indians entered the house, and delighted themselves by breaking stoves and furniture of various kinds and throwing crockery through the windows. After they had completed the destruction of everything in the house which they did not wish to appropriate for their own use, we were put into wagons and ordered to be taken to Little Crow's village."[356]

Sarah Wakefield also commented on the destruction of her own home and that of the Williamson's. About her own home she said, "for the next morning after that fight I removed with their family farther up the country with sad feelings. I gazed on my home,

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[354] Carrigan, 14.
[355] White, 413.

as it was enveloped in flames the morning we started. I had very little hopes of ever seeing that place again."[357] She was devastated by the loss of her home but even more so by the damage at Williamson's mission:

> Their once happy home was all destroyed. It looked as if an earthquake had done its worst work, for everything was broken up and mixed together. Bedsteads, stoves, book and medicines. I could not keep from shrieking as I thought of the old people that had passed all their lives among these same peoples, and now how they were repaid! They had been compelled to flee, forsaking all, after passing nearly all their lives among these Indians. They had a delightful home with many of the comforts of eastern farmers around them.[358]

Mary Renville also commented on the destruction wrought at Williamson's mission: "It is impossible to describe the desolation, confusion and destruction that had been made at these houses, and the feelings that took possession of us when we thought of the many families that had thus been driven from their homes."[359] Destruction of homes was a powerful and painful signifier for these women as they struggled with the larger losses this devastation symbolized. Women's homes were their workplaces and refuge, places where the family was nutured and women gained value for their own identities. Once they were destroyed, women were left without one of the most important moorings in their lives. Lisa Logan emphasized the link between a woman's home and her identity in her discussion of Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative: "At home, Rowlandson was an important and influential person, a minister's wife, a mother to her children. In this new, unstable, wilderness place, she is a servant, shuffled from master to master, begging for food from strangers. Her removal from home poses a loss of identity."[360] Captive

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[356] White, 403.
[357] Wakefield, 97-98.
[358] Wakefield, 99-100.
[359] Renville, 12.
[360] Logan, 266.

women were cut adrift from not only their homes but from the stability and civilization that home symbolized.

Sexual Vulnerability

The most powerful perceived threat from Indian men within captivity was rape. Labeled 'a fate worse than death' by the women, rape by an Indian man was the worst act a woman could suffer. The threat of rape operated on many levels in white culture. It was obviously a physical violation that could result in the birth of a mixed heritage child. Beyond this, rape of a white woman by an Indian man was a powerful symbol. If white men could not protect their women from rape, then their status as civilizers and tamers of the wilderness was compromised. Unchecked sexual violence became a metaphor for white failure to tame the Indians. If white women were raped, the white mission on the frontier was foiled.

In the eight narratives examined here, all women feared for their own sexual integrity and speculated about that of their fellow captives. Urania White and Helen Tarble both feared they would suffer this fate. Tarble openly admitted this fear saying, "I soon began to fully realize what it meant to be a prisoner of the Indians, and to suspect the fate—far worse than death—which awaited me."[361] After being separated from her fourteen-year-old daughter earlier in their captivity, Urania White related her relief when they were reunited both unmolested: "It was like seeing one risen from the dead to meet her. She was as happy as myself. And oh! How pleased we were that so far we had been spared not only from death, but, worse than that, the Indian's lust."[362] She and her daughter had so far remained physically intact and it was a point of rejoicing for both of

[361] Tarble, 32.
[362] White, 411.

them. But the threat of unwanted sexual advances continued to lurk for White and her daughter Julia:

> While in this camp my daughter came to me, crying as though her heart would break, and told me an Indian was coming that night to claim her for his wife. . . . I returned and told my daughter what he said, and she returned to her tepee home, leaving me to worry over the great danger that threatened her. Time and time again I thought, will this terrible calamity that has come to us ever end?[363]

It was this perceived sexual threat that served to put all of the women on edge during their captivities. Dakota men may not have meant advances as assault. White's daughter Julia was possibly desired as a wife which would have given her a new role and legitimizing role as the wife of a warrior and future mother of tribal members.

Unfortunately, sexual assault was a reality for a handful of captives. Mary Schwandt never explicitly stated that she was raped in her 1894 narrative although she had testified to that fact in a statement made in 1864 and recorded by Charles Bryant. In her 1894 narrative, Schwandt glossed over the repeated rapes in her early captivity. "As she [DeCamp Sweet] has so well described the incidents of that dreadful night and the four following days, it seems unnecessary that I should repeat them; and, indeed it is a relief to avoid the subject."[364] She had sustained such trauma that the effects lingered thirty-two years later. Two other captives corroborated Schwandt's rape. Mary Butler Renville learned of the incident secondhand from Sweet who was with the girls during the early days when they were raped:

> The most thrilling incident related by this reliable woman, was the suffering of three young ladies brought to camp in the evening—six young drunken Indians (or Satan's emissaries) taking these helpless girls. They clung to Mrs. D saying 'save, oh, save us!' She could only listen to their heart-rending moans. One of them had been seriously wounded in the morning trying to make her escape, and died the next day. These fiends, in human form, not satisfied with their crimes,

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[363]Ibid., 416-417.
[364] Schwandt, 16.

> took them to a tent where there was another drunken rabble, and afterwards returned them to the first camp. The chief seemed very sad about the whole affair, and said had he been home he could have prevented it.[365]

Mattie Williams and a critically wounded Mary Anderson shared Schwandt's fate.

This is not to say that Indian men did not protect white women from sexual violence. The most famous case is Chaska protecting Sara Wakefield throughout her captivity. During the initial attack, he saved her from being killed by Hapa, the warrior he was traveling with who had killed George Gleason. Once in camp, Sara Wakefield lived with Chaska's mother, but it was his presence kept her safe from harm.[366] She stayed in his tent and slept near him, which eventually raised questions about her virtue, especially among the other captives. One night, Hapa threatened to rape Wakefield:

> He soon arose, and, with knife drawn, came towards my place, saying, 'You must be my wife or die!' I said, 'Chaska, come here; he will kill me!' He said, 'Be still! I will take care of you,' whereupon he arose and came toward me, asking Hapa what he wanted. He said, 'She must be your wife or die!'...He turned to Hapa, who had his knife drawn and was still flourishing it, and said, 'You go lie down; I will take her for my wife, for I have none.' Hapa said, 'This is right; you take her, and I will not kill her.'...but Hapa said I must be his (Chaska's) wife immediately. I did not know what to do...then Chaska said, 'You must let me lie down beside you or he will kill you, he is so drunk. I am a good man, and my wife is in the 'spirit world,' and can see me, and I will not harm you.[367]

Chaska and Wakefield lay beside each other pretending to be husband and wife so that Hapa would leave her alone. Wakefield supported this ruse and pretended to be Chaska's wife throughout her captivity to keep her safe from Hapa:

> It was constantly reported and believed that I was his wife, and I dared not contradict it, but rather encouraged everyone to believe so, for I was in fear all the while that Hapa would find out we had deceived him. I did not consider the consequences outside of the Indian camp, for I had my doubts all the while of my

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[365] Renville, 19.
[366] Wakefield, 36.
[367] Ibid., 84.

> getting away. I supposed if I was ever so fortunate as to get back I could explain all, never once thinking people would consider me a liar, as many call me.[368]

By saying that Chaska was her husband to protect her from Hapa, Wakefield brought her own virtue into question. She did not realize that her fellow captives would judge her so harshly once they returned to white society.

After her captivity, no one would believe that she had not had sex with Chaska, especially given the strident nature with which she defended him during the military tribunal and while he was imprisoned. White society would not condone her actions as it was unpardonable for her to engage in sex with an Indian men of her own free will. Her fellow captives and Sibley's soldiers would have extended sympathy towards her if she had been raped, but they perceived that she had been his wife willingly—an act that was unforgivable. She even went so far in her narrative as to state that he was hung intentionally.[369] She condemned her own race and those who took part in his execution:

> It has caused me to feel very unkindly towards my own people, particularly those in command at Mankato. There have been all kinds of reports in circulation respecting Chaska and myself, but I care not for them. I know that I did what was right, that my feelings were only those of gratitude toward my preserver. I should have done the same for the blackest negro that Africa ever produced. I loved not the man, but his kindly acts.[370]

By making statements such as this, Wakefield was obviously not interested in winning anyone to her side and, in fact, she probably alienated even more people by defending him. It seemed to Wakefield that Chaska was hung because of an assumed sexual relationship with her rather than being an accessory to George Gleason's murder.

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[368] Ibid., 84-85.
[369] Ibid., 122.
[370] Ibid., 123.

Indian Men as Protectors

Dakota men also acted as protectors of captive women and children. Once Jannette DeCamp Sweet learned her husband was alive, she was determined to escape. On the day of preparations for the Battle of Birch Coulee, DeCamp Sweet and her children, helped by her former servant Lucy, escaped to the camp of the friendly Indians. DeCamp and her children were taken in by Lorenzo, a Christian Indian, and his family. "All this time I had kept hidden from them, and I afterward learned that they were out hunting for us."[371] Sweet and Lorenzo both realized she was not safe and decided to make an escape. "I arose very quickly, and gathering my children together, found Lorenzo and his family ready to start. . . . Lorenzo led the way toward the river, and we walked in Indian file, he returning every little way to cover up our tracks."[372] Lorenzo then hid everyone in the swamp until the following morning. "Just as day was dawning, we arose and started for the river, where the Indian and his mother had hidden the boats the Sunday before. When we got to the river we were so overjoyed that we could not wait, but rushed into it, drinking to our heart's content."[373] They traveled on the river for three days before safely reaching the fort. Sweet was so thankful for Lorenzo's help that she recommended him to Sibley:

> I would also add that the Indian, Ton-wan-i-ton, or Lorenzo Lawrence, who brought us to the fort, was taken into Gen. Sibley's employ as a scout and returned with him, guiding and directing them to the enemy. The General came to see me in regard to their numbers and position and the probability of getting the captives. I referred him to Lorenzo as perfectly reliable and trust-worthy , and he did not fail to fill the recommendation.[374]

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[371] DeCamp Sweet, 371.
[372] Ibid., 372-373.
[373] Ibid., 373.
[374] Ibid., 379-380.

When Sweet returned to the fort in 1866, she was reunited with Lorenzo and visited him and his wife. His former kindnesses were not forgotten. Indian men also protected Nancy McClure; in her case they were relatives. "A few minutes afterward my uncle, with three of his cousins, rode into the camp. My uncle's name was Rday-a-mannee (the Rattling Walker.) He was a very brave, good man, and had taken no part in the outbreak. To my great joy, he said he had come to take us away."[375] She was saved from further trouble in Little Crow's camp by the intervention of her uncle.

In other instances, Indian men protected captives by hiding them from aggressors. Chaska's eighty-year-old grandfather, Eagle Head hid Sarah Wakefield, after a rumor spread that the captives would be killed:

> The old man took his gun and I my baby on my back; we started in great haste for the woods, which we roamed all night from dark until daylight, never stopping only long enough to nurse my baby; when we would hear them shouting, we would dive deeper into the gloom. . . .He said he would go back to camp, but he must hide me first, for he dared not take me back until he knew how matters were. He proposed hiding me in a hay stack, saying he could pull out the centre and put me into the middle and then cover me up.[376]

He hid her there until sunset when she could safely return to camp.

Captives also noted when Indian men helped them care for captive children. Sweet stopped to rest during a camp move. An old man who she had helped the during the winter preceding the war recognized her destitute condition and offered both sympathy and aid:

> The old man's eloquence touched me deeply as I contrasted my situation with what it had been, and we were all bathed in tears. He brought up his pony, with poles fastened behind, and reaching a bundle brought out some pieces of bread and gave to the children, who were almost famished. He then fixed the bundles so that my little boy could ride, but no persuasions on our parts could induce him

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[375] McClure, 453.
[376] Wakefield, 80.

> to leave me a moment. The poor old man and tried to comfort us the best he could, and I did not soon forget his attempted kindness in my forlorn state."[377]

She remembered this comfort as a pivotal part of her captivity. Urania White also became exhausted on a camp move and an old Indian man tried to help her:

> But I remained sitting about ten minutes, I should think, when an old Indian came to me and took hold of my hand to help me. I shook my head. He then had the train halt, or part of it, a short time. I afterward learned that a council was held, the object being to come to some agreement as to how they would deal with me. Some thought best to kill me and my child; others thought not. The final conclusion was to take my child, place him on a loaded wagon, and start the train. The, if I did not 'puckachee,' they would kill me and the baby also. They started, after putting the child on a wagon, and I followed, taking hold of the end-board of the wagon, which proved to be a great help to me to the end of our day's march.[378]

Her life was almost forfeit until the Dakota men created a solution that preserved her and her child.

As new members of Dakota camps, each woman was thrust into a very different and often frightening environment. Captives were forced into new relationships with Dakota men that moved well beyond the casual contact of prewar relations. Female captives struggled to come to terms with the world of Dakota masculine power that had moved them from the confines of white culture into a vastly different native culture. As a part of this new culture, white women took on new roles defined by Dakota ideals of gender and race. Initially, all the captives were victims of violence perpetrated by Dakota men and many would remain so throughout their captivities. Over time some captive women moved into new roles during the course of captivity. They moved beyond being victims and traumatized women into roles as adopted kin of Dakota men. A handful of captive women such as Wakefield were even believed to be wives of Indians. In the

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[377] Sweet, 369.
[378] White, 411.

early days of captivity, Mary Schwandt was used as a slave for sex while Helen Tarble worked as a servant until her escape. Capture by and interaction with Dakota men thrust women into a new cultural milieu and challenged their existing identities and feminine roles. This transformation would continue through captive interaction with Dakota women.

Chapter Five

Protectors or Tormentors? Dakota and White Women in Captivity

Interaction between Dakota men and white women within the context of capture and captivity began a transformation of white women's roles. The challenges presented by captivity to white female identity became more pronounced through captive interaction with Dakota women because both groups of women shared similar gender-related duties such as childcare, preparation of clothing and food, and care of the home. In Indian camps, white women lived on a more intimate level with Dakota women whose roles and supporting ideology further reshaped white women's roles.. Dakota women were cultural mediators during this time teaching white women how to fulfill their new roles as slaves and servants; wives and mothers; adopted kin; and cultural critics based in Dakota culture.

Prewar Contacts

Dakota and white women cultivated relationships on the Minnesota frontier before the war. As women interacted at white households and sometimes in the Indian camps over common ground such as food, clothing, and childcare, both groups came into frequent contact with the other's cultures. This cultural interaction was deepened during captivity as white captives were immersed in Dakota culture.

Before the war, white and Dakota women formed relationships over mutual interests. Minnie Carrigan noted this about a Dakota woman her mother had befriended: "The squaw used to come to our house a great deal and my mother would show her how to bake bread and do a good many other things. Father used to call her mother's sister,

because she was such a great friend of ours."[379] Her mother and the Dakota woman had become so close that Carrigan's father called them sisters. Sara Wakefield found the Dakota women to be friendly and kind when they came to work in her home: "And I will state in the beginning that I found them very kind, good people. The women have sewed for me, and I have employed them in various ways around my house, and began to love and respect them as well as if they were whites."[380] Other captives attacked Wakefield for being too sympathetic to the Indians, but her bonds of friendship are no less important. Relationships with Indian women seemed to have evolved into something more than mistress and laborer and Wakefield obviously felt a genuine warmth for these women that transcended racial stereotypes to form solid friendships. Both quotes revealed how racial and gender differences did not have to be boundaries for friendship. According to Sara Brooks Sundberg, it was not uncommon for frontier women to establish relationships with the Indians: "It is apparent that some Minnesota frontierswomen established meaningful social relationships with American Indians."[381] Perceived differences could be set aside by those open minded and strong enough to do so.

Helen Tarble described Indian-white relations as cordial where "the white settlers in the adjoining country were friendly to the Indians and often helped them, and between the settlers and some of the Indians the relations were most cordial and intimate, like those of near neighbors and good friends."[382] Because Tarble had been in the area longer than any of the other captives, she recorded how her views of the Dakota changed over

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[379] Carrigan, 17.
[380] Wakefield, 61.
[381] Sara Brooks Sundberg, "A Study of Farm Women on the Minnesota Prairie Frontier, 1850-1900," M.A., University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 1984: 44.

time. When she first came to the area in 1857 as a child bride of thirteen, she was terrified of the Indians:

> Those only who have heard the blood curdling war-whoop of the wild Indian can imagine the terror I felt, the agony of fear I endured. This was the first large band of Indians I had ever seen... They invited me into their house, but I was afraid of the repulsive looking squaw, and I implored my husband to go back with me.[383]

Later that year, however, after becoming acquainted with the Indians she related:

> Naturally I began to drop into their ways and learned their language. My home was only a few miles from one of their big villages, and we visited back and forth. When I could talk with them in their own language they seemed to think I belonged to them. They would at any time give me a share of what they had to eat, and often I would go to their camp and listen to their war adventures.[384]

Tarble had moved beyond her fear to establish reciprocal intimate relationships with the Dakota. In fact, two Indian women attended the birth of her first child.[385] She became acculturated to Dakota life learning their language, travelling to their camps, and allowing them into her home.[386] Because of this close contact, Tarble was a transculturated woman due not to captivity but to proximity. Her age also facilitated her acceptance by the Dakota as she was a lonely adolescent girl during the prewar period. The fact that these women could still relate any positive aspects about the Indians after captivity attests to the importance of friendly relations before the war.

Not all of the women learned to like the Indians, however. Mary Schwandt gave her views about the Indians:

> The Indians visited us almost every day, but they were not company for us. Their ways were so strange that they were disagreeable to me. They were always begging, but otherwise were well behaved. We treated them kindly, and tried the

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[382] Tarble, 12.
[383] Ibid., 16.
[384] Ibid., 19.
[385] Ibid, 20.
[386] Ibid., 18-21.

> best we knew to keep their good will . . . .In time I became accustomed to the Indians, and had no real fear of them.[387]

While she may have been prejudiced because of her experience during captivity, she could not deny that almost daily contact with the Indians was a pervasive part of life on the frontier.

Using post war narratives to discuss prewar relationships may be problematic because captivity obviously changed captive views of the Dakota. But the captives themselves felt prewar relations important enough to describe in their narratives for a number of possible reasons. By describing friendly relationships, some authors portrayed the war as completely unexpected coming only from Indian barbarity and not legitimate grievances. Helen Tarble was one such captive:

> During that dreadful period many of these red demons, who 'never forget a kindness,' rose from the humble board, where they had just shared with the kind-hearted pioneer and his family their frugal meal, and bathed their cruel hands in the blood of all that dwelt beneath the hospitable roof and then bore away their gory scalps, as trophies of their demoniac exploits, in triumph to their villages.[388]

Of course Tarble had been closest to the Dakota before the war and probably knew that there were legitimate causes. Her sense of betrayal overwhelmed her capability to think rationally about what had happened.

On the other hand, some women felt that their behavior before the war shaped their treatment in captivity. Wakefield expressed this clearly in her narrative:

> As they perceived who I was, their laments were really touching to my feelings. They proved to be old friends of mine. Six years previous to my living at the Agency, I had lived in the town of Shakopee. In the winter there were camped around the town this same band that I was now among. Not a day passed but some of the Indians were at my house, and I had always pitied them, and given

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[387] Schwandt, 6-7.
[388] Tarble, 8.

> them food...and now I was with them they said they would protect me and mine.[389]

Wakefield's captors treated her and her children kindly because of what she had done for them in the past. DeCamp Sweet noted how previous kindnesses to the Indians were repaid during her captivity as well:

> We had stopped to rest for a few moments...when I saw an old man, who had been a constant visitor to our house during the winter. I had felt great pity for him, as he was very old and feeble, and he said his wife was ill. He came three times a week to get his dinner, and I always sent food to his wife . . . He was telling her how good we had been to them, saying that I had everything and now I was a poor captive, without food or clothes.[390]

After this the old man gave her and the children food. Many captives felt that good behavior on their part shaped how Dakota treated them during captivity.

These relationships did not necessarily change within the context of captivity. Sandra Myres believed that in general, Indian women remained loyal to their white friends when violent outbreaks did occur: "Even during outbreaks of violence, friendly Indians often came to the assistance of their white neighbors, warned them of possible danger, and sometimes assisted them in fleeing from the hostiles or in spreading the alarm to other white settlers."[391] This seemed to have been the case in one instance in Minnesota as well. Janette Sweet related how this happened:

> Chief Wacouta's mother came running past. As she came up she cried, "'Puck-a-chee! Puck-a-chee! Dakota, nepo-wa-sicha squaw! Puck-a-chee!' 'Fly! Fly! They will kill you, white squaw!' and she threw my four-year-old boy over her shoulder, not stopping for a moment. I followed with the other children, running toward Wabasha's village."[392]

Sweet was warned and assisted by a Dakota woman who tried to keep her safe.

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[389] Wakefield, 69.
[390] DeCamp Sweet, 369.
[391] Myres, 63.
[392] Sweet, 358.

Life in the Indian Camps

Once captive women and children were brought to Dakota camps, Indian women aided and protected white women, some of whom they had known and befriended before the war. When Sarah Wakefield arrived in camp, two older Indian women who knew her lamented at her capture and immediately gave her and her children a place to rest and some food:

> Many of the old squaws cried like children. They spread down carpets for me to sit on, gave me a pillow, and wished me to lie down and rest. They prepared my supper, and tried every way possible to make me comfortable; but that was an impossibility. They promised me life, but I dared not hope, and felt as if death was staring me in the face.[393]

On her initial arrival in camp, Helen Tarble was taken to the house of Little Crow himself and there met one of his wives:

> One of his squaws came in and I told her that the poor children were very hungry, and she made us some bread and coffee. She told me that there were many white women captives and that they made a great fuss, crying a great deal, etc. She said the Indians did not like this and would kill the women if they kept up their crying, and would not be good to me if I cried. I knew this was true and resolved to do my best to please them.[394]

Little Crow's wife gave her some stern advice about how to behave so that she would not be harmed. Tarble realized this and resolved to do so to please her captors.

This type of assistance was even more crucial for children and adolescents brought into camp. Minnie Buce Carrigan was a seven-year-old girl when her parents and three sisters were killed and she was taken captive with her brother and sister. On the second day of their captivity, when the horrible reality sunk in, all three children wailed despite threats that they would be killed if they did not quiet:

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[393] Wakefield, 20.
[394] Tarble, 32.

> Just then an old Indian widow and her daughter came in. I knew them as they used to come to our house. I jumped off the couch and ran to the young girl and put my arms around her neck and hugged her tightly . . . . The old lady picked up my sister and put her on her back as she would her own child and brought her out. She seemed to like the Indian mama as she called her. My brother followed us.[395]

Indian women were protectors and foster parents of the Buce children. Adoption by an Indian woman was even more important for Mary Schwandt. Schwandt was fourteen-years-old when taken captive and had obviously suffered severely during the first days of her captivity. She was taken to Little Crow's camp where Snana eventually adopted her:

> An old Indian woman called Wam-nu-ka-win . . . took compassion on me and bought me of the Indian who claimed me, giving a pony for me. She gave me to her daughter, whose Indian name was Snana (ringing sound), but the whites called her Maggie . . . Maggie and her mother were both very kind to me, and Maggie could not have treated me more tenderly if I had been her daughter.[396]

Snana was Mary's protector on several occasions. "Often and often she preserved me from dangers, and sometimes, I think, saved my life. Many times, when the savage and brutal Indians were threatening to kill all the prisoners, and it was feared they would, she and her mother hid me."[397] Dakota women were fierce protectors of captive children they had adopted and their protection was crucial to the survival of those children.

Care of Captive Children

One of the main issues during captivity for many female captives was the whereabouts and condition of their captive children. The ages of child captives ranged from infants to teenagers with the older children sometimes separated from their mothers as the warriors returned to different camps. Urania White and her daughter were separated as the captives were transported to the villages. "Just as we were driving into the water, the wagon containing my daughter with other captives was disappearing

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[395] Carrigan, 11.
[396] Schwandt, 19-20.

beyond the top of the bluff on the other side of the river. I thought again, what will befall her?"[398] White's trials in captivity were compounded by a mother's fears as she agonized over the well being of her infant son: "I looked at my poor little starving babe, and saw that he was growing thinner every day from pure starvation."[399] Sara Wakefield noted her separation from her son during a camp move:

> I told James he might go with Paul, for Chaska had advised me to let him go, as our load was so large he could not ride. He said as he started, "I wish you would go too, mamma," and he seemed a little sorry I had consented to let him go. I can now see his little bare legs hanging down against the black ones of the Indian, and his white face looking pitiful as he rode away. How many times that day I regretted that I left him leave me.[400]

Once she let him leave with Paul, her mind was not at peace until their reunion. Minnie Buce Carrigan also remembered her separation from her brother and sister during the initial days of their captivity:

> We children were watching them when all of a sudden somebody stepped up behind me and threw a blanket over my head and picked me up and ran with me to a wagon, put me into it and held me fast. I kicked and screamed but they would not let me go. The wagon was in motion for about an hour before they took off the blanket, and then I looked in all directions, but could see nothing of my brother or sister and I did not see them again for over a week. My brother said he was served in the same way.[401]

Separation from children or siblings served a dual purpose for the Indians. Children became dependent on their Indian caregivers and more likely to become acculturated to Indian life once separated from siblings and parents.[402]

Even when captives had their children with them, the women still suffered over their well being. Urania White worried constantly about being able to procure food for

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[397] Schwandt, 20.
[398] White, 403.
[399] Ibid., 407.
[400] Wakefield, 90.
[401] Carrigan, 11.
[402] For a more detailed discussion of assimilation of captive children see J. Norman Heard, *White into Red.*

her five-month-old son when she could no longer nurse very well: "The little fellow was a mere skeleton. I was only able to get a small quantity of milk for him once every two days. This was all that kept him from starving."[403] Wakefield worried about protecting her children and tried to disguise them so the Dakota would not kill them:

> I tried to disguise my children. I rubbed dirt all over my boy, but his white hair would betray him. I tore off the shirt of my baby's dress, took off her shoes and stockings, but did not rub dirt into her flesh, for she is naturally of very dark skin, and the squaws said she looked like a papoose after I had made her rugged.[404]

Captive women were sometimes desperate to protect their children. After an Indian woman said that Wakefield was to be killed and that her children would be kept and ransomed by the Indians, she became deranged, threatening to kill her own children:

> I became nearly frantic. I had thought of this all night, and I determined I would kill them rather than leave them with those savages. I ran to a squaw, begged her knife, caught up my little girl, and in a moment would have cut her throat, when a squaw said it was false. What I suffered, let every mother imagine, when you think of my trying to cut my child's throat myself.[405]

Wakefield's despair over the fate of her children was so deep that she would have killed them instead of leaving them to the Indians. Despite all her descriptions of the Dakota as a good but abused people, she still did not want her children to be kept and raised by Indians.

Overall, Dakota women treated captive children well and helped white women care for them. Mary Renville remarked that Dakota women cared for captive children to the point of spoiling them. Speaking of her daughter Ella, Renville stated:

> She is getting more contented, having learned a little of the language; and the girls carry her on their backs, and the women fetch her all the *goodies* [her emphasis] they can. She is a great favorite, and should we punish her we should have half a dozen women to see what is the matter with Ella. She has learned this, and will

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[403] Frazer, 412.
[404] Wakefield, 72.
[405] Ibid., 72.

> not be washed or combed without screaming like the Dakota children, and we dare not punish her.[406]

Dakota and white women were both responsible for childcare as part of their duties and Dakota women cared for captive children like they did their own. This distressed white captives who had their own childrearing practices including different standards of cleanliness, diet, and especially discipline. White parents used physical punishment for disobedience but this was frowned upon by Dakota women who did not. Dakota and white women both nutured their children but in very different, culturally specific ways. These differences emerged during captivity and caused problems for white women who were no longer in complete control of their own children. They also had to consider Dakota women's childrearing practices so that difficulties would not be caused between the two groups of women during captivity.

Clothing

Clothing, or lack of it, played an important role in these narratives. Caring for and providing clothing was a primary duty of female captives before the war. Once in the Dakota camps, captives lost control over clothing as Dakota women provided clothing and determined how captives should dress. Sara Wakefield related how changing clothes changed her very identity: "I went to Chaska's mother, and soon I was changed from a white woman to a squaw. How humiliating it was to adopt such a dress, even forced by such circumstances."[407] Helen Tarble described how an Indian woman's garb was made when she and fellow captive Urania White were told to make suits of Dakota women's clothing for themselves:

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[406] Renville, 35.
[407] Wakefield, 71.

> The skirt consisted of two yards of broadcloth simply made by sewing the two ends together. The extra fullness folded over the hips and was tied on with a scarf. The sacques or basques were made by folding a piece of calico together, cutting out a half for the head to pass through, and another on each side to form the sleeve.[408]

Urania White described her reaction to adoption of Indian women's clothing:

> I put mine on while she [Helen Tarble] was making hers as first told. When finished she put it on. We thought our looks were extremely ludicrous. She cast a queer gaze at me, and then commenced laughing. I said to her that under the circumstances I could see nothing to laugh about. She replied that we might better laugh than cry, for we had been told that the Indians would have no tears.[409]

Clothing was such a powerful symbol for white women that their identities were compromised when wearing Indian attire.

Mary Butler Renville recognized the transformative power of clothing as well: "We went a little distance and watched the progress of the fire, keeping our blankets wrapped close about our head, for fear of being known as white persons, for we have been obliged to lay aside civilized costumes."[410] She concealed her white identity and became Indian, and thus uncivilized, to protect her life. She also tried to assert that captives did not care for fine clothing they wore before the war: "The Indians dressed them up in the poorest kind of Dakota clothes, and then laughed at them, saying 'these are the people who used to dress in silks so rich and fine,' little realizing that one cared not for fine dress in such perilous times as these."[411] Renville proved her self false by discussing the issue at all. Captive women obviously cared more about self-preservation, but clothing remained a powerful symbol of what they had lost, including their white identities.

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[408] Tarble, 33.
[409] White, 405.
[410] Renville, 22.
[411] Renville, 17.

The transformative power of clothing was so important for these women they did not feel civilized again until they were wearing white clothing. Urania White noted the change once she was rescued: "Here we exchanged our squaw outfit for new calico dresses, and really began to feel as though were white folks again."[412] She did not feel like herself until she had the female attire of a white woman. Helen Tarble echoed White's assessment about the reclaiming power of white clothing, especially after she reached the fort essentially nude. "The waist fitted me very well, but the skirt was rather short, as Mrs. Jones was short in stature, while I was inclined to be tall. However, I felt very comfortable in my new clothes, as they were much better than anything I had had for several days."[413] New clothing comforted Tarble on many levels, physical and emotional, because it meant she survived her captivity and travels in the wilderness to return to white culture. By returning to white clothing, captive women repudiated the roles they had as members of Dakota society. John Mack Faragher noted a similar thing for women traveling across country on the overland trail. As women traveled, they continued to wear traditional female attire instead of shorter styles that would facilitate travel. Many women he studied noted that they did not feel civilized again until the end of their trips when they could be clean and properly attired.[414]Clothing helped these women redefine themselves once they returned to white society.

In their narratives, captive women astutely observed how Indian women adorned themselves and how Dakota used, or in the captive's opinions misused, plundered white

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[412] White, 413.
[413] Tarble, 44.
[414] John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men no the Overland Trail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979): 106-107.

clothing. Urania White described the elaborate toilet of Indian women as they adorned themselves:

> The squaws seemed to take great pride in ornamenting their head and hair. They usually parted their hair in the middle of the forehead, plaited it in two braids, and tied the ends firmly with buckskin strings, on which were strung three large glass beads at the end of each string. Then they painted a bright streak over the head where the hair was parted. I saw one squaw with five holes in the rim of each ear, from which hung five brass chains dangling on her shoulders, with a dollar gold piece fastened to each chain.[415]

Dakota women's concept of beauty included braiding and ornamentation of hair, paint, and special clothes and moccasins. Although white women viewed this adornment and attire as uncivilized, Indians women's standards of feminine beauty were not so different from those of whites. Both groups of women adorned their hair, applied paint or make-up, and dressed well. What the end result looked like was culturally determined as both groups outfitted themselves with the accouterment that was available. Standards of beauty for both groups of women were not as far apart as white women perceived just because Dakota women looked different. Dakota women's habits were important to captive women who were deprived of the means to conduct their own personal hygienic and beauty routines.

Clothing acted as a signifier on another level as well. Clothing and jewelry plundered during the war were visibile reminders to captive women of their losses because owners of those items were dead, captured or fled. Janette DeCamp Sweet commented on Dakota uses for plundered clothing:

> Many of the warriors wore ladies' bonnets on their heads, and furs dragged downward from their legs. Their breasts were covered with brooches and chains of value; from their ears depended wheels from clocks and watches which they had destroyed. The finest silks were made into shirts; beautiful shawls were used

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[415] White, 413.