

**Fear and Reconciliation: The U.S.-Dakota War
in White Public Pedagogy**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines closely related public discourses like *balance*, *neutrality*, *objectivity*, and *fairness*, analyzing the collective barrier they pose to social-justice education. Taking the recent sesquicentennial of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 as a case in point, this study gives an overview of the *public pedagogy* (Sandlin et al., 2011) that prevailed in southern Minnesota in 2012, encouraging educators to present perspectives on the war in ways commonly considered “balanced,” “neutral,” etc., all while urging citizen-scholars to commemorate sacrifices made by the Dakota people and white settlers equally. As I argue, this *public pedagogy* mediates *justice as fairness* (Rawls, 1993; Steele, 2005; Seth, 2010), a sense of justice that has a long colonial history in America, promoting the suspension of social contingencies like race so that the historically empowered may make sense and derive comfort from the violently unequal past.

To better understand *justice-as-fairness* discourses as antithetical to *critical social-justice* education (McLaren, 1995; Grande, 2004; Giroux, 2006; Waziyatawin, 2008), this study proceeds to explore relationships between classroom pedagogy and 2012’s larger public pedagogy. Analyzing data collected from fieldnotes, informal conversational interviews, and classroom artifacts, I look carefully into dilemmas these conflicting senses of justice presented to a group of 15 college students and two instructors as they co-authored a successful traveling museum exhibit on the U.S.-Dakota War. Conducting their work at a private, liberal-arts institution located near where the fighting once took place, I investigate various ways students and instructors resisted, negotiated, and reproduced *justice-as-fairness* discourses that have long encouraged local citizens to suspend moral judgment about how their communities were made. What emerges is a portrait of educators and student knowledge workers setting aside critical prior knowledge about colonialism and racial oppression in order to accommodate the creation of a museum exhibit that would safely mediate a common sense of justice for them and their implied white audience.

The study concludes by theorizing pedagogical support for a critical museum-exhibit project on the U.S.-Dakota War that would advocate for regional social change, an exhibit variously envisioned by students but one that ultimately went unwritten for deference to local ideological demands.

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TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Quotes taken from study participants and printed in this text use normal punctuation. The quotes do however include symbols from time to time marking aspects of participant speech important to my analysis.

The symbols used are adapted from a system developed by Gail Jefferson and published in J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage's *Structures of Social Interaction: Studies in Conversation Analysis* (1984, pp. ix-xvi).

[]	brackets indicate overlapping utterances
-	dash indicates self interruption
(.)	period within parentheses indicates micropause
(2.0)	number within parentheses indicates pause of length in approximate seconds
<u>yes</u>	underlining indicates emphasis
°yes°	degree marks indicate decreased volume of words between
(hhh)	h's within parentheses indicate laughter
((cough))	items within double parentheses indicate some sound or feature of the talk which is not easily transcribable
(yes)	parentheses indicate transcriber doubt about hearing passage
↑yes	arrow indicates upward intonation of sound it precedes

Introduction

I've lived in Mankato, Minnesota, for almost nine years. In case you don't know, Mankato is the site of the largest simultaneous mass execution in U.S. history. It once made the Guinness Book of World Records for this distinction (Wazyatawin, 2008, p. 40). On the second day of Christmas, 1862, thousands came to what was then a town of only a few hundred residents to witness the event — 38 Dakota men hanged together at the cut of a single rope. Some of the 38 were reported to have grabbed each other's hands and clothing as they struggled in their nooses and died. They hung there that way for nearly half an hour.

Two sesquicentennials have come and gone since I moved here, one for the state's founding in 1858, the other for the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. It goes without saying that these events are closely related but details telling how are often startling. Joseph R. Brown, an officer on hand at the execution whose job it was to signal the executioner when it was time to cut the rope, had once been a trader in the territory well known for dealing in whiskey (Green, 2007, pp. 24-25). He was said to have had "a penchant for young Sioux girls" and to have "kept Indian women," (Anderson, 1984, p. 227; Green, 2007, p. 107), pleasurable for him, to be sure, but also advantageous for building kinship ties and expanding trade.

Brown served for a time as Indian agent for the U.S. government, appointed to the position by the state's first governor, Henry Sibley. He played an instrumental role in assimilation strategies that split the Dakota into white-like "cut-hair" and traditionalist "blanket" factions, a fissure that led to the threat of civil war among Dakota people (Lass,

1995, p. 22). By the time of the Mankato hanging, Brown had served as a founding state legislator, as had William Duley, the man who cut the gallows rope. Both were signers of the state's first constitution in 1857 (Constitution, Democratic version, p. 37; Republican version, p. 40). Among Brown's many accomplishments was assisting to draft Article 7,¹ delineating the franchise according to the racial hierarchy of the day: "1. White citizens of the United States; 2. White persons of foreign birth [...]; 3. Persons of mixed white and Indian blood [...]; 4. Persons of Indian blood [...]" (Constitution of the State).² Restrictions increased moving down ladder to the point where level 4 described nonstarters. As historian William Green has written, "Indians could never be white enough to be equal" (2007, p. 109).

Not long before the fighting broke out in 1862, Joseph R. Brown completed a mansion for himself and his family — "Farther-and-Gay Castle"³ — situated across the river from the reservation on land confiscated through recent treaties whose terms were essentially dictated to the Dakota (Meyer, 1967, p. 104). Brown stocked his new home well with food, "sumptuous furnishings," and other luxuries shipped from New York and Washington D.C. (Lindeman and Nystuen, 1969). Nearby, Dakota people were confined

¹ Brown's contribution to Article 7 concerned suffrage restrictions on people in category three, "who have adopted the customs and habits of civilization," and category four, "residing in this State who have adopted the language customs and habits of civilization, after an examination before any District Court of the State, in such manner as may be provided by law, and shall have been pronounced by said court capable of enjoying the rights of citizenship within the State" (Wingerd, 2010, p. 389n75).

² Article 7 appears on page 19 of the Democratic version and page 20 of the Republican version. Page numbers are taken from pdf files provided by the Minnesota Historical Society. The article reads identically in both documents.

³ The name is believed to have been a play on Fortheringhay Castle in England (Lindeman and Nystuen, 1969).

to a dwindled reservation, expected to resign themselves to impoverished conditions and their less-than-equal status. Farther-and-Gay Castle was plundered and burned in 1862.

Every winter since I've lived in Mankato, horse riders have come to the hanging site from Lower Brule, South Dakota, to honor the 38 hanging victims. For approximately two weeks, dozens of them ride through the cold and snow, covering 330 miles to bring offerings and prayers on December 26. They also bring messages for white or *wasicun* (wah-SHE-chewn) culture. In 2014, a ride leader told the crowd, "I want to encourage all my non-Indian relatives by saying that a culture driven by profit is contrary to natural law."⁴

I am a relatively privileged white from Marietta, Ohio. Although I learned about the U.S.-Dakota War and hanging as a college student in the early 1990s, I could afford not to know about it before that time and to continue not paying attention to its significance afterward. My wife and I purchased a house in Mankato in 2006 without giving any thought to the violence that made the transaction possible. It seemed natural to take this next step in our lives as career educators. That we were entitled to do so seemed beyond question. We simply didn't think about it.

Since moving here, I've learned that Mankato has carried a stigma for many decades ("Powwow overcoming history's stigma," 2012). Dakotas have told of their people avoiding the place for over 100 years, not just for being the site of the execution but for local whites' tendency to celebrate the event and to celebrate local conquest in general prior to the 1970s. In 1935, the Mankato Teachers College (today's Minnesota

⁴ Video recorded by author and published on YouTube, December 26, 2014. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YV83NZk2kME>

State University where my wife came to work) made “the Indians” its mascot. The bookstore used to be called “the Wigwam.” Tepees went up on the football field during homecoming week, or “powwow.” Witchdoctor dances were performed by white students the night before the game and a white Indian princess was crowned (*Katonian*, 1959, p. 280-281). Aptly named Governor Freeman came and received his own headdress in 1962 (*Katonian*, 1962, p. 99).

While this type of celebratory activity may be typical for white American communities, the hanging provided occasion for even darker forms of racist expression. Images of the execution used to adorn things like cigar packages and beer trays. Thirty-eight bald tires were once painted red and strung up with ropes in an advertising campaign at a gas station situated near the hanging site. A sign read “38 Red Skins Bite the Dust,” as Mankato *Free Press* editor Ken Berg once recalled (Berg, 1975; Berg, 1984). Coverage of local reconciliation activities since the 1980s have brought out stories about local racism shared for years among Dakotas. In 1997, Ed Godfrey, a descendant of one of the 38 hanging victims, told the press about a confrontation that took place in a Mankato restaurant in the 1950s between a small group of Dakotas passing through town and white youths who told them “We hung 38 of you here before, maybe we can add six more” (Lindberg, 1997). Such incidents and white-supremacist social practices fed the sense of stigma, keeping Dakota people away from the town for so long.

Much has changed since the 1960s to make things like a real annual powwow, the *Mahkato Wacipi*, possible (Andrews, 2010). Today, many whites turn out every December 26 to witness and welcome the arrival of the 38 + 2 Memorial riders as well as

the ceremonial runners from Fort Snelling who meet them at the hanging site.⁵ Reception and news coverage is positive. In making room for Dakota ceremony and joining with Dakotas at annual events like the powwow, the Mankato community has recently been held up as “a model for what is possible” in efforts to “heal the wounds of 1862,” as recently noted in the Twin Cities Public Television (TPT) documentary *The Past Is Alive within Us: The US-Dakota Conflict* (2013). Just before pointing to the Mankato success story, however, the film quotes Sandee Geshick, a member of the nearby Lower Sioux Community, who claims,

There’s still a lot of racism, discrimination, and I always ask myself, why? *Why?* Is it because we fought for what was ours? Should we have just given up and said take whatever you want? It’s in all indigenous people to give, to share, you know, what we have and we thought we were doing that in giving so generously, sharing the things that we had, and we were taken advantage of.

This study takes Geshick’s claim about current racism and discrimination seriously. In giving a brief overview in this Introduction of the white public pedagogy of the U.S.-Dakota War that prevailed in southern Minnesota in 2012, and then proceeding in subsequent chapters to analyze its reproduction in classroom pedagogy, this study explores the question of why racial discrimination still persists to the detriment of Dakota people. Before attempting to give any plausible explanations or reasons, however, this study must first show *where* such discrimination circulates and *how*. As this study demonstrates, current racist practices that work to the civic exclusion of Dakota people

⁵ The commemorative run began in 1987, Minnesota’s “year of reconciliation” (Fischenich, 1991).

do not just manifest themselves in straightforward expressions of bigotry that readily come to mind at the word racism (Fields and Fields, 2012, p. 17). This work is not necessarily about the kind of celebratory white-supremacist expressions of the past, like those mentioned above, nor does it primarily concern the kind of hate speech one may find on the internet, in angry e-mails, or in letters to the editor, although it does sometimes include such forms of racist expression. Rather, this study concerns subtle uses of language and day-to-day social practices that are often not seen as discriminatory for their being perceived as normal, natural, and commonsensical to the people engaging in them.

My goal with this work is not to try to overturn the Mankato success story but to show how current equity-minded discourses that seem to exude multicultural progress when compared to the racist past — mutual healing and reconciliation, forgiving everyone and everything, equally honoring and commemorating all who died in 1862, etc. — can provide political cover for divisive social practices that continually reopen the wounds of 1862. I conduct this work with the hope that by identifying various ways that the starkly-drawn Dakota/white racial divide continues to get reproduced today, progress can be made toward restorative justice for Dakota people, a goal that could enable everyone, even white homeowners like me, to realize a more just social order (Waziyatawin, 2008).

* * *

In January 2011, the Mankato *Free Press*, printed an editorial “thumbs up” to a project going on at North Dakota State University (“Dakota translations welcome,” 2011).⁶ Retired Dakota Presbyterian ministers Clifford Canku and Michael Simon were translating selected letters written in 1863 by Dakota men originally sentenced to hang in 1862 but who had received pardons from President Lincoln. Prior to their removal from Minnesota, these 265 men sat detained indefinitely in a Mankato prison. Approximately 120 of them ended up dying not long after in a prison in Davenport, Iowa (Meyer, 1967, p. 144). Canku and Simon’s work has since been published by the Minnesota Historical Society as *The Dakota Prisoner of War Letters* (2013).

Within a week of giving its “thumbs up,” the newspaper printed a rebuke from David J. Gray, a local who positioned himself as a descendant of a white who had fought against Dakotas in the siege of New Ulm in 1862. Titled “Why is the white side in Conflict ignored?” Gray took issue with all the negativity being heaped on settler society:

But let us not forget that those wonderful letters that were translated were written with Latin letters brought by white Christians. They would not be here today if not for those kind enough to have taught writing or transcribed the words spoken to them. I guess some people just tend to forget that when writing about ‘a terrible moment in Native American history.’ (Gray, January 28, 2011)

In going back to the original Minnesota Public Radio News story on Canku and Simon’s project that had provided the newspaper occasion to give its thumbs up, I learned of disappearances of Dakota prisoners who would not convert to Christianity and of rapes of

⁶ The thumbs up came in response to a Minnesota Public Radio News story covering the project (Gunderson, 2011).

Dakota women at the hands of white prison guards (Gunderson, 2011). Gray's letter seemed to cast all of this as part of a larger humanitarian effort.

By the time this letter ran, I had completed the first semester of my doctoral program in Literacy Education at the University of Minnesota. That very day I was deep into a book titled *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (1984), reading Brian Street's critique of the "autonomous model" of literacy. According to the autonomous model, the capacity for abstract reasoning in a group of people is best evidenced by their development of what anthropologist Jack Goody had once called "the technology of the intellect," that is, alphabetic technology for western-style reading and writing practices (Street, p. 65). As Street points out, this conceit — looking for socially abstracted technologies in non-western cultures — often led to a failure among researchers to identify literacy practices already present among the supposedly "pre-literate" people they were studying.

Street's analysis emphasizes how Eurocentric notions of literacy tend to go hand in hand with other conceits about civilization, Christianity, reason, and race that regularly cast non-white people in terms of their alleged deficiencies. Reading the letter to the editor on a morning when I was still only partway through Street's book made me wonder about the subtle ways that old colonizing beliefs about literacy and race might still be circulating around me. On one level, the letter's racism was easy to see. I didn't need to be in a doctoral program to know that the "white side" to colonization had not been ignored in white American communities. Growing up in Marietta, a town that boasts of being the "first settlement in the Northwest Territory" despite its founding on an ancient village or "earthworks," I had learned at an early age that the opposite was the

case, that the “Indian side” to colonization had literally been graded over and its people effectively erased from the modern white public narrative (O’Brien, 2010). But in this intersecting point between Street’s book and Gray’s letter, I had never really observed such specific connections made between white supremacy and something as seemingly benign to me as the alphabet. Finding it in the newspaper this way sparked curiosity for me in multiple directions. If I continued to collect articles and letters about the war as I studied, would connections continue to emerge as rich as this one? Was the literacy-racism link still circulating among more “reasonable” people than Gray? On a seemingly different front, why would the newspaper bother to run a letter like Gray’s? The editor probably received racist letters and e-mails all the time, or so I figured. Why would he run this particular one just then, designed as it was to spread salt on the wounds of 1862? Or why would he seem to take those wounds seriously on Saturday only to turn around and subject them to ridicule the next Friday? This question felt most troubling to me. No further columns or letters were printed on the subject. Gray got the last word on the Dakota prisoner-of-war letters.

With these questions in mind, I began collecting everything I could find being written and said publicly about the U.S.-Dakota War. A subscriber, I clipped everything relevant out of the *Free Press*, amassing over 100 articles and letters printed between 2011 and 2013. As the largest daily newspaper in the region, the *Free Press* provided stories and reports on commemorative activities and upcoming events held in Mankato and surrounding communities also affected by the war like New Ulm and Gotland where I eventually conducted my ethnographic work. The paper also features a weekly

“Glimpse of the Past” series to which six regional county historical societies contributed during the period in question. At the same time, I trolled the internet, capturing articles from the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, St. Paul *Pioneer Press*, as well as regional newspapers like the Redwood Falls *Gazette*, New Ulm *Journal*, and Le Sueur *Herald*, printing or bookmarking over 60 pieces relevant to themes like *healing, reconciliation, balance, equality, and perspectives* that were emerging in my primary focus on the Mankato press. I captured Minnesota and National Public Radio stories, accessed oral histories published on the Minnesota Historical Society website, and viewed documentary films. In cases where transcripts were not available from radio stories or recent films like *Dakota 38* and *The Past Is Alive within Us*, I transcribed segments related to my emerging themes. In addition to this work, I attended public lectures and commemorative events like the public discussion on reconciliation at the 2012 *Mahkato Wacipi* and the arrival of the Dakota 38 + 2 ride every December 26 in Mankato, taking notes in field journals. I even went so far as to attend a drama in a local church basement where the war and Mankato mass execution were reenacted by a Mankato children’s theater company, “Lincoln’s Traveling Troupe.”⁷

⁷ The troupe is organized and directed by Bryce Stenzel, a local independent historian and Abraham Lincoln impersonator. Promoted by the *Free Press* as a “researched, reasoned perspective” on the war, Stenzel’s original drama ... *We Cannot Escape History...* provided the script for the performance at Mankato’s Bethlehem Lutheran Church on May 19 and 20, 2012 (Kent, 2012). Stenzel’s was not the only regional reenactment that recruited white child actors to play Dakota Indians in 2012. In Rochester, Joe Chase, an Olmsted County District Court judge, also produced his own script and drama for public performance (Weber, 2012). Both Stenzel and Chase told the press that they consulted Dakota people during production.

To help make sense of this work that drew from so many different kinds of public sources, I sought a theoretical approach within my field of Literacy Education, one that could address the ways people were teaching one another about the past in extra-institutional spaces, meaning outside formal classroom settings. Accordingly, this study follows the work of Jennifer Sandlin, Michael O'Malley, and Jake Burdick who have mapped various uses of *public pedagogy* since the late nineteenth century. In what follows, I apply *public pedagogy* to mean the *dominant discourses* that express “pedagogical aspects of the cultural milieu, such as public policy, political discourse, [and] widespread cultural values” (Sandlin et al., 2011, p. 351). In tracking and coding regional *discourses* on the war, this study also follows the work of critical discourse analysts like Norman Fairclough and James Gee who define *discourse* in terms of “language as a form of social practice” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 16), involving the enactment of specific, situated identities (Gee, 2011, p. 201).

* * *

In trying to learn as much as I could about the current public pedagogy of the U.S.-Dakota War, I attended a regional academic History conference hosted by Minnesota State University, Mankato, in the fall of 2011. There I went to a workshop and panel discussion concerning a college course on the war being developed at St. Lucia College⁸ in Gotland, Minnesota,⁹ a town also affected by the war of 1862 that lies

⁸ St. Lucia College is a pseudonym applied to maintain the promise of anonymity to study participants.

⁹ Gotland is also a pseudonym in keeping with the promise of anonymity.

approximately twenty minutes away. This section of the Introduction gives background for the course that comprises the lion's share of my study, explaining how I got involved and introducing themes central to the "fear and white public pedagogy" of my title.

At the September 2011 workshop, the course designers, Dr. Judith Lenz, Professor of English, and Mr. John Harwell, Director of the Blankenship County Historical Society (BLCHS),¹⁰ presented their working syllabus and discussed the instructional approaches they would take beginning in just a few short months (Field journal, 09-22-2011).¹¹ As explained to the audience, Lenz and Harwell had spent more than two years designing this one-month January-term (J-term) experience called *Conflict and Remembrance: The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862* wherein students would immerse themselves in the war as public history. The instructors had arranged a six-part lecture series for the entire St. Lucia/Gotland community featuring both Dakota and white educators with expertise on the war. They had lined up three field trips including visits to the Mankato execution site;¹² Fort Ridgely and the Lower Sioux Agency historical site near Morton, Minnesota; and Fort Snelling and the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. In addition to reading six books¹³ and hearing from guest speakers in the classroom,

¹⁰ Also a pseudonym to help preserve anonymity.

¹¹ The following account and all direct quotes in this section are reconstructed from journal notes taken on the days of the conference, September 22 and 23, 2011.

¹² This first field trip also included stops at the Blankenship County Historical Society and a regional psychiatric treatment facility that provides settings for Thomas Maltman's novel *The Nightbirds* (2007) which was on the J-term syllabus.

¹³ The readings were organized in the following order: *Waterlily* (1988) by Ella Deloria; *Through Dakota Eyes: Narratives of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* (1988) by editors Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan Woolworth; *The Dakota War of 1862: Minnesota's Other Civil War* (1961/1976) by Kenneth Carley; *The Nightbirds* (2007) by Thomas Maltman; *The Captivity Narrative of Sarah Wakefield* (1863/1997) by Sarah Wakefield,

students would produce a traveling museum exhibit on the war primarily under Mr. Harwell's supervision. The workshop presentation that day was organized according to an approach that favored listening to and representing multiple public perspectives. In line with the focus on perspectives, Dr. Lenz's role on the day's panel was to discuss creating the course from "the college perspective," Harwell creating the course from "the community perspective," and Anthony Morse, curator of the Lower Sioux Agency historical site, would speak about History "from a Dakota perspective."¹⁴ According to this configuration, social and political divisions important to this study already lurk. Most importantly at this juncture is "the community perspective" sitting apart from "a Dakota perspective." Indeed, the Gotland community represented by Harwell reports 90% white and 0.6% native populations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Current U.S. Census Bureau estimates show an even starker contrast for Blankenship County — 94.6% white and 0.4% native populations. Under demographic circumstances like these, borne out in Mankato and New Ulm and their respective counties as well, the whiteness of "the community perspective" is implicitly understood.

edited by June Namias; and *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation on Dakota Homeland* (2008) by Waziyatawin.

¹⁴ The J-term instructors solicited a Dakota perspective from Morse on this and other occasions. As manager of the Lower Sioux Agency historical site, Morse was a colleague of Harwell's at the time of this study. Morse explains in a promotional video for the Agency site that "My family was one where the culture was not what we lived every day. I am very much a novice compared to two- and three-year olds from the Community because they live in the culture every day." Morse, who introduced himself to the J-term students as a ninth-generation Mdewakanton Dakota (Fieldnotes, 01-19-2012) had been voted on and denied enrollment by the Lower Sioux Indian Community tribal council 21 times prior to the J-term. He still remained hopeful in 2012 of future enrollment because of the amount of Dakota blood he feels shares with relatives who are enrolled. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1ak3R6qPP0> Retrieved March 8, 2015.

After each panelist spoke, the working syllabus was shared with the audience. It began with two epigraphs that reflected negatively on settler society — one by Indian Agent Thomas Galbraith reading,

The [beliefs] and habits of the Indian must be eradicated; habits of industry and economy must be introduced in the place of idleness . . . the peaceful pursuit of home life must be substituted for the war-path, the chase, and the dance; and more than all, the hostility of the Indian opposed to this policy must be met on the threshold.

and one by *Wambditanka* (Big Eagle) that read,

The whites were always trying to make the Indians give up their life and live like white men . . . If the Indians had tried to make the whites live like them, the whites would have resisted, and it was the same way with many Dakota.

Dr. Lenz read over parts of the syllabus containing language suggestive of a critical approach to the war. The course description, for example, mentioned the Mankato hanging as occurring “the day after Christmas, 1862.” It went on to say, “The bloodshed and its aftermath left deep wounds that have yet to heal. It also resulted in the eradication of much of the heritage of the Dakota in this land. What happened here continues to matter today.” Among course goals, students would “understand the context in which St. Lucia College was founded in 1862.” Students would also “study the ‘linguistic turn’ in history.” The purpose of the museum exhibit assignment included, “The hope is that this exhibit will raise awareness of the treatment of indigenous people in the 19th century as white settlers poured into Minnesota.” In addition to the epigraphic references to

ethnocide and white double standards, the list of texts included *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (2008), a book arguing that what happened to the Dakota people in the nineteenth century qualifies as genocide, as genocide is defined in international law. Dr. Lenz happened to have expertise in this area having researched, taught, and published for many years on experiences of women during the Holocaust.

In the ensuing question-and-answer session, the co-instructors were asked such things as what they planned to do about students passing judgment on people from the past “from their modern perspectives,” how they could keep students from falling into “paralyzing guilt,” and whether they planned to teach the course “from a neutral perspective” (Field journal, 09-22-11). Among the panelists, Dr. Lenz was the only one to resist the notion that a neutral position should be assumed, saying she didn’t think there was such a thing as teaching this history from a neutral perspective.¹⁵ Soon, a man sitting toward the back of the audience near the door stood up and took issue with Dr. Lenz’s previous references to genocide in relation to the book *What Does Justice Look Like?*

“Are you going to have your students read Richard Fox’s book, *Archaeology, History, and Custer’s Last Battle?*,” he asked.

“No, that’s not on the syllabus,” Dr. Lenz replied.

With some intensity, the man proceeded to explain that a book like Fox’s would teach the students something important about a context that seemed to be missing, the

¹⁵ Dr. Lenz confirmed this response in an interview on January 12, 2012.

fact that Dakota warriors mutilated the bodies of their fallen enemies on the battlefield believing that would be the way they would enter the afterlife, unable to do battle there.

“Are you going to have your students learn about that?” he asked.

Silence ensued. Dr. Lenz thought for a moment and then answered that she wasn't planning to include that on the syllabus and didn't see how it would be relevant. The session chair looked uneasily around the room as if waiting for someone else to speak on the matter. No one did. The Q & A continued and the man left.

I stopped this man the next day between conference sessions and asked if I could speak with him. I told him I was researching the U.S.-Dakota War and that I thought he had made an interesting point the day before. I wanted to learn more about why he felt it was important. Although he didn't introduce himself, his nametag told me he was a professor at a regional state university (Field journal, 09-23-11). He said he thought Dr. Lenz didn't seem to know very much about the history of the war since she seemed to be omitting a whole body of knowledge concerning the settler experience. Specifically, that experience included fears in the aftermath of violence that the Dakota would band together with other tribes out west and return to Minnesota with the intention of wiping whites out of the state. He asked me in a friendly, rhetorical sort of way whether I knew what it was like to live out on the prairie. I answered no. He quickly said that he did. He said he came from a small town in western Minnesota and that he had “walked that ground,” the settlers' ground, many times before. He explained that theirs was an uncertain and tenuous existence on the frontier, and isolated settler families were

vulnerable to attack. Most of the settlers owned guns but few really knew how to defend themselves in combat. Fear of mutilation was part of their experience.

I have come up empty checking Richard Fox's book for details about Dakota fighters mutilating their fallen enemies. The book, *Archaeology, History, and Custer's Last Battle: Little Big Horn Reexamined* (1993) shares what the title suggests, an archaeological analysis of the battle site in Montana that does not highlight such practices among the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho people who went to war against Custer's troops. Fox devotes only a single paragraph of his lengthy book to mutilation, telling first that accounts vary among both Indians and whites as to whether mutilation occurred at all. He points to other scholars' archaeological evidence in concluding that it did happen, but concludes, "Acts of mutilation were, in part, a result of anger and were a practice not restricted to one or another group" (p. 221). That is all. Fox is simply not interested in mutilation as a potential contributing factor to the panic and terror experienced by Custer's troops whose tactical unity disintegrated in the chaos of combat. Interestingly, Fox uses archaeological evidence from the battle site to challenge "white beliefs" and "hearsay" (p. 241) regarding the soldiers' defeat that point away from the disintegration of the soldiers' gallantry under fire, a disintegration Fox refers to as "psychological debilitation" (p. 228).

In the body of literature covered for the present work, I have come across mutilation-of-the-fallen tales in a variety of places — Bryant and Murch's *A History of the Great Sioux Massacre by the Sioux Indians* (1864) where they are included in selected military reports, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865* (1890)

where they come in the same type of documents, and Duane Schultz's *Over the Earth I Come: The Great Sioux Uprising of 1862* (1992) where the practice is referred to without reference to a source (1992, p. 60). Considering the frames these works set for telling mutilation tales — the first two establishing them as barbaric acts committed by “savages”¹⁶ and “red devils,”¹⁷ and the third as sensational material adding a sense of terror to a novelistic history¹⁸ — the prospect of locating reliable information from such sources is not good.

Regardless of the “truth” in this matter, most important for my study is the *socially symbolic act*¹⁹ the professor performed in the conference session, an act designed to address and perhaps even try to resolve the “unresolvable contradictions” (Jameson, p. 79) that white-settler identity poses to its defenders, e.g. settlers as innocent victims versus settlers as exterminationists. Taking a slightly calculated risk that no one in the audience would have read a marginally related and somewhat obscure history like Fox's, the professor established authority to speak on a specialized topic he only seemed to know from a biased point of view. But even this is not necessarily what aligned the act

¹⁶ Both of these first two sources use mutilation tales to emphasize white innocence and gallantry: “Not even satisfied with the death thus inflicted, the savages had removed his scalp, beaten out his brains, cut his throat from ear to ear, and cut his tongue out by the roots” (Bryant and Murch, 1864, p. 219).

¹⁷ After describing a mutilated civilian casualty, Major C. Powell Adams wrote in 1864, “... my scout, Quinn, soon discovered the point where the red devils recrossed the river” (Minnesota Board of Commissioners, vol. 2, p. 544).

¹⁸ Schultz's chapter title, “The Indians are Raising Hell,” freely reproduces the red-devil trope rampant in traditional white sources like Bryant and Murch.

¹⁹ In *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981), Friedrich Jameson explains the function of *socially symbolic acts* — “the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal ‘solutions’ to unresolvable social contradictions” (p. 79).

with its ideological tradition. Rather, by ignoring the long history of mutilations whites have exacted against their “enemies” — from taking the heads of the fallen back to the English king for proof of success in battle to the ritualized, public dismemberment of lynching victims well into the twentieth century in the United States — the professor established a racial double standard suggesting that mutilating bodies was the sole practice of Dakota fighters. Reports of mutilations carried out by whites against Dakotas are of course easy to find in the sources and indicative of the multidirectional violence that occurs in wartime (Heard, 1864, pp. 177-178; Clodfelter, 1998, pp. 160-161; Bessler, 2003, p. 65).²⁰ In this way, the professor’s act of protest at the workshop can be said to fit an important dynamic involved in racism as examined by Karen and Barbara Fields in their book *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (2012), a kind of definition that will figure into other socially symbolic acts analyzed in this study, namely, “the theory and practice of applying a social, civic, or legal double standard based on ancestry, and to the ideology surrounding such a double standard (p. 17). Identifying strongly with white Minnesota settlers, having “walked that ground” himself in western Minnesota and sensed the fear of mutilation, this ideological descendant felt obligated to remind the instructors of a neglected form of knowledge, the fear of red “savagery” that would presumably counterbalance talk of genocide against natives. Like David J. Gray’s letter

²⁰ Disturbingly, the day before I eventually made a presentation to the *Conflict and Remembrance* students about the Mankato hanging which involves the desecration of the bodies of the executed, a story broke about U.S. Marines desecrating the bodies of Taliban fighters (Fieldnotes, 01-12-2012). See Afghan leader Karzai condemns US Marines body desecration video, BBC News Asia, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16524419>

to the editor, most troubling for me was that no one in the audience seemed prepared to contest his assertion in the moment, including me. While some may well have identified the double standard to themselves, no one voiced opposition to the claim.

It did not help that this conference workshop took place in the Blue Earth County Public Library auditorium. The building partially covers the 1862 execution site and the auditorium itself must be situated very near where “the exact spot” of the execution was determined by a group of white Dakota war veterans in 1911 (Andrews, 2010; Lybeck, 2015). The monument they erected on the site became a source of public controversy for years for the way it flaunted public execution by hanging, a practice outlawed in Minnesota that same year (Bessler, 2003; Lybeck, 2015). Protests against the marker ramped up during the Vietnam War era and included native activists who called for its removal, sometimes threatening to take matters into their own hands (Lybeck, 2015). Protests around the library site continued into the 1970s, even after the monument’s removal in 1971. Whether or not the conference participants were aware of this history, the site has historically been a politically charged one. While only Mr. Harwell pointed back to this moment in interviews, and then only to tell me that he also had learned that mutilations did not occur as the professor had suggested (Fieldnotes, 01-06-2012), I believe the exchange was a formative one in establishing a cautious tone for the instructors, especially Dr. Lenz whose neutral classroom pedagogy provides the focus for Chapters Two and Three.

When Dr. Lenz and Mr. Harwell wrapped up their conference session in Mankato, I immediately approached them requesting permission to follow the course as a

participant-observer. After meeting with them later that fall to discuss my purpose and potential role in the J-term — that of a graduate-student researcher embedded with the students, using ethnographic methods to research questions pertaining to critical literacy — they graciously welcomed me to the course.

* * *

This Introduction has presented some elements of the “fear” referred to in *Fear and Reconciliation*. Like hate, however, fear is an awfully strong word, perhaps too strong for the examples of caution and anxiety I describe at times. Still, the emotion was there. On the first day of class, a representative from the Minnesota Historical Society told the St. Lucia J-term students, “This topic scares the crap out of me. People point fingers. It can be scary sometimes because people accuse you of being racist” (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012). As will be discussed, formative moments like this one for the students and at the History conference for the J-term instructors worked to constrain critical approaches to the war, exacerbating perceptions of both racist and race-sensitive audience members attending the lectures and who would be coming to view the final museum exhibit.

Now what of *reconciliation*? The *Mahkato Wacipi*, the Dakota 38 + 2 Memorial Ride, and the commemorative run from Fort Snelling already mentioned, combined with related regional activities outside Mankato like the Commemorative March to Fort Snelling (Wilson, 2006), all give powerful evidence that many more discourses concerning 1862 circulate in the region than the white-supremacist defenses noted. Like

in 1987's statewide "Year of Reconciliation" and 1997's dedication of Reconciliation Park in Mankato near the hanging site, *reconciliation* found frequent expression as a dominant discourse during the recent sesquicentennial. Among some natives, reconciliation could be cast in terms of attaining the self-healing needed to overcome histories of poverty, addiction, and abuse that afflict their families and communities as colonized people. Toward the end of the film *Dakota 38*, for instance, ride leader Jim Miller²¹ speaks of reconciliation as an internal process — "We've gotta strive for that reconciliation. Let's go home and reconcile our families, our differences. Let's go home and hug our children, tell them that we love them." According to this conception, reconciliation only makes demands on Dakota people rather than looking to white institutions for formal apologies, psychological concessions, or material reparations. As Miller says in the film, "We don't have to blame the *wasicus* [whites] anymore. We're doing it for ourselves. We're selling drugs. We're killing our own people. And that's what this ride's about. It's healing." As Waziyatawin explains, this type of internal reconciliation has developed in response to white institutions' persistent refusal to apologize for their roles in colonizing Dakota homeland and to curb ongoing oppressive practices like championing prominent nineteenth-century men who happen to have been ardent exterminationists (Wilson, 2006, pp. 130-131).

In *Dakota 38*, another recent Memorial Ride leader, Peter Lengkeek, cast *reconciliation* as an external process of mutual forgiveness and healing between Dakotas and whites — "We're trying to reconcile, unite, make peace with everyone." Early in

²¹ Miller is Lakota, a descendant of people related to the Dakota but indigenous to areas west of Dakota homeland.

2013, Lengkeek brought this message to the local media during a screening of *Dakota 38* in New Ulm. One reporter wrote, “Along the way Lengkeek said he's had ‘healing’ conversations with descendants of settlers killed during the war and even descendants of President Abraham Lincoln” (Dyslin, August 18, 2013). In line with this form of mutual reconciliation, Vernell Wabasha, a Dakota elder from the Lower Sioux Community, promoted the message “Forgive Everyone Everything,” at least according to the press,²² agreeing to have the phrase engraved onto park benches surrounding the new Mankato monument she envisioned for the 38 hanging victims (Krohn, April 24, 2012). The *Free Press* heavily endorsed this message, emblazoning it across its front page the day after the monument dedication ceremony. Coverage of the December 26 proceedings included mayor Eric Anderson’s proclamation of 2012 as “the year of ‘forgiveness and understanding’” (Krohn, December 27, 2012).

Cross-cultural reconciliation as mutual healing has seen resistance from Dakota public intellectuals, most prominently historian Waziyatawin and her father, Chris Mato Nunpa, both of whom have worked for decades as writers, professors, and human-rights activists to decolonize their homeland. In 2013, the Mankato *Free Press* reported on a roundtable discussion at a local college where Mato Nunpa critiqued this mainstream form of reconciliation which is clearly appealing to whites for its non-threatening content — “Mato Nunpa says most of the ‘reconciliation’ he’s seen between whites and Dakota Indians has been a superficial exercise. ‘We eat together, everyone is nice. We put on our

²² “Forgive everyone everything” has not been Wabasha’s message in years past. In 1987, she referred to the “Year of Reconciliation” as “a farce” for its failure to make a difference in white/Dakota relations, including whites’ persistent tendency to blame the Dakota for the violence of 1862 (Wilson, 2006, p. 130).

feathers and dance for you, entertain. The white man feels good,' Nunpa said. 'There's more to do than that. There are things that need to be done.'" Among the things Mato Nunpa mentioned needing redress were "the taking of land, bounties put on Dakota scalps in the 1860s, 'concentration camps' at Fort Snelling and elsewhere, and the attempt to kill and banish Indians from Minnesota. Then a returning of lands and payments for violated treaties" (Krohn, January 21, 2013).

Within this resistance to reconciliation as mutual healing lay another meaning of *reconciliation*, i.e. truth and reconciliation like that seen in South Africa in recent decades. "A truth-telling forum," Waziyatawin writes in *What Does Justice Look Like?* would "disallow Minnesotans from denying or ignoring the history of genocide and the perpetration of human injustices," a prerequisite, she argues, for restorative justice (2008, p 11). Waziyatawin's writings on reconciliation reveal an acute awareness of whites' eagerness to endorse and promote forgiveness and mutual healing knowing that this kind of reconciliation will involve no psychological or material concessions or challenge their legitimacy as property owners in Dakota homeland. In *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors: The Dakota Commemorative Marches of the 21st Century*, Waziyatawin disavows mutual-healing reconciliation for its tendency to support the status quo by suppressing calls for restorative justice (Wilson, 2006, p. 130). Below, I will refer to Chris Mato Nunpa and Waziyatawin's conception of truth-telling and restorative justice as *critical*

reconciliation meaning that it openly acknowledges unequal and oppressive power relations between whites and Dakotas, past and present.²³

Tension between uncritical and critical reconciliation — mutual healing and forgiveness versus truth-telling as a catalyst for social justice — came through most dramatically in 2012 in the public discussion of a poem proposed for engraving onto the new monument to the 38 hanging victims. Read aloud in downtown Mankato on December 26, 1971, by Conrad Balfour, Minnesota’s human-rights commissioner at the time, this apparently untitled poem focused on the hypocrisy of a people who would carry out a mass hanging the day after Christmas, one of their holiest times of the year. Presented to the public as “The Balfour poem,” this unpublished social-justice piece had apparently been selected by monument designers Vernell Wabasha and Martin and Linda Bernard of Winona, all of whom are of native descent (Linehan, March 4, 2012; Luhmann, 2012). Within four days of the printing of the Balfour poem, a new poem had been written by Katherine Hughes, a white descendant of a former Mankato State University historian, tentatively accepted by city council members, and reported on by the newspaper (Linehan, March 8, 2012).

Early the following week, the *Free Press* printed an editorial “Our View” column entitled “The Goal is to Reconcile,” in which the editor attempted to canonize uncritical reconciliation by asserting the power the city derived from owning the park property where the monument would stand:

²³ *Critical* approaches to discourse “treat social practices, not just in terms of social relationships, but also in terms of their implication for things like status, solidarity, the distribution of social goods, and power” (Gee, 2004, p. 28).

But the city park, owned and maintained by the city, is named Reconciliation Park for a reason. The park, containing the buffalo statue across from the library, is to be a place where blame and judgment about the 1862 war can be set aside while Native Americans and area residents focus on commonality and learning more about each other. (“Goal is to reconcile,” March 11, 2012)

The words “is to be” helped carry a powerful message to the community that the newspaper, in its alignment with the authority of the City of Mankato, would define the ideological parameters within which Dakotas and whites could congregate in the park. In short, Reconciliation Park “is to be” a neutral and presumably apolitical space where “judgment,” something presented as separate from “blame,” would be suspended. It is here, at the ideological intersection of uncritical reconciliation with the often entangled discourses of *balance*, *objectivity*, and *neutrality* that a larger white public pedagogy takes shape.

As Dakota commemorative run participant Ray Owen puts it in the film *Dakota* 38, “Reconciliation means something to everybody. And I think it’s a collective.” This astute observation made in the midst of social activity — a run — helps make several points about what is meant by *discourse* — that reconciliation, for example, constitutes no mere composite of words or beliefs but rather a collective of people *practicing* reconciliation together through *activity* involving the enactment of specific *identities* (Fairclough 2001; Gee, 2011); that while repeated uses of a word like “reconciliation” may sound as if they accrete into a single unifying concept, individual utterances of the discourse mean something slightly different for every speaker practicing it; that

discourses are therefore adaptable to changing times, situations, and speakers.²⁴ In illustrating intersections of discourses like *balance*, *objectivity*, and *neutrality* with *reconciliation*, I hope to demonstrate how the adaptability of a discourse bearing the promise (or threat) of transformative social justice and change can be capitalized on in an effort to defend the political status quo.

“Reconcile,” the replacement poem now etched onto the new Mankato monument, provides a highly visible example of capitalizing on discursive adaptability, subjecting *reconciliation* to a kind of refraction by the intersecting white discourse of *balance*. Set up by a series of stanzas that “Remember the innocent dead” on the one hand and “the guilty dead” on the other — “Both Dakota and white” and, alternately, “both white and Dakota” — the conclusion expresses

Hope for a future
 When memories remain,
 Balanced by forgiveness

(Linehan, March 8, 2012)

There are certainly multiple ways to paraphrase this ending — the balancing of memories being a byproduct of forgiveness; the reconciled point of forgiveness being a means for one day achieving balanced memories — but to reconcile changes here from a community goal to a state attained on the way to another goal, that is, the fifty-fifty

²⁴ In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1973), V. N. Volosinov writes, “what is important for the speaker about a linguistic form is not that it is a stable and always self-equivalent signal, but that it is an always changeable and adaptable sign” (p. 68).

distribution of innocence and guilt among whites and Dakotas established in the poem's dialectics. Considering fundamental memories that such an equalization seeks to eliminate — that Dakotas lived in the area first; that treaties enabled whites to rob them of their homeland; that the Indian system run by living, breathing white men was fundamentally corrupt and precipitated war (Nichols, 1978/2012, pp. 5-24) — the poem reads not as a series of artistic stanzas but as a list of simplistic imperatives telling readers to remember in an equitable way that involves a great deal of forgetting. Rather than “Balanced by forgiveness,” the poem means to end with something like “forgive and forget.” Refracted by the discourse of *balance*, then, this form of uncritical reconciliation runs exactly counter to critical reconciliation for its attempt to manipulate collective memory to the benefit of those holding civic authority and power.

Katherine Hughes told a *Free Press* reporter that she wrote “Reconcile” in an effort to be “objective” about the U.S.-Dakota War. In the same article, she dismissed the Balfour poem by saying, “It wasn’t in the spirit of reconciliation” (Linehan, March 8, 2012). In such remarks one notes a kind of willful blindness toward those advocating critical reconciliation, as well as an expression of privileged colonial identity that seems to continually ask *what do these people want?* when facing the demands of the dispossessed (Spivak, 1993, p. 265). Regionally, the privileged “objective” position riddled the white public pedagogy of 2012, from independent historian Mary Bakeman’s publication of the journal *Minnesota’s Heritage: Back to the Sources* (2010 — 2013) promising “objective looks at Minnesota’s diverse heritage” (Bakeman, 2011, p. 1) to Bryce Stenzel’s children’s theater production ... *We Cannot Escape History...*, staged,

according to the author, because “Our history deserves the respect of truth of objectivity” (Kent, 2012). In this case, white *objectivity* refracted mutual-healing much like Katherine Hughes’ use of *balance*, in an effort to help canonize uncritical reconciliation. As Stenzel put it, “There will never be true reconciliation until the story is told objectively from multiple perspectives” (Kent, 2012). The fact that his production required white children to play Indians and provided roles for white women and children but none for Dakota women and children was all beside the point; the play was “researched,” meaning the independent historian had consulted the white sources in conducting his work (Kent, 2012). In this political arena where the intentions and social contingencies of colonial knowledge production seem to have erased themselves, and keep erasing themselves daily, presenting the “perspectives” available in the white sources still provides all the warrant one needs to claim “objectivity.”

Throughout this study, my project will not be to parse the histories of dominant discourses like *balance*, *neutrality*, and *objectivity* but to look carefully at the daily political work they perform in order to keep both critical reconciliation and interpretive moral judgment at bay. Although I delve at times into the local histories of some of these discourses — the roots of old-settler *objectivity*, for example, as expressed in white-supremacist histories like Isaac Heard’s *History of the Sioux War* (1864) — it should become clear that speakers using the terms do so without necessarily thinking of their distinct etymologies or political genealogies. What concerns me is the collective function of these discourses to obscure racial power through what the Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gomez refers to as the *hubris of the zero point* — the epistemological

conceit of the “neutral seeker of truth and objectivity who at the same time controls the disciplinary rules and puts himself or herself in a privileged position to evaluate and dictate” (Mignolo, 2009, p. 162). Indeed, in the image already taking shape of whites attempting to and even pressuring each other to balance perspectives from sites of institutional power like the local historical society, the local college, the local newspaper, etc., the normative aspect of the zero point should be coming into view. In what follows, elements of my project will be — a) to investigate how today’s educators and students negotiate white zero-point epistemology and its politics of race, b) to trace this epistemology’s ties to local white-settler ideology, and c) to make the social contingencies behind iterations of the zero point of representation visible. Ultimately, the explanations I provide supporting Sandee Geshick’s claim about racism today derive from analyses of racially divisive social practices enabled by zero-point discourses.

* * *

As witnessed in the counterbalancing act performed by the angry professor at the Mankato History conference, approaching the U.S.-Dakota War “equitably” or “objectively” in the local sense can entail more than mere folk notions about racial equality in America or the nature of the work professional historians do. Indeed, to “balance” the war against critical reconciliation and moral interpretive judgment can involve complete awareness of knowledge being produced today like Waziyatawin’s and of the nature of the violence that occurred in 1862. The attempt to eliminate not just blame but judgment itself from public spaces betrays a significant degree of well-

informed white anxiety about the outcomes of interpretive thought. The often repeated call not to weigh sides or to weigh them only in light of universal equality, to collect the dots of objective fact but never to connect them, reveals an implicit awareness that to do so would lead “the community” to ask some embarrassing questions of itself, questions that could disrupt foundational beliefs about its own values and identity such as the entitlement to land and property ownership in southern Minnesota; notions of settler innocence, Christian victimhood and benevolence; notions of American justice, equality, and democracy through which the public has long taught itself. In this lies “the 150 years of myth making” that Waziyatawin confronts in *What Does Justice Look Like?* (p. 11).

Indeed, the demand for balance provides political commentary on various ways of interpreting Minnesota history deemed “imbalanced” from a traditional and often stereotypical white-settler perspective.²⁵ What some whites learn from studying 1862 in southern Minnesota is a history that seems to refute critical pedagogies like Waziyatawin’s that teach about histories of oppression against racialized people. In the

²⁵ I sometimes present white claims to equal victimhood and the white politics of resentment as endemic to “settler perspective.” I do so knowing there are settler descendants on the public scene who do not espouse these discourses, for instance, Jacob Farmer, a 78 year-old man who walked alongside Dakota 38 + 2 Memorial Riders for parts of their journey in 2013. An ancestor of Farmer’s served in the cavalry in 1863 overseeing the removal of Dakotas across the Missouri River. Farmer told the press, “Out of that I began to realize the Native Americans had to walk while the military rode their horses. I wanted to reverse roles” (Krohn, December 27, 2013). Frederick Juni, a descendant of settlers from Milford, Minnesota, where many settlers were killed in 1862, told the press, “There is a certain amount of blackness that had to be in the souls of some of those people back in the day” (“150 years later,” August 19, 2012), a problematic statement, to be sure, but an uncommon one that seemed to try to account for an undeniable racism among ordinary settlers in 1862, people eager to ascribe “black” identity to Dakota people (Heard, 1864, p. 55). A bottom line consistent in the admittedly diverse white-settler perspective I analyze, however, is the defense of property.

local case, whites sometimes come to understand that their people were the oppressed ones, the ones threatened with extermination when Indians ran them off “their” (the whites’) land. However resistant this form of knowledge is to incorporating facts about, say, the white production of red “savagery,” colonized people’s need to take up the tools of their oppressors to gain self-determination (Begaye, p. vii), the multidirectional violence symptomatic of colonial aggression (Rothberg, 2009; Wilson, 2006, p. 44), etc., this white-settler politics of resentment is nevertheless a social fact that one must take into account when going public with the U.S.–Dakota War.

So when a spokesperson from the (Joseph R.) Brown County Historical Society in New Ulm tells the media, “For us, it’s got to be balanced” (Fischenich, January 28, 2012), the message is not one of fifty-fifty Dakota/white representation in his museum’s exhibit but rather a message expressing an urgency to (re)tell stories of violence committed against whites because that “side” is presumably being forgotten with all the attention paid to the suffering of Indians in recent decades. Thus, the title of the Brown County exhibit, *Never shall I forget* — words taken from a fifty-year-old woman who vividly recalled seeing and hearing fellow whites in agony during the attacks on New Ulm when she was a ten year-old girl. The exhibit features video of her account and others like it only from white survivors. Visitors witness this while sitting in a mini theater fashioned as the cellar of Frank Erd’s store, holed up as the fighting rages outside. Images are intimately projected onto a white flour sack strongly resembling a pillow. They sit close to a powder keg, the premise being to blow themselves up should Indians come crashing through the door (Field journal, 11-06-2012).

In Mankato, this demand for white balance found expression in sensational letters to the editor written against the new monument proposed to the 38 hanging victims in the spring of 2012. In the spirit of full disclosure, I contributed to public debate by submitting my own letters against equal white representation at the hanging site when the proposed monument's fate seemed uncertain (Spear, 2012). At any rate, letters written in favor of balance bore titles such as “38 murderers don't deserve memorial” (Gray, March 12, 2012); “A blond scalp is worth remembering also” (Mueller, 2012); and “Dakota got trials; what did their victims get?” (LaBatte, March 23, 2012). Arguments conveyed in these pieces readily invoked family history and the white terror of 1862. The second letter listed, for example, engaged the rape discourse that circulated wildly during the war²⁶ — “If another monument is put up, maybe you could hang that nameless girl's scalp on it. I'm sure her death was a lot more complicated than a drop from the gallows.” In this political climate, to tip the scales toward “imbalance” by engaging critical reconciliation or interpretive moral judgment could mean to incite face-to-face controversy with such a modern-day defender.

Looking Ahead to Coming Chapters

As you may have guessed in my reading of the angry professor's socially symbolic act at the History conference in Mankato, I take the region's history of genocide seriously. After reading the nineteenth-century sources on the U.S.-Dakota War as well

²⁶ Rumors of rape were so pervasive in 1862 that when reviewing records from the trials that saw 303 Dakota and Euro-Dakota men condemned to death for “murders and other outrages” (Chomsky, 1990, p. 23), President Lincoln initially sought to uphold only the convictions based on rape. Only two such cases could be upheld (Wingerd, 2010, p. 319).

as the modern histories and interpretive works about race and colonial violence, I do think that white settlers perpetrated genocide against the Dakota people. At the same time, my purpose is not to write a history making that case. Others have already done so (Mann, 2005; Kiernan, 2007; Waziyatawin, 2008). My investigation of the regional white public pedagogy of 2012 and the various ways its dominant discourses shaped community teaching and learning unavoidably entails analyzing how J-term instructors and students grappled with genocide once having shaped their state. J-termers frequently talked about regional genocide and how the experts and professionals around them either treated it as an unresolved question or dismissed it altogether. As I demonstrate, this grappling engaged a politics of descent that continually reconstructed racial divides. So while genocide may sometimes appear to become the focus of my writing, in Chapters Two and Three, for instance, which look closely into Dr. Lenz's classroom treatment of the subject as a Holocaust scholar, and then again in Chapter Four which looks into how historian Gary Clayton Anderson addressed genocide in one of the J-term lectures, my interest is in the contradictions the violently unequal past presents to fact-seeking, equity-minded white educators and students today. Ultimately, this work draws out various ways their attempts to resolve those contradictions reopened the wounds of 1862.

Chapter One gives an introduction to the J-term course by relating interview passages selected from four students commenting on their work and the museum-writing project. By contextualizing these four passages, this chapter identifies key themes that recur throughout the study — a) how the principle of equal validity for all perspectives can provide political cover for racially divisive social practices, and b) how appeals to

“the facts” and “balance” on the U.S.-Dakota War effectively hold independent thought and moral judgment in check. This chapter includes my research methods and a brief and perhaps belated history of the war, but a history placed so as to introduce important dilemmas students faced in their study, e.g. that moral judgment cannot be so easily withheld when confronting the facts of the war and that presenting those facts inevitably leads to narrating a history of imbalance, outcomes that cut against the grain of demands placed on the students by instructors and the larger white public pedagogy.

Chapter Two focuses on Dr. Lenz’s teaching of Waziyatawin’s history *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (2008). I organize this chapter according to two conceptions of *frames* — *frames* as contextual levels of analysis (Gee, 2011) and *frames* as discursive cues that help determine *scripts*, what gets said and what does not get said in the classroom (Fairclough, 2001). Discussion of frames as contextual levels helps to demonstrate how a discourse like *balance* circulates broadly, for example statewide, but then moves in to shape activities and analysis at the classroom level. Writing through this dynamic enables me to dramatize the ideological give and take going on between classroom pedagogy and community-level public pedagogy. As I argue, an important part of the ideological take at the classroom level involves drawing a frame of *balance* around a foundational white source of knowledge on the war and *imbalance* for Waziyatawin’s history, effectively cropping direct talk of regional genocide out of the J-term script.

Chapter Three explores the pedagogical effects of this cropping out of talk about genocide in Dakota homeland. First, I highlight contradictions in Dr. Lenz’s attempt at

neutral pedagogy as she sought to teach about genocide as a Holocaust scholar on the one hand while avoiding saying anything definitive about *regional* genocide on the other.

This chapter returns to classroom and focus-group talk to explore how contradictions in Dr. Lenz's pedagogy served to shape ambivalence among students who both critiqued and endorsed instructor neutrality. This chapter ends by giving an example of how instructor silence on regional genocide affected student work on the museum exhibit.

Chapter Four continues with the topic of public teaching on regional genocide, closely examining a J-term lecture delivered early on by Dr. Gary Clayton Anderson. Anderson's January 10 lecture concerned the trials conducted immediately following the violence of the summer of 1862. In making the case that Gen. Henry Sibley and Gen. John Pope's military commission was largely unjust and part of an overly severe reaction to the violence carried out by Dakota fighters, Anderson also argued that genocide, as legally defined, did not occur in Minnesota. This argument made a lasting impression on me and the students, and questions swirled among us for days afterward, ultimately going unexamined by course instructors. In reading Anderson's lecture closely, this chapter identifies a politics of descent embedded in Anderson's argument that bore marginalizing repercussions not just for Dakota people or even some of the J-term students, but for an indigenous European scholar visiting St. Lucia College that winter. Relating her reaction to the lecture helps make visible not only the highly normative aspects of a privileged white identity constructed in Anderson's presentation, but the nature of the epistemic violence it enacted.

Chapter Five returns to the regional white public pedagogy of the war, taking its point of departure in Dr. Lenz's claim of *balance* on the first day of class as *the* perspective students and instructors were looking for together. As presented, the balanced perspective resided in a foundational white history, Kenneth Carley's *The Dakota War of 1862: Minnesota's Other Civil War* (1961/1976), rather than in equal consideration of white and Dakota sources. This chapter proceeds then to historicize Carleyan balance, tracing its roots in public arguments for citizens uninvolved in the violence to remain reasonable and suspend moral judgment about 1862 since the first histories on the U.S.-Dakota War were written. As I demonstrate, today's gap between "reasonable," middle-ground balance and the balance that evokes the *white terror* (Mills, 1997) to counteract multicultural teaching is not wide, both forms of balance serving to "justify" among whites disproportionate retaliatory measures (extermination) once carried out against the Dakota people.

Chapter Six continues to examine the white public pedagogy, focusing on discourses of *neutrality* and *fairness* and their impact on local teaching. In historicizing white neutrality, this chapter unpacks core tenets of a civic-minded public reasoning that seeks to obscure discussion of social contingencies like race when it comes to teaching and representing acts of oppression carried out by white forbears. To give evidence, this chapter recounts how empowered white commemorators at the semicentennial of the U.S.-Dakota War (1912) once fashioned their privileged colonial identity as socially abstract and epistemologically supreme in relation to Dakota identity, an impulse that has long ideological roots reaching back through settler society's social/racial contract

(Rawls 1993; Mills, 1997; Seth, 2010). As I eventually argue, this impulse is still very much alive in today's "evolved" pluralist forms of white representation of the war.

Ultimately, these two chapters on the white public pedagogy demonstrate how commonly repeated discourses like *balance*, *objectivity*, *neutrality*, and *fairness* on the U.S.-Dakota War serve racially divisive purposes that counteract social justice. Chapter Six ends with analysis of J-term focus-group conversation and examples of student museum-exhibit work that simultaneously dismantle and reproduce the regional white politics of *balance* and *neutrality*.

Chapters Seven and Eight go deeper into the exhibit-writing work as it unfolded for students designing two key panels listed on the syllabus — "War — Dakota perspectives" and "War — Settler perspectives." Positioned dichotomously near the middle of the exhibit as a kind of fulcrum for balancing perspectives from the zero-point of observation, these panels created the most tension of any between the students and Harwell as he supervised the project. Eventually, the "War — Dakota perspectives" panel also created conflict between a J-term participant and members of the Dakota community. Looking carefully into the ways that institutional power moved through instructor and student talk as these two panels took shape, these chapters demonstrate how Mr. Harwell won consent among J-term students to speak against their critical interpretive judgment rather than "from the heart" as Dakota educators encouraged them to do.

I conclude this study by reflecting back on what students told me about exhibit panels they envisioned writing but could not as they worked to co-author a successful and

politically safe museum exhibit. Taking cues from students, I proceed to imagine a critical museum exhibit based on their unwritten panels and tell how support could have been summoned to write and defend such a project. This chapter also gives a brief picture of the state of the white public pedagogy when it comes to the topic of race, and the effect of the sesquicentennial year on public historiographic work produced locally in 2013, focusing on a key source of information for this study, the Mankato *Free Press*.

Chapter One

J-Term Perspectives

“It’s not about righting wrongs that have been done. For me, it’s about how do we move forward and recognize the humanity in all of us, that we’re all noble beings. Um, and that we all have good hearts. Even the people who are the oppressors have good hearts. That’s the perspective that I come from.”

— Lori¹ (Interview, 01-23-2012)

“You know, this is a class that was built in the perspective from a white person trying to explain the position of a red man. Sorry, sorry. I love the Dakota person. Because there wasn’t a Dakota person writing these panels, um, you can’t- you can’t blame that person for building something incorrectly if somebody else’s truth is different from your own.”

— Tom (Interview, 05-11-2012)

“I kind of felt when I was reading it [*What Does Justice Look Like?*] like I felt when I read Malcolm X, you know. I was like a little bit threatened. I was like, ‘Well I didn’t do any of these things. My ancestors didn’t do any of these things. What? Are you mad at me?’ But, you know- and I also realize that that’s kind of a ridiculous racial irony because the only reason I feel so sensitive about being like racially profiled is because it never happens to me because I’m white.”

— Stephanie (Interview, 01-24-2012)

“I think a lot of my sense of guilt is- there’s the guilt from what my family has done, and then there’s the broader notion of white guilt that extends way beyond my family. Because whatever money or land or power that my family gained directly from killing natives, that was enabled and reinforced and affirmed and perpetuated by the broader existence of white privilege.”

—Alan (Interview, 01-09-2012)

¹ Pseudonyms are used for the students and instructors in keeping with the promise of anonymity.

These four quotes are selected from conversational interviews I held in 2012 with students enrolled in the St. Lucia College J-term course *Conflict and Remembrance: The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862*. St. Lucia is a small private liberal-arts school located in Gotland, Minnesota, a town of approximately ten-thousand residents today. In the summer of 1862, scores of white refugees fled to Gotland during violence unfolding at points west.

In 2012, fifteen students enrolled in *Conflict and Remembrance*, 14 whites and one Latina, four men and 11 women. As mentioned in the Introduction, the course co-instructors — Dr. Lenz, Professor of English and former College dean, and John Harwell, Director of the Blankenship County Historical Society (BLCHS) located in Gotland — had spent two-and-a-half years designing the course as an experience in public history, lining up a widely publicized six-part lecture series, conducting three field trips including stops at seven regional historical sites, and hosting in-class visits from four guest speakers. For the final project, Lenz and Harwell arranged for students to design a traveling museum exhibit consisting of ten 3' X 6' canvas screens including text and images that would contextualize the war in chronological fashion, from “Dakota Culture (Pre-Contact), as stated on the course syllabus, moving through the violence of the summer of 1862, to “Aftermath — Exile/Diaspora” and the “Commemoration and Reconciliation” of today. Six books were on the reading list. Additional bibliographical materials had been compiled for students. Harwell, principle designer and supervisor of the exhibit project, stood ready with a wealth of other resources and practical advice

based on his experience as a public historian. As a result of his planning, the exhibit had already been slated to tour educational sites in the region through 2013.

I followed this course closely as a participant-observer, taking field notes by hand in the classroom and on excursions and then typing them up into expanded form each evening.² I audio-recorded multiple conversational interviews with both instructors and transcribed them for analysis. I interviewed each of the 15 students at least once, and 10 of them at least twice, recording and transcribing these conversations as well. Initial interviews ranged from approximately 20 to 75 minutes, follow-up interviews from approximately 10 to 30 minutes. Finally, I held one-hour focus-group discussions each Friday before class in a banquet room near the school cafeteria where I tried to lure students with pizza and beverages. In all, nine of the students participated at least once in the focus groups and attendance on any given Friday ranged from six to eight. I recorded and transcribed all four conversations for analysis. In these sessions, I asked students to tell me what they thought about recent experiences like lectures and field trips or anything else they happened to be thinking about in relation to the J-term. I contributed to these conversations, sharing what I thought and asking students to tell more when my curiosity grew.

In inviting students to participate in my study, Dr. Lenz and Mr. Harwell gave me time to address the class on the second day. Because of a time crunch always sensed in

² Permission to audio-record classroom proceedings was not granted by the course instructors. Because of work obligations, I missed one classroom session, January 17, which was devoted to discussion of Thomas Maltman's novel *The Nightbirds*. On my return to class January 18, I asked students what I missed and wrote down what they told me.

the J-term, I had to explain my project quickly — that of an educational researcher who investigates identity and social power as negotiated in classroom settings. I told the class explicitly that I focus on race and whiteness in my work, pursuing questions such as where and how race tends to get talked about in educational settings, where it does not get talked about, and to what effects (Pollock, 2004). I made it clear to the students that I had not been part of the J-term course planning and that participation would not affect their final grades. All eventually agreed to participate.

In the present chapter, I build profiles of the four students quoted above, contextualizing their statements in ways designed to emphasize dilemmas they faced as J-term knowledge workers. With Lori and Tom, I discuss the principle of equal validity for all perspectives, telling how that view was supported by instruction and how it served to reinforce racially divisive social practices. I proceed then to demonstrate how the same principle was supported outside the classroom in a lecture that encouraged audience members to embrace equal validity and suspend independent thought through an appeal to “the facts” of the war. In moving on to introduce Stephanie and Tom as two students strongly predisposed to independent thought, I show how J-term experiences took a toll on their critical funds, positioning them in ways favorable to the equalized and “balanced” view promoted. Following the epistemological challenge posed in the lecture, I look into “the facts” of the war myself and show how they presented Lori with a key J-term dilemma— how to balance a one-sided history. The chapter ends by bringing the demand for balance in the community and classroom closer to view.

Lori and Tom

After interviewing students and hearing them contribute to conversations in different settings over time, I grew familiar enough to have a sense for where each was probably coming from when speaking. Lori, the first student quoted above, was a fourth-year Gender Studies major at the time of the study and a follower of the Baha'i faith, believing firmly in three spiritual tenets she delineated in our first interview — “that there's one source of all of creation, one god;” that there is “one god, one religion;” and that there is a “oneness of humanity” (Interview, 01-23-2012). Lori's spiritual study provided her with a language of unity, universals, and frequent references to *all*, fitting well with an equity-minded approach to public history modeled by Harwell. As he explained it, Harwell's approach as a historical-society representative entailed listening to all perspectives from the community and assigning equal validity as long as those perspectives were informed by historical facts.³ When telling me of the difficulties that can arise trying juggle the many and sometimes conflicting perspectives he hears from voices in the community, Harwell said, “I think we need to be, um, more inclusive in hearing all of those opinions instead of being selective and saying, ‘Well, we're gonna listen to this person because they have a Ph.D. and we're gonna discount everything that

³ Harwell related his approach to public history in the first class session — “Everybody has their opinions. Who am I to say someone's opinion is less valid? We can't always agree, especially on something that happened 150 years ago” (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012). He advised students to take this approach at public events during the J-term. Late in the course, when I shared disbelief at a claim made by independent historian Corrine Marz in her St. Lucia lecture, that when it came to trauma, white, “mixed-blood,” and Dakota experiences “were the same,” Harwell replied that hers was a common understanding of the war in the community that needed to be heard and represented (Fieldnotes, 01-25-2012).

this person says because they don't'" (Interview, 01-20-2012). Interestingly in Lori's case are the lengths that equal validity for all perspectives could be taken to. Even though she had just told me in this same interview that "I've always wanted to- regardless of what I know about the situation, wanted to stand on the side of the oppressed," when it came to the question of applying moral judgment, oppressors and oppressed were equally "good" inside.

Lori's comments provide a glimpse into the ways that democratic-sounding language can provide cover for undemocratic social practices. In Tom's case, one sees the dynamic laid bare. Tom was a third-year Nursing major in 2012. Hailing from Hutchinson, Minnesota, a town besieged by Dakota fighters in 1862, Tom knew the history of the U.S.-Dakota War well prior to enrolling in the course and sometimes invoked his settler ancestry in interviews to express opposition to classmates he perceived as being too liberal. Having co-authored a museum-exhibit panel originally listed on the J-term syllabus as "War — Dakota perspectives," Tom's coursework had positioned him exactly as he described it, as "a white person trying to explain the position of a red man." The paternalistic aspect of this positioning seems to flow almost inevitably into his next comment — "Sorry, sorry. I love the Dakota person." What could make this okay? An assurance that all perspectives are equally valid and that moral judgment has been suspended, at least in public spheres where formal representation occurs — "you can't blame that person for building something incorrectly if somebody else's truth is different from your own." In trying to justify his J-term experience as a white knowledge worker presenting Dakota perspectives, Tom seems to invoke a rather defensive form of pluralist

expression (Bernstein, 1991).⁴ Because all individual truths are relative and equally worthy of respect, the public speaker (foremost Tom) operates in a space beyond “blame” in the event he may have built something incorrect (stereotyped) about racialized others.

The J-term class was full of critically minded students. Among them I include Lori and Tom. This may sound surprising given these opening quotes yet Lori and Tom provided some of the most incisive reflections on social power I heard all month. Regarding the troubling way the museum project positioned the students to represent Dakota people,⁵ Lori had this to say:

Some of the people working on their panels really are reaching out to Dakota people, um, and putting a lot of work into understanding the Dakota perspective. Um, but still, doing it on behalf of them? You know what I mean? Does that make sense? Like, I’m sharing this for you? Um, and that’s the nature of the class itself,

⁴ In *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity*, Richard Bernstein defines *defensive pluralism* as times where “we pay lip service to others ‘doing their own thing,’ but are already convinced that there is nothing important to be learned from them” (Bernstein, 1991, p. 336). As will be seen in my analyses of Harwell’s pedagogy in Chapters Seven and Eight, Tom’s position derives partly from having heard Dakota people speak about racial stereotyping during the J-term, but not really having heeded and acted upon their messages in the exhibit writing work.

⁵ Student awareness of the problem of representing Dakota perspectives was easy to find in the interview data. I never made this a central question asked across interviews yet collected concerns from seven students. Here are a few examples: **Rachel**: “Yeah, it’s weird because we’re trying to show for the native Americans and for white people, you know, with this horrific event” (Interview, 01-24-2012); **Steven**: “we’re gonna just bring even more of a Dakota perspective, or like, you know, which we don’t all have, really, but, I don’t know, bring more of that than just like factuality, you know” (Interview, 01-12-2012); **Monica**: “Obviously I can’t speak for the Dakota people, but if they go and see this exhibit, like I don’t even know if they’re actually going to go see what the historical society’s putting on because they’ve had such kind of like problems and like clashing with them in the past, so I mean, as (2.0) rash as it sounds, put it out, and if they go, I mean, whatever. But that’s just like say- that makes me feel like one of those horrible white people” (Interview, 01-23-2012).

so there's not really any way that you can get around that. (Interview, 01-23-2012)⁶

Tom agreed, blaming the project design when accounting for angry reaction to his panel from a Dakota viewer the day the exhibit was unveiled to the public — “if I were to tell him that was mine, he would probably be like, ‘I don’t want to have to anything to do with you,’ but even so, it’s like you- you were- we were given 250 words to say- to speak for an entire people and their perspective of why the war happened” (Interview, 05-11-2012). Despite his German settler ancestry, Tom often satirized regional whitestream understandings of the war, as he did in our first interview recalling coursework he had completed in high school —

It just kind of gave me this broader understanding of the actual events versus just the Sunday-school version, ((in a Dana Carvey-like, church-lady voice)) “Jesus this is the answer for everything,” you know, you know, so the story is, ((church-lady voice)) “the Indians were bad and they burned everything down but the good settlers prevailed,” you know. You can get that in most fifth-grade history courses. (Interview, 01-09-2012)

While the intentions for Lori and Tom’s shifts between critical awareness of social power and uncritical expression of equal validity or moral relativism are no doubt complex, this study examines the social function of such shifts and their impact on public

⁶ I suspect the instructors would disagree with this assessment because they had at least one Dakota person, Sandee Geshick, helping them with the final editing after the J-term class ended, before the panels went into production. Students spoke this way because no Dakota people were ever on hand to assist them with their daily exhibit writing on campus.

knowledge. Where and when do white students and instructors express critical, independent thought on the U.S.-Dakota War, and to what effect? Conversely, where and when do white students and instructors invoke relativistic, democratic-sounding discourses, and to what effect? Importantly, not all of the J-term students were white, so while pursuing these questions, this study also attends to the effect of participating in the white public pedagogy of 2012 for one Latina student.

The Freedom to Think Runs Up against “the Facts”

I wish to emphasize at this early point that democratic-sounding discourses teaching the principle of equal validity for all perspectives was pervasive during the J-term, just as it is in the larger regional white public pedagogy as historian Waziyatawin has noted (2008, pp. 75-76). These discourses found their most high-profile expression during the J-term in a public lecture delivered late in the month by independent historian Corrine Marz. Speaking on the aftermath of the 1862 war,⁷ Marz began by commending the J-term students for enrolling and relating what a colleague had told her — “the students taking this class really are the future educators of this entire subject because you will have the credentials after taking this class of having something substantive.” Then,

⁷ Of the six public lectures, I transcribed four because of their relevance to themes that emerged from my analysis of the white public pedagogy and what students were telling me during the J-term. The lectures were recorded by St. Lucia College staff and made available to the public on the College website for over a year after they took place. As paraphrased and cited in this section, Marz’s lecture occurred on January 24, 2012, with three days remaining in the course.

after poring over copious details arranged to emphasize white victimhood in 1862,⁸ Marz displayed an image of a monument to Confederate prisoners of war and presented her thesis:

We have these different perspectives of the Dakota War, and we are each free to think- um looking at the facts and the events that happened, you know, whatever is true in your heart, that is uh- for you, and uh (1.0) when you think of the great suffering that the people of- all of the people of Minnesota uh went through, this- this sign is- this uh grave marker for the confederate soldiers is very true, that “they all died for a cause that they believed was worth fighting for and made the sacrifice.” (Lecture, 01-24-2012)

Admittedly, this was one of the least convincing moments of the J-term,⁹ witnessing an expert on the war highlight the suffering of Confederate war soldiers imprisoned at Rock

⁸ An obvious example of this came when Marz spent much time estimating the number of whites killed in the summer of 1862 while failing to do the same regarding Dakota deaths or estimate the number of Dakotas killed in the Dakota Territory after 1862 which is central to any understanding of the “aftermath” years 1863-1866 that her lecture purported to cover. The double standard was plain to see when a J-term student, Jennifer, asked her to estimate Dakota deaths in the first contribution to Q and A. Marz answered — “There have been attempts to get- to provide an accurate accounting because it is important to know the number of casualties that the Dakota suffered. We know that there was the Dakota baby that was killed in Henderson. Um, then there is an accounting by the Cavender family, um that one of their grandmothers was killed. That’s an oral account, and, you know, I take oral accounts, you know. If there is an oral story, we accept it, um because generally I use- generally I use printed documents, um but for the Dakota there weren’t- the Dako- the documents come much later. Many of the interviews, you know, from your book *Through Dakota Eyes* were later in the 1890s almost at the end of many of their lives, and, you know, it was a very good thing that they were interviewed at the time so you would have that viewpoint. Um, I could give you an estimate of perhaps maybe a hundred because we know that there were many killed uh in the various battles and the skirmishes. But that is one area of study that really needs to be done [...] other than that I don’t have a specific number for you” (Lecture, 01-24-2012).

Island, Illinois, in order to avoid addressing (and diminish by contrast) the suffering of Dakota war prisoners held at the same time at Fort McClellan prison just across the river in Davenport, Iowa. Yet this presentation *was* potentially formative for the “future educators” in attendance as the speaker noted, and the passage is full of themes that recur in this study — stopping the freedom “to think” short with an appeal to “the facts” (but which ones?); asserting equal validity for “whatever is true in your heart,” even if your heart harbors racist tendencies; noting that truth is relative and remains “for you,” suggesting that it is probably not for the public; and, finally, ending in an air of solemn commemoration, a move in line with the J-term course and museum exhibit framed as they were for “remembrance” rather than social change. Importantly in Marz’s presentation, the democratic umbrella of commemoration shelters slave owners and presumably Indian killers from judgment, leveling their respective “causes” (dehumanization for economic gain, extermination for land and resulting economic gain) to a common good for simply once having been believed. Ultimately, this move is as defensive for the local Indian-killing identity as the Rock Island grave marker is for defenders of slavery — “LET NO MAN ASPERSE THE MEMORY OF OUR SACRED DEAD” the monument reads.

⁹ Dr. Lenz offered this assessment — “I just thought what she said was crap, and I thought that was pretty recognizable by most of the audience that it was crap” (Interview, 04-27-2012). Student negativity toward the lecture in interviews and the last focus group support this assessment, as Chapter Two will show.

Stephanie and Alan

Next come the epigraphic quotes from Stephanie and Alan, two students I would characterize as consistently exercising the freedom to think independently about the U.S.-Dakota War and its meaning for them as relatively privileged white Americans. I say “Americans” because Stephanie had recently moved to Minnesota from North Carolina. A third-year Psychology major at the time, Stephanie told me she felt surprised when she first “found out that some people here are like still mad because their great-great grandfather was, you know, beaten to death or whatever.” Stephanie went on to explain her reaction — “I was like, ‘That’s not fair. It’s not fair that you feel that way,’ and John [Harwell] was just like, ‘Well-’

Rick:¹⁰ It’s not fair that they still carry the settler anger, or not fair that-

Stephanie: I guess I was just looking at it from like a dominant culture perspective. It was like, “You guys are here and you have land and you have freedom that the Dakota people like will never get to have.” (Interview, 01-24-2012)

Stephanie told me her view was changing by this late point in the course, however, taking on a different sense of fairness — “I kind of want to hate all the people who were settlers. At the same time, that’s not fair to them either. You know. Does that make sense?”

The only J-term student from a racially segregated community of the South,¹¹ Stephanie had a distinctive sense for the politics of race in relation to her classmates.¹²

¹⁰ Rick is me, the interviewer and author of this study.

Interestingly, she seemed to go back and forth in how she identified with regional white identity in a historical sense. While her initial reaction at reading Waziyatawin's work seen in the epigraphic quote to this chapter is a defensive one arguably common for white U.S.-Dakota War descendants in southern Minnesota ("Well I didn't do any of these things"),¹³ Stephanie retained the right to say something a bit different ("My ancestors didn't do any of these things"). But when voicing her displeasure in this same interview about being positioned by the museum-exhibit project to try to speak *for* Dakota people, she suddenly cast herself as a regional white descendant — "Like, I am attempting to write a museum panel about your people when my people are your ancestors' oppressors? That's sort of continuing- I don't know- I don't think we can ever really portray the severity and the horrible situation and everything that they were going through." While this shift can read as an acknowledgement that whites have oppressed natives in all U.S. states, it also says something significant, I think, about the kind of identity work

¹¹ Stephanie said, "I grew up with all those horrible things, like I couldn't go to Hickory High even though it was the closest high school because it was the black school and I would get all my stuff stolen. I had to go to Freddy Ford and, you know, like all that just-stuff. Like when I first started studying native Americans in the casinos and stuff freshman year, I was interviewing people and I knew my biological mother, where she's from and she was like, 'Well, they have casinos why should we give them anything more?' She was like, 'They've made plenty of money. They're fine.' I was like, 'Whoa! Oh my god!'" (Interview, 01-24-2012).

¹² Stephanie noted this about herself with self-deprecating humor— "I'm southern, right? And I'm German, and I've lived in both places, so I have more race skill than anybody in the history of the planet" (Focus group, 01-06-2012).

¹³ In the TPT documentary *The Past is Alive Within Us: The U.S.-Dakota Conflict* (2013), Minnesota state legislator Dean Urdahl says, "I hear from people in the state, from descendants of white settlers who say, 'Don't you dare say you're sorry. Don't you dare talk about reconciliation,' making comments like, 'It wasn't me that did this. Issue an apology for my great-great grandfather, but not for me.'" See <http://video.tpt.org/video/2365142131/> (52:30). Retrieved February 18, 2015.

performed by the J-term class. In coming together with white instructors and classmates to co-author an exhibit on this specific war, and perhaps commit an act of epistemic violence on today's Dakota people in the process as Stephanie suggests the exhibit was doing ("That's sort of continuing-"), Stephanie was, in a way, being recruited to a normative *regional* white identity, Corrine Marz's appeal to her as a future Minnesota educator being just one example showing how. Importantly, Stephanie's comments reveal the degree to which she resisted such recruitment; indeed, her experience having to think daily about race growing up in North Carolina appears to have given her the ability to identify ancestry-based double standards as they arise, such double standards being a key element of *racism* that this study keeps in view (Fields and Fields, 2012). In checking her own defensive reaction when first reading *What Does Justice Look Like?*, Stephanie points out the "ridiculous racial irony because the only reason I feel so sensitive about being like racially profiled is because it never happens to me because I'm white."

Alan also thought deeply about ancestry and race during the J-term. A third-year Environmental Studies major from Minneapolis, he introduced himself on the first day of class as having enrolled in *Conflict and Remembrance* to seek "personal atonement" (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012). That day, he described a rifle belonging to his grandfather that his family believed was once used by Alan's great-great-great-great grandfather in punitive expeditions against the Dakota in the 1860s. There were fourteen notches in the butt of the rifle, each thought to have been carved for an Indian killed. Alan's dramatic introduction created a moment of silence in the room, a solemn air that surrounded most classroom talk of white privilege. Alan had taken part in a St. Lucia College delegation to

the national White Privilege Conference convened in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and Minneapolis in 2010 and 2011 respectively, providing him with a language for interpreting the facts he was learning — “whatever money or land or power that my family gained directly from killing natives, that was enabled and reinforced and affirmed and perpetuated by the broader existence of white privilege.”

When I asked Alan in this same interview about his reaction to a recent class discussion where Harwell helped students come to a consensus about the museum exhibit taking a “linear” and “chronological” approach to the war (Fieldnotes, 01-06-2012), Alan said,

I mean my first reaction was no, of course we’re not obligated to. I don’t think we should- (4.0) °Well, I’m not sure.° I do think we have an obligation to our audience (4.0) and that’s where we should start the conversation and try to figure out (4.0) whether it’s possible, what types of presentation are possible for the audience we’re going to have and decide from there. (Interview, 01-09-2012)

This was an important moment in my data collection, witnessing independent critical thought getting held in check by collective thinking based on ideological constraints perceived in the community — “what types of presentation are possible for the audience we’re going to have.” Here, Alan presents a discursive checkpoint to himself where the political demands of “we” bring the agency of “I” to a halt and collect a toll, much in the way Corrine Marz interrupted herself at the words “free to think-” and took a turn toward the language of “all” and moral relativism in her lecture. In the block quote above, Alan stops himself at the forthright phrase “I don’t think we should-”, enters a four-second silence, brings his voice back with a subdued “Well, I’m not sure,” and then turns to

collective thinking — the obligations he and his classmates allegedly owe to their imagined white audience.¹⁴ At this checkpoint, Alan’s payment leaves him, at least for the time being, with fewer critical funds expressed through an underestimation of what the white audience can take.¹⁵ This evocation of a critical checkpoint made early in the course foreshadowed Marz’s later formulation well — “whatever is true in your heart, that is uh- for you.” Alan’s resistance to the linear, chronological exhibit remained “for him.” This form of public pedagogy contradicted powerful advice brought to the J-term on two separate occasions by Dakota speakers Glenn Wasicuna and Sheldon Wolfchild who encouraged the students to “speak from the heart” on history and their roles in producing it.¹⁶

¹⁴ St. Lucia College hosts a social-justice conference every spring attended by a majority white audience. The conference is designed as one of the J-termers, Sarah, put it, to “make people uncomfortable [...] Last year it was huge” (Interview 01-26-2012). In 2012, the conference theme focused on native history and included a hard-hitting theatrical piece in which Alan played a prominent role, speaking out against genocide against natives with the national anthem playing in the background (Field journal, 03-10-2012). As Sarah explained, the conference “attracts a certain audience and college students are more receptive to that sense of things. And people are coming who have a genuine interest in the topic. People who see the [J-term] exhibit might just happen upon it probably” (Interview 01-26-2012). So it wasn’t adjusting for a white audience per se that inhibited critical thought in the exhibit work, but adjusting for a broader, regional, less educated white audience.

¹⁵ The construction of the exhibit for an imagined white audience will be discussed later in this study. Two of the students introduced here made the point rather bluntly. **Tom**: “the panels aren’t to explain to a Dakota person what happened. They already have that history” (Interview, 05-11-2012). **Stephanie**: “if I were a Dakota person it would offend me. But we’re not making the panels for Dakota people, we’re making them for like ignorant white people” (Interview, 01-24-2012).

¹⁶ Glenn Wasicuna modeled how to “speak from the heart” in his lecture delivered to the St. Lucia College community on January 5, 2012. His message related to learning how to speak with honesty and sincerity about history — “Let’s understand history. Let’s look at it fearlessly. Not point any fingers. No guilt trips. Let’s look at it and see what happened and understand. That’s what we want to do.” At a meeting with Dakota community

Of course, every act of public speaking or representation demands consideration of audience. Speakers commonly adjust for things they perceive to be deemed good, appropriate, professional and so forth by the people they address. Yet, all topics of representation are not equal nor are all methods of representation equal, as student talk has already suggested. Indeed, histories of oppression are violently unequal histories. They are often ongoing histories that find sustenance through oppressive forms of teaching and learning (Freire, 1970; Kumashiro, 2002). They do not suddenly become equal by filtering them with the kind of democratic-sounding discourses that riddle public statements cited throughout this study. For those working to make their societies more equitable and just, a different sort of language is needed involving unconventional social practices that do not lead to the silencing of independent critical thought but serve rather to open it up. As Waziyatawin writes, “Silence suggests complicity with the status quo” (Waziyatawin, 2008, p. 94), a point that my writing seeks to keep in view. The struggle for social change in modern colonial contexts has inspired many memorable calls for transformative social practices, practices that must disrupt status-quo conceptions of the good, the appropriate, and the professional in order to make the slightest moves toward justice. As Arundhati Roy writes, “Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our

members at Lower Sioux Community on January 19, Sheldon Wolfchild encouraged J-termers to never be ashamed of crying — “there’s nothing more pure than that which comes from the heart. Tears heal because they come from the heart [...] Don’t ever be ashamed to cry. It’s a natural part of us. That’s the reason for the horse ride honoring the 38. To cry and to heal” (Fieldnotes, 01-19-2012). His allusion to the horse ride concerns the Dakota 38 + 2 Memorial Ride.

music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer restlessness — and our ability to tell our own stories” (2003, p. 112).

Our ability to tell our own stories. This phrase should resound in the minds of any white Minnesotan who has ever taken up the position of providing Dakota perspective.

As Glenn Wasicuna politely told the J-term audience:

There are a lot of people in organizations out there who want to help preserve and understand, but as Dakota people we have to- we have to be the ones that heal ourselves, understand our history, and present our point of view [...] We appreciate all the- the work that has been done to try and help understand not only Dakota people but just to understand people like museums and all those books that have been written by people who want to help. Those are good. We appreciate that. Bless those people that do that. But we want to tell our story and that’s the responsibility that we have. And we have to do that. But in order to do that we have to heal ourselves because that’s in the way right now. (Lecture, 01-05-2012)

Judging from comments made by Lori, Tom and Stephanie, and Rachel, Steven and Monica in note 5 above, this explanation of who should be telling whose stories was partly disregarded by the J-term exhibit writing project.

These four introductory sketches of Lori, Tom, Stephanie, and Alan provide a glimpse into the diversity of J-term orientations toward local history. Students, instructors, and public figures could evoke the principle of equal validity for all perspectives to the point where it provided political cover for oppressive social practices both past and present. At the same time, critical orientations produced straight talk about

racial power and the problematic politics of display going on with the exhibit writing. Most troublingly, such “straight talk” included oppressive social relations reproduced by Tom from his zero point from which Dakota perspective was represented. Importantly, the tensions and struggles I highlight between uncritical and critical student orientations were not taking place with any sense of equal footing. As comments from all four students suggest, to participate successfully as a J-term knowledge worker and contribute to a highly professional museum exhibit required setting aside independent critical thought at certain junctures.

“The Facts” and The Dilemma They Present

The first half of the nineteenth century marked a time when white power brokers drew the color line through Dakota homeland by various means, the most decisive being duplicitous treaties (Meyer, 1967, pp. 72-87; Westerman and White, p. 163-195). By 1860, the Dakota people, whose lands had recently consisted of vast expanses of forest and prairie, found themselves confined to a 10- by 140-mile reservation that cut them off from their traditional sources of life. Game for those living by the hunt had grown scarce. Hunters repeatedly crossed reservation borders in search of food, often coming into conflict with white settlers. Money and food promised in treaties forged in the 1850s were often delayed, withheld, or parceled out only to those willing to adopt the lifeways of whites. Anger boiled over after four young Dakotas killed five whites in Acton township on August 17. Rather than turn the four over to white authorities, an assemblage of leaders at the Rice Creek village elected to fight, killing nearly two dozen traders and

government agents the next day (Wingerd, 2010, p. 307; Anderson, 1984, pp. 253-254; Anderson & Woolworth, 1988, p. 13). In an effort to defend their rights according to the terms of the treaties, several hundred Dakota men combined from the Upper and Lower Sioux Agencies to carry out violence on whites in the region, laying siege to Fort Ridgely, the town of New Ulm, and other settlements. Assuming the role of military commander, Minnesota's former first governor Henry Sibley marched troops south to engage Dakota combatants. After 37 days of fighting, hundreds of whites, including settler women and children had been killed. A much smaller number of Dakotas are believed to have lost their lives in this period (Chomsky, 1990, pp. 21-22).

A spirit of vengeance ran high among whites in the aftermath. Thousands of Dakotas fled west and north to seek shelter among relatives, in some cases going as far as Canada. In October 1862, Sibley established a military commission subjecting nearly 400 Dakota men to hasty trials for their suspected involvement in the violence, offering no opportunity for legal counsel (Chomsky, pp. 46-56). The commission sentenced 303 to execution by hanging. President Lincoln reviewed the trial transcripts, finding enough errors to pardon 264. Weeks passed during the review, a time when public calls for genocidal action reached a fever pitch. "Exterminate the wild beasts,"¹⁷ cried the editor of the *St. Cloud Democrat*, in unison with much of the Minnesota press (Wingerd, p. 318). Around this time, the military force-marched over 1,600 Dakotas, mainly women, children and elderly, to a concentration camp at Fort Snelling, holding them under miserable conditions until their removal from the state the following spring. Meanwhile

¹⁷ November 13, 1862.

in Mankato, soldiers had all they could do to keep vigilante mobs from killing the men condemned to hang (Bessler, 2003, pp. 49-54). After one additional reprieve, 38 were executed simultaneously in Mankato on December 26, 1862.

Neither the eventual mass hanging of 38 men nor the removal of the imprisoned Dakotas from the state would bring the war to a close however. These actions served rather as messages of violence to come. Already by early November 1862, the commander of the Military Department of the Northwest, General John Pope, had proposed a campaign for the following summer to “remove entirely” all Indians living between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, or as he put it “to seize and dispose of all the Indians upon whom we can lay our hands in like manner, so the lines of travel, and emigration shall be secure to the smallest parties” (“Sioux War,” November 15, 1862). In accordance with this plan, Generals Alfred Sully and Henry Sibley carried out two subsequent years of genocidal massacres¹⁸ in the name of state security, killing untold numbers of Dakotas and destroying massive amounts of provisions to engineer starvation.

The most readily available nineteenth-century sources reporting “the facts” about the U.S.-Dakota War were often packaged in ways designed to defend the campaign of

¹⁸ For a discussion of the events in Minnesota and the Dakota Territory in the early 1860s as genocidal massacres, see Ben Kiernan’s *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (2007, p. 355). In explaining his use of the term genocide, Kiernan explains, “Terms like genocide, extinction, extermination, civil war, ethnic ‘cleansing,’ war crimes, and biological warfare all represent independent and often overlapping concepts, neither synonymous nor mutually exclusive. For instance, in wartime, killing soldiers in combat is routine and distinct from the prohibited mass murder of civilians. Such mass murder, even if it ends once all resistance stops, is a war crime and may also qualify as either genocide or genocidal massacres if it targets protected groups” (p. 16).

extermination begun in 1862.¹⁹ They routinely emphasize the “gallantry” of white soldiers, the “innocence” of white civilians, and the “savagery” of Dakota people. Often they withhold information that would reflect negatively on what it meant to “settle” southern Minnesota.²⁰ Nevertheless, scenes they report from the Dakota Territory are harrowing:

* * *

I commenced by disposing of the various forces so as to destroy with the least delay the vast quantity of goods left in the timber and ravines adjacent to the camp. The men gathered into heaps and burned tons of dried buffalo meat packed in buffalo-skin cases, great quantities of dried berries, buffalo robes, tanned buffalo, elk, and antelope skins, household utensils, such as brass and copper kettles, mess pans, etc., riding saddles, dray poles for ponies and dogs.

Finding that one day was too short a time to make the destruction complete, I ordered the men to gather only the lodge poles in heaps and burn them, and then deployed the men and fired the woods in every direction; the

¹⁹ Defensive passages reminding Easterners that they had either done the same things in the past or would have done them in the 1860s had they stood in Minnesotans’ shoes can be found in the early histories — Bryant and Murch, (1864, pp. 470-471), Heard (1864, pp. 270-271), and McConkey (1863, pp. 280-286).

²⁰ Withholding information can take many forms. Two worthy of note are omitting discussion of white exterminationist agitators prior to 1862 (Meyer, 1967, p. 101-102) and the acknowledgment of exterminationist practices long after the fact, when it was politically safe to do so. On the suppression of information regarding the terror that settler men brought down on Indian communities, for example, the *Mankato Review* once reported — “These Winnebagoes were known to be friendly with the Sioux, and only the most watchful care and vigilance had prevented them from joining in the murderous raid [...] One noteworthy act of the Mankato lodge, however, merits particular attention. This was the employment of a certain number of men, members of the order, whose duty was to lie in ambush on the outskirts of the Winnebago reservation, and shoot any Indian who might be observed outside the line. [...] For obvious reasons their reports were not made a matter of record” (“Knights of the Forest,” 1886).

destruction was thus complete, and everywhere was manifest the rapid flight of the Indians, leaving everything, even their dogs and colts tied to the pickets. In skirmishing the timber dead Indians were found killed by exploding shells. After a thorough examination of the camping ground, and by judging from the amount of lodge poles burnt, I should judge the camp to have numbered 1,400 lodges.

— Col. Robert N. McLaren, Second Minnesota

Cavalry, July 29, 1864. (Minnesota Board of Commissioners, 1893, vol. 2, p. 543)

* * *

Much had been accomplished. Forty-four bodies of warriors had been found, many more carried off and concealed. The season's supplies of meat and clothing material, and their wagons, were destroyed. The howlings of the squaws that came across the river told the tale of their misery and despair.

— Lieutenant Col. William R. Marshall, Seventh

Regiment, Minnesota Volunteers, 1863. (qtd. in Heard, 1864, p. 332)

* * *

Michael Clodfelter's *The Dakota War: The United States Army Versus the Sioux, 1862-1865* (1998) is a modern study included in the bibliographic materials provided to the J-term students. The author uses military reports like the ones quoted here to show the scale of destruction wrought upon the Dakota after their removal from Minnesota. His chapter on Gen. Alfred Sully's 1863 campaign at Whitestone Hill tells of the massively disproportionate response to the killing of settlers that took place in Minnesota the year before:

Sully's men spent September 4 and September 5 burning plunder and Indian gear, including 300 lodges and a winter's supply of 400,000 — 500,000 pounds of buffalo meat (representing at least 1,000 butchered buffalos). Captain R. B. Mason, the wagonmaster, stated that "fat ran in streams from the burning mass of meat." (p. 141)

At such moments, the sources reveal whites earning their reputations among the Lakota as *wasicu* (white) people, or, literally, "takers of the fat." Clodfelter reproduces one of the few non-triumphalist white nineteenth-century accounts of what happened to native people at Whitestone Hill, citing Samuel Brown, son of former trader, Indian agent, execution signal officer, and Minnesota legislator Joseph Brown discussed in my Introduction:

I hope you will not believe all that is said of Sully's successful expedition against the Sioux. I don't think he ought to brag of it at all, because it was what no decent man would have done, he pitched into their camp and just slaughtered them, worse a great deal than what the Indians did in 1862 [...] It is lamentable to hear how those women and children were slaughtered, it was a perfect massacre and now he returns saying that we need fear no more, for he has wiped out all hostile Indians from Dakota; if he had killed men instead of women and children, then it would have been a success, and the worse of it, they had no hostile intention whatever [...] (pp. 144-145)

Besides white military histories like Clodfelter's, bibliographic materials provided to the J-term students included early white-supremacist histories like Isaac Heard's *History of the Sioux War and Massacre of 1862 and 1863* (1864) and Harriet McConkey's *Dakota War Whoop: Indian Massacre and War in Minnesota, 1862-1863* (1863). Critical works

by Vine Deloria (1969), David Nichols (1978), Mary Wingerd (2010), Waziyatawin (2008), and others were on the lists as well to assist in the museum writing work.

Students found “the facts” of the war uncomfortable, sometimes painful, and even shocking, all in multidirectional ways like the violence itself. Some of them consulted newspapers from 1862 showing the extent to which settler society dehumanized the Dakota, inciting violence that rationalized land confiscation, removal, and extermination. The “exterminate the wild beasts” line printed in the *St. Cloud Democrat*, for example, made it onto the “Settler perspectives” panel authored by Jennifer who used it precisely because she found it “heinous” and thought it would grab the attention of unknowing audience members (Interview, 01-18-2012). Hers was not a common approach among J-termers nor did it come without its own problems as Chapter Seven reveals. Although the discovery that Dakota fighters had killed so many settlers in the summer of 1862 had a strong impact, so too did white discourses espousing racial supremacy, native “savagery,” and genocidal intentions.

Appeals to “the facts” like the one made by Corrine Marz presented a dilemma to J-termers working in this four-week exhibit-writing crucible — how to present them in ways aligned with the equal validity principle. Despite her belief that even the oppressors have good hearts, Lori found that moral judgment could not be so easily set aside when doing her work. Her panel concerned “Aftermath — Exile/Diaspora,” which includes the period represented by the military passages quoted above.

Lori: I’ve only lived in Minnesota for a year, um, so I’m not sure what the public knows and what the overall feeling is or perspective is about what

actually took place, um, so people could be very upset about what appears to be imbalance in- in how we are portraying through the quotes that we're using and the images that we're using, um what the settlers and the traders and the government officials were like.

Rick: Like- like you're- you're cherry-picking the worst?

Lori: Right, right. Um, (2.0) however, (3.0) seeing what I've seen and looking at what I've looked at (4.0) there's very few (1.5) perspectives that I've seen that are not what would be considered the worst if you were only to have the option of putting one quote up. (Interview, 01-23-2012)

There were only four days left in the course when Lori told me this. Most of her research was done and she had a final draft due in 3 days. The constraints she refers to, putting up a single quote, and which Stephanie referred to, limiting commentary to 250 words, made the kind of balanced representation implied next to impossible. For Lori, to choose a triumphalist quote from the 1860s promoting white "victimhood," "innocence," "benevolence," or "gallantry" could have meant to sanitize the history, embrace white supremacy, or be accused of trying to make whites look bad by drawing attention to their supremacist ways of narrating conquest. Choosing white quotes about Dakota "savagery" or critical quotes from Dakota people about racism, oppression, or genocide could have made it look like she was, again, trying to make whites look bad. Whatever factual quote she chose, it would probably appear as if she had intentionally cherry-picked the "worst" from the vantage point of the type of white audience imagined whenever talk turned to balance. In consulting the facts from early sources, Lori was bound to present the unavoidable imbalance of the 1860s, an act that seemed to imply breaking a code in the

white public pedagogy, i.e. making people upset over what appears to be (but can only be) imbalance.

These dilemmas facing the J-term students — to check independent thought and moral judgment by consulting the facts, and then to attain balanced representation based on those facts — capture the tensions this study must work through in uncovering the racially divisive social practices driving today’s white public pedagogy of the U.S.-Dakota War. These tensions involve white epistemology (appeals to the facts and the truth of their sources), white ontology (appeals to equal representation of white victimhood), and their combined resistance to critical reconciliation, or restorative social justice.

* * *

Before moving on to analyze the white public pedagogy at work in the classroom, I must note that Lori’s anxiety about producing an imbalanced history speaks to the situated demand for balance on the war discussed in the Introduction, a demand privileging white victimhood over other forms of knowledge. This brand of balance is strongly pushed by a group of regional independent historians with whom Harwell was networked in his historical-society directorship; as mentioned, the sesquicentennial period provided occasion for the launching of *Minnesota’s Heritage: Back to the Sources* (2010 — 2013), a journal produced by Mary Bakeman, owner of Park Genealogical Books in Roseville, Minnesota. Three of the independent historians serving on the journal’s first editorial board — Corrine Marz, John LaBatte, and Curtis Dahlin — either

delivered addresses at the BLCHS's annual meeting around the time of the sesquicentennial or spoke directly to J-term audiences. At various points during the course, these three served as key sources that either Harwell or Dr. Lenz directed students to while conducting their exhibit-writing work. Corrine Marz's emphasis on white victimhood has already been seen. LaBatte's (March 23, 2012) and Dahlin's (2007, 2009, 2013a) can be found in sources cited and will be returned to periodically in subsequent chapters.

In the second issue of *Minnesota's Heritage*, Mary Bakeman writes that the journal's subtitle, *Back to the Sources*, "prescribes the research methodology requested from each author" (Bakeman, 2010, p. 87). Delivered without elaboration, this statement leaves the impression that only the early sources published on the war can provide the objective knowledge the journal promises. Bakeman reiterates this assumption in the journal's penultimate issue — "It has never been easier for scholars and the public alike to consider 150-year-old resources in order to cut through the veil of opinion and seek a balanced view of the past" (Bakeman, 2012, p. 2). This statement seems to hinge on an assurance that when scholars read "the facts" delivered in foundational histories like Isaac Heard's *History of the Sioux War and Massacres of 1862 and 1863* (1864) or Charles Bryant and Abel Murch's *A History of the Great Massacre by the Sioux Indians, in Minnesota, Including the Personal Narratives of Many who Escaped* (1864), they will come to understand why white settlers exterminated the Dakota people from their homeland — because of the nature of the atrocities Dakota fighters allegedly committed. As Dahlin writes in his own work, it is necessary to "open up old wounds" suffered by

whites because “truth has often become a casualty in the politically correct world we live in” (2013a, pp. 12-13). In his work, and in Bakeman’s contributions to Minnesota’s *Heritage* (Bakeman, 2011, pp. 104-109), Heard or Bryant and Murch or similar works serve as foundational sources whose overtly stated racist agendas go unquestioned. Bryant and Murch’s work, for example, begins, with an epigraph quoting Ferdousi — “For that which is unclean by nature thou canst entertain no hope; no washing will turn the Gypsy white.” Throughout this study, particularly in Chapters Five and Six, I will go back to the sources to contextualize the ideological pressures exerted on the J-term students by the discourse of *balance* and the white-supremacist politics embedded in it.

Chapter Two

Framing the Discussion

If you are neutral on situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

— Desmond Tutu (Quigley, 2003, p. 8)

* * *

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the Dakota War. That's an episode in state history too formative to ignore and too ugly to examine without pain.

A few years ago this column referred to the events in the Minnesota River valley in the summer of 1862. Reader response revealed that the famous William Faulkner line about the South -- "the past isn't over; it isn't even past" -- applies to Minnesota, too.

A mini-war erupted in my e-mail box, with descendents of people on each side of the conflict claiming that their side remains misunderstood and that facts remain in dispute.

(A passing aside to the Minnesota Historical Society and anyone else planning to publicly commemorate this year's sad sesquicentennial: Good luck.)

— Lori Sturdevant, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 21, 2012

On January 24, 2012, Dr. Lenz began the final Tuesday session of *Conflict and Remembrance* reading this passage from Lori Sturdevant's Sunday column about the recent election of the state's first female native-American state legislator, Susan Allen.

The column explained that “Allen, 48, is a member of the Yankton Sioux tribe. Some of her ancestors were in Minnesota during the Dakota War.” Allen’s election to office served as a sign of a step taken toward equality for Dakota people. Sturdevant continued, “I hope I’m standing watch sometime this session when she walks past the portrait of Gov. Alexander Ramsey, who ordered in the war’s wake that Sioux Indians be ‘driven forever beyond the borders of the state.’” For those familiar with the history Sturdevant evoked, her satisfaction came with a disturbing silence; on September 9, 1862, Gov. Ramsey said, “The Sioux Indians of Minnesota *must be exterminated* or driven forever beyond the borders of the state” (Folwell, 1924, p. 255, emphasis mine).

I read Sturdevant’s self censorship as a kind of parable for Chapters Two and Three. Both of these chapters concern promoting notions of social progress and mending the racial divide all while evading direct talk about regional genocide. The present chapter focuses on how Dr. Lenz approached Waziyatawin’s history *What Does Justice Look Like?* with students, starting out with a narrative of progress but establishing frames for classroom discussion that enabled her to take a divisive neutral stance on this controversial topic for white Minnesotans. As I introduce two notions of *frames* and explain their role in establishing the terms by which classroom talk would transpire, I continue to provide student profiles in an effort to make the classroom politics clear. This chapter ends with an expansion of my thesis, developing a picture of Minnesota’s civically imagined balanced educator as a privileged white aligned with historically oppressive institutions, following the epigraph by Bishop Tutu.

* * *

By the afternoon Dr. Lenz brought the *Star Tribune* story about Susan Allen to class, she and Harwell and their 15 students had been engaged for three weeks doing exactly what Sturdevant identified as a perilous task — publicly commemorating 2012’s sad sesquicentennial. To add to everyone’s anxiety, a deadline loomed just 48 hours away, final drafts for the 10 exhibit panels that would comprise the traveling museum exhibit already slated to tour educational sites through the following year. Like in Sturdevant’s column, a sense of caution seemed to be prevailing:

Holly ((on her work with Mitch)) — “I mean, the only thing we ran into was like, ‘we don’t want white people to feel like they’re being attacked,’ but like, all we did was say the facts of what happened with the treaties.” (Interview, 01-26-2012)

* * *

Anna ((on the peril for the instructors)) — “Cause they have to like be so careful of the wording in what they present because they don’t want to like lose funding and piss anybody off.” (Interview, 01-27-2012)

* * *

Jennifer ((on her own fears)) — “Who am I more wary to, you know? Who am I stepping around because I don’t want to step on their toes? It’s white people. It’s—and, you know, and it’s the children of white people.” (Interview, 01-18-2012)

As Lori Sturdevant wished them, *Good luck* indeed.

On the bright side, after four high-profile public lectures, only one message had tried to provoke anything like a mini-war in the instructors’ e-mail boxes — a short

complaint that took issue with the lecture-series speakers, or as the writer put it, “today’s Dahcotah sympathizers” who were “turning the history of events in the Minnesota River Valley in 1862, on its head.” (E-mail correspondence, 01-10-2012).¹ In line with Sturdevant’s recollection of disputed facts, this one portrayed speaker accounts as “factually-flawed” to the point of being “disturbing;” yet it failed to identify any of those facts or explain how they might be disturbing or for whom. Beyond this lone rebuke came an overwhelmingly positive public response to the *Conflict and Remembrance* lectures. Anonymous surveys reflected glowingly on the “interesting,” “excellent,” and “enlightening” proceedings, never once expressing defenses of neglected or misunderstood “sides.”²

By this fourth week, regional media outlets such as the Mankato *Free Press* and *Minnesota Monthly Magazine* had expressed favorable interest in the course (Fieldnotes, 01-12, 18, 20-2012). A former Speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives had telephoned Dr. Lenz to offer her personal encouragement (Fieldnotes, 01-04-2012). Importantly for Dr. Lenz, Dakota elders were touring BLCHS that very afternoon as she explained to the students, accounting for Harwell’s absence. For her, the visit gave evidence of an important development in her often-stated purpose to create dialogue

¹ Shared with me by Dr. Lenz on April 27, 2012.

² Lecture surveys were devised by course instructors and placed on chairs prior to each of the six lectures. By the morning of January 24, four lectures had taken place, the largest audience estimated at over 260 people not counting approximately 30 others who had followed via online streaming (Fieldnotes, 01-12-2012). In all, 50 completed surveys had been collected by the date in question, none containing negative reactions like those alluded to above. The anonymous surveys provided ample space for audience members to write their opinions.

between Dakota and white communities long divided.³ As she said on this day, “Engendering dialogue with Dakota people has been a goal all along. At every lecture, a Dakota person has stood up and talked. This has been precious in my mind” (Fieldnotes, 01-24-2012). Dr. Lenz routinely announced all such positive events to the class since it had begun on January 3. Taking stock of favorable public response and developments built a sense over time that the *Conflict and Remembrance* J-term was not only getting things right despite the political peril noted in the *Star Tribune*, but also helping with progress toward mutual healing.

Waziyatawin’s *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (2008) was to provide the basis for reading and discussion on the Tuesday afternoon in question. Hers was the last of 6 books on the syllabus moving from Ella Deloria’s *Waterlily* (1988) through works the instructors considered foundational for students possessing little prior knowledge of the war such as Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan Woolworth’s *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of Minnesota’s Indian War of 1862* (1988) and Kenneth Carley’s *The Dakota War of 1862: Minnesota’s Other Civil War* (1961/1976). Though three days remained on the syllabus, this discussion would mark an end to the processing of course content together as a large group. The jam-packed itinerary simply would not allow for more of it. There were still two lectures to attend, a day-long field trip to Fort Snelling and the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul

³ As Sheldon Wolfchild prepared to visit the class as a guest speaker, Dr. Lenz commented, “This is an opportunity to have the kind of dialogue we hoped to engender when beginning to plan the course two years ago. Our goal has been a year of genuine dialogue” (Fieldnotes, 01-12-2012). The goal was repeated when students visited Lower Sioux Community (Fieldnotes, 01-19-2012). A course goal listed on the syllabus was “to engage in dialogue about these issues with speakers and the community.”

slated for Wednesday, small-group work with a visiting graphic designer on Thursday to set the final exhibit panel layouts, and a farewell gathering on Friday to celebrate a job well done.⁴ In order to observe the Waziyatawin discussion as both a culmination of their time together and the processing of hard-hitting material that included a history of ethnic cleansing and genocide against the Dakota people, Dr. Lenz had brought in a wreath of sweetgrass. As she explained the previous Friday, passing the wreath and speaking only while holding it would offer a “native-American pedagogical approach, allowing one to speak and be heard without being interrupted” (Fieldnotes, 01-20-2012). Students would sit in a circle, make a statement when the sweetgrass came to them, pass it on and listen.

On Frames and What the Students Knew

Before delving into student talk that transpired that day, I would like to take a few steps back to examine how the day’s discussion was *framed*, framed beginning with the sense of taking place within various contextual boundaries, some large and some small (Gee, 2011, pp. 67-68). By reading from Lori Sturdevant’s column warning that one should proceed with caution about the U.S.-Dakota War because the past is not past for war descendants, Dr. Lenz provided one large, statewide frame for the discussion to follow, a frame of caution and perhaps even anxiety or fear about offending descendants.

⁴ This day had originally been planned for final presentations of the panels, but as it turned out the class had already done this twice together as part of an on-going collaborative editing process. It was also understood that further editing could take place between the last class meeting and sometime in February when the panel drafts would go to production. Students planned to present their work to each other and the community on March 10 at a special workshop planned for the course at the St. Lucia social-justice conference.

Referring to the Dakota elders' visit to the local historical society established another, more local frame for discussion, suggesting that the public-service style work being performed by the J-term class was helping to mend the longstanding racial divide between white towns like Gotland and Dakota communities like Lower Sioux where the day's visitors had traveled from. Structuring the discussion in terms of nativistic ceremony, sitting in a circle and passing a wreath, provided an even smaller, classroom-level frame, setting students up to listen more than speak, to show mutual respect for what peers, Dr. Lenz, and Waziyatawin, a Dakota author, had to say. By invoking these various contextual levels, then, certain tones had been set — caution, mending and perhaps healing, mutual respect — all looking outward to various community levels and coming back again to help shape the terms of classroom expression.

This last tone of mutual respect requires a bit more elaboration that will help nuance what I mean by *frames*. In *Language and Power* (2001), Norman Fairclough approaches frames in a slightly different sense than James Gee's contextual levels, noting that specific frames themselves can figure as subject matter for activities and thereby play determinative roles for the particular *scripts* that unfold, *scripts* being the ways participants behave towards each other during the activity, the things they do and say and how they do and say them (p. 132). When reading through the course syllabus on the first day of class, Dr. Lenz established a kind of dichotomous frame for understanding Waziyatawin's work in relation to Kenneth Carley's history in particular, the latter volume chosen for its easy-to-follow chronology, maps, and illustrations, and its general overview of the facts on the war for the uninitiated (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012). On top of

this accessibility, Carley would offer “a fairly balanced perspective, which is what we’re looking for,” as Dr. Lenz explained to the students (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012). By contrast, Dr. Lenz introduced *What Does Justice Look Like?* as “a radical, provocative book” that included strong suggestions for what modern Minnesotans should do to make reparations for the dispossession of the Dakota people of their homeland and genocide. Among Waziyatawin’s proposals were taking down Fort Snelling and returning public lands to Minnesota’s original inhabitants, proposals so bold as to make Dr. Lenz “not certain how much she believes what she writes,” as she also explained to the class that first day (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012).

Despite Dr. Lenz’s eventual dissatisfaction with Carley,⁵ this initial overview of the readings set an important frame that built an implicit stability for a long-established white authority on the war and, by contrast, instability for a critical indigenous voice calling for restorative social justice today. As skepticism about Carley as a reliable source grew during the course,⁶ the idea of Waziyatawin’s unreliability only seemed to deepen;

⁵ Professor Lenz told the class that the editor of the Minnesota Historical Society Press had recently asked her “If MHS published a new book on the Dakota War, what should it be?” Dr. Lenz said that she had recommended an updated version of a text like Carley’s, “a good introductory text.” She said the editor absolutely agreed (Fieldnotes, 01-24-2012).

⁶ Critical comments about white bias in Carley’s text ranged from suspicion to outright certainty among students. Lori, for instance, said, “the Carley book that we read felt like it gave an accurate portrayal of things that took place, but some of the word choices and the going back and forth between some of the choices of words kind of gave me a funny feeling [...] it made me wonder what Carley’s personal views were because I felt like in some capacity they seeped into what he was writing about” (Interview, 01-23-2012). On the other hand, Jennifer made no bones about identifying what she saw as race-based double standards in the text — “Yeah, I think that even stuff in the Carley book that is supposedly this great account, we still don’t know how many Indians were killed, you know. We still don’t know how many- you know, we still don’t know- we don’t have

on the Friday preceding the discussion on *What Does Justice Look Like?*, Dr. Lenz reminded students that Waziyatawin was “the most radical of our authors. Some Dakota see her as really out there on the fringe” (Fieldnotes, 01-20-2012). Delivered late in the day as part of instructions to students for how they should read in preparation for the following week’s discussion, these words seemed to suggest that if Dakota people could be found who regarded Waziyatawin’s book as marginal, then why should this class of readers, fourteen of whom were white, position it anywhere close to the center of their understanding of 1862 and its ongoing legacy?

This specific discursive frame — Carley’s balance and Waziyatawin’s imbalance — was a tenuous one to set and maintain. The fifteen students enrolled did not reflect the proverbially ignorant masses often imagined by regional media when it comes to the topic of the U.S.-Dakota War.⁷ On the contrary, many of them brought critical orientations with them that seemed aligned with Waziyatawin’s call for restorative justice. Although Dr. Lenz described the class to me in a follow-up interview as having “started essentially at zero” in terms of relevant prior knowledge,⁸ only four students reported never having completed coursework or read books by or about native Americans

solid numbers on any of that. Yeah, we have solid numbers on the white settlers that were killed” (Interview, 01-18-2012).

⁷ A Mankato *Free Press* editorial column printed during the J-term course began, “The lack of public knowledge about the Dakota-U.S. War is remarkable. Go outside Minnesota and there is scant if any awareness of the bloody, historic events that took place on the southern Minnesota plains in 1862. Even in the state, comprehension of the war is generally limited” (“Dakota-U.S. War history,” January 10, 2012). Similarly, the TPT production *The Past is Alive within Us* begins with the claim of widespread ignorance. See, <http://www.tpt.org/?a=tptUpdate&id=1867>

⁸ Looking back over the course in April, Dr. Lenz remarked, “I just think given the circumstances that we had 15 students who started essentially at zero and got to 120 in three and a half weeks is extraordinary” (Interview, 04-27-2012).

prior to enrolling.⁹ On the other hand, ten reported having taken coursework that included critical perspectives on colonialism in North America, read critical works on the subject independently, or had relevant personal experiences like visiting reservations in North or South Dakota.

A good example of the students' wealth of prior knowledge, and Dr. Lenz's awareness of it despite describing them as having started at zero, came on the first day of class. Just before describing Waziyatawin's book to the students, Dr. Lenz called on Alan, the student taking the class to atone for what he believed his ancestors had done to natives, asking him to share what he had learned about the author at the White Privilege Conference in Minneapolis the previous year. Alan explained that he had attended Waziyatawin's session on decolonization and heard her speak about the history of Fort Snelling and its strategic placement on ground sacred to the Dakota people (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012). It was immediately after Alan's brief remarks that Dr. Lenz proceeded to characterize the book as "radical" and "provocative," but not in the way someone working consciously for social change might use these words; a negative or dubious sense for the terms quickly arose when Dr. Lenz added that she was "not certain how much she really believes what she writes," a comment directed at the author's proposal to

⁹ My discussion of students' prior knowledge begins with data collected by course instructors on the first day of class when they administered a "Pre-Test" consisting of 5 questions which included the following items: "1. Briefly list what you have previously learned/studied about American Indians; 2. Briefly list books by/about American Indians you have read; 3. Summarize what you already know about the U.S. Dakota War of 1862; 4. Have you been on a reservation or visited a museum devoted to American Indians? Do you have American Indian ancestry or know people who do?" Pre-Tests were lacking for three students who eventually completed the course; information pertaining to their prior knowledge is taken from interview data. Ultimately, this discussion combines data from the Pre-Tests with interviews I conducted with all fifteen student participants.

take down Fort Snelling and return the land surrounding it to the Dakota (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012). With this, Dr. Lenz suggested that she herself might be just as interested in preserving colonial institutions as she is in helping historically dispossessed people attain social justice. Dr. Lenz did not elaborate in an effort to dispel this ambiguity. Alan made no further comments. There was a great deal of ground to cover that first day and Dr. Lenz moved immediately on to make introductory comments about Sarah Wakefield's *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees*.

Like Alan, three other students had attended the White Privilege Conference in recent years and brought back with them a heightened consciousness about race and oppression. Of these three, Anna, a third-year Sociology/Anthropology major, reported having had overviews of the U.S.-Dakota War in her past education and of having read a history of the war plus Deloria's *Waterlily*, John Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks*, and other works associated with a college-level Indigenous Peoples of North America course she had taken. Lori, introduced in Chapter One, reported having spent time on the Rosebud Reservation in her youth (Interview, 01-23-2012). She reported awareness on the first day of class that St. Lucia College had been founded the same year as an important date associated with the war and that the conflict involved President Lincoln ordering a mass execution of Dakotas.¹⁰

Of the four White Privilege Conference attendees, only Jennifer reported knowing next to nothing about the war. A highly accomplished second-year Communications Studies major, Jennifer railed against the educational system the more she learned about

¹⁰ On her "Pre-Test," Lori misaligned the date of the College's founding with the 1851 Traverse des Sioux Treaty. The College was founded in 1862, the same year as the war.

the U.S-Dakota War — “I think that there needs to be required- there needs to be something required within our educational system so that everyone is at least given, you know, a better understanding of what went on versus the feeling that I feel like I got nothing. In terms of Dakota and white-settler relations, I think that it was a genocide” (Interview, 01-18-2012). Jennifer shared this understanding with me two and a half weeks into the course, making clear her anxiety that her developing view involved taking up a marginal position in relation to white authority. At this point, she had read Carley’s history, Anderson and Woolworth’s volume *Through Dakota Eyes*, and had attended a lecture delivered by Anderson himself where the author stated that genocide, as legally defined, never occurred in Minnesota. On her conviction about regional genocide, Jennifer worried, “I don’t know how many people are gonna, you know (.) agree with me. Some people aren’t. I know Gary Clayton Anderson certainly didn’t. Um, but in that regard, I came into the class being far more sympathetic to the Dakota experience simply because, uh, white history has been taught to me my whole life and this is the first time I’m even touching on it” (Interview, 01-18-2012). Like all of the students, Jennifer possessed prior awareness of colonialism, racism, and oppression that provided her ways of understanding the previously unknown facts about 1862 that she was learning.

The prior knowledge students reported about specific events that took place in Dakota homeland in the 1850s and 60s sometimes seemed spotty or even nonexistent, as in Jennifer’s remark that she had “got nothing.” This is the only explanation for the students having “started essentially at zero” in early January. Even on this score, Dr. Lenz described herself as a “neophyte” when reflecting on the time when she first started

planning the course with Harwell in 2009 (Interview, 04-27-2012). Because of this, Dr. Lenz positioned herself as a “learner” during the J-term, an identity she curiously retained long after the course had ended despite having taught on the Holocaust and other colonial contexts for 25 years (Interview, 04-27-2012).¹¹ She had three books behind her on women’s experiences under Nazi oppression.

But even this implicit privileging of and deference to the local “facts” (ultimately their protection from critical inquiry) could not support the imagined zero point of knowledge. Tom, the student from Hutchinson introduced in Chapter One, knew very well that his hometown had been attacked and burned by Dakota fighters in 1862. As alluded to in Chapter One, he had taken a high-school course on the war and had visited many of the battle sites in the region, something he felt gave him a unique perspective on the U.S.-Dakota War in contrast to students like Jennifer in particular whom he felt was being overly critical — “she doesn’t know anything about this conflict at all until this last couple of weeks, and then since I’ve kind of learned about it my entire life, and I’ve gone to these places, and it’s part of my hometown’s heritage, and I’ve seen this thing that my town has as a resource” (Interview, 01-09-2012). Yet despite taking such conservative stances in one-on-one interviews, Tom often provided classroom commentaries on injustice that cut against the grain of whitestream calls for fairness and balance, as he did here when making sense out of why Dakotas attacked whites in 1862 — “For me this is about accountability and fair treatment. The Dakota weren’t treated fairly anywhere, not

¹¹ Dr. Lenz described herself as a “learner” on another occasion when addressing those attending a workshop on the J-term class at the St. Lucia social justice conference (Fieldnotes, 03-10-2012).

in the stores. I don't think the goal was so much about getting rid of whites but the bull crap that came with them" (Fieldnotes, 01-23-2012). In other instances, Tom spoke out for "truth-telling" and against racist double standards that shaped such things as unfair public treatment of Little Crow vis-à-vis Henry Sibley and the banning of Dakota spiritual practices until 1978 (Fieldnotes, 01-23, 24-2012). His comments show prior knowledge of both the local "facts" and a critical orientation toward them.

Mitch came to the course with similar prior knowledge to Tom's though he rarely expressed Tom's kind of conservatism. Mitch was raised in Lake Okoboji, Iowa, near Spirit Lake where an important precursor to the U.S.-Dakota War took place in 1857.¹² He expressed both awareness and sympathy for historical grievances expressed by Dakotas. Like Tom, Mitch came from a farm family. He had visited Crow Creek Reservation in South Dakota as a boy and understood that this primary place Minnesota officials violently evicted Dakota non-combatants to in 1863 was land on which "you can't do anything" in terms of food production (Interview, 01-26-2012). Mitch shared first-hand knowledge of celebratory modes of white commemoration in northwest Iowa, an area he characterized as "a very conservative, very racist place" (Focus group, 01-13-2012). He opposed local school mascots like the Lake Okoboji Pioneers and Spirit Lake Indians, especially "the Indians" who happened to drape themselves in the color red (Focus group, 01-13-2012). What concerned Mitch most was the feeling that no one there seemed to see anything wrong with fellow whites using "Indian" identity to build school

¹² Goaded into violence after white officials failed to prosecute trader Henry Lott for massacring chief Sintomniduta and his family, a group of Wahpekute Dakota, led by Inkpaduta, killed approximately 40 settlers who had encroached on their territory (Wingerd, 2010, pp. 260-265).

community amongst themselves — “there’s not been really any serious talk about changing it. People aren’t really concerned about it” (Focus group, 01-13-2012).

Given these glimpses into what I would characterize as a wealth of student prior knowledge, a potential for controversy of course existed among J-termers and between them and the instructors, Jennifer’s anxiety about having a dissenting opinion on genocide providing one good example. This potential included resistance to the Carley = balance / Waziyatawin = imbalance frame noted in interview data. Just before class on the day of the *What Does Justice Look Like?* discussion, I happened to interview Stephanie, the former North Carolinian. I asked her how she thought the coming talk might go:

You know, I don’t know. If we didn’t have the object passing thing going on I think it would be a pretty explosive- (1.0) everyone would be talking at once cause we’re all kinda pissed (1.0) thing. I don’t know. I feel like as usual Steven is gonna be like, °whoa° he’s all pissed and he’s gonna be like, °okay°. The- the object passing takes a lot of the heat out of it (2.0) so there’s gonna be a lot of lengthy silence. (Interview, 01-24-2012)

In this interview, Stephanie had just spoken of ways she was pissed after working all month on the “War — Dakota perspectives” exhibit panel. As seen in Chapter One, she strongly expected Dakota viewers to get upset over the kind of knowledge Harwell had guided her and Tom to produce together — whites giving “Dakota perspective,” whites focusing on military strategy and prominent men like Little Crow rather than everyday

Dakota people affected by war.¹³ By claiming “we’re all kinda pissed,” and then thinking specifically of Steven,¹⁴ Stephanie noted of a point of solidarity within a larger group of classmates she imagined as potentially “explosive” with disagreement over Waziyatawin’s book. In a focus-group discussion the previous Friday, Steven, for example, had gone so far as to say “I hope some people get pissed” by the museum exhibit for its overall potential to be perceived as one sided, favoring a Dakota perspective long silenced in regional commemoration (Focus group, 01-20-2012).¹⁵ Meanwhile Stephanie’s co-author, Tom, had been advocating for “balance” in the panels (Interview, 05-11-2012). In group discussions late in the course, Steven mentioned a need for activism regarding public commemoration (Focus group, 01-13-2012). Imagining Steven’s critical voice unleashed amidst chaotic and controversial reaction to *What Does Justice Look Like?* seemed to raise a vision of gravity for Stephanie surrounding Steven where he would pause in a moment of tamped-down “*whoa*” to assess equally “pissed” voices on the one hand, but where he would proceed to contribute something powerful from his determined “*okay*” moment on the other.

¹³ “They’re gonna look at my panel and they’re gonna say, ‘Here’s two hundred words representing how my people felt about, you know, fifty years of injustice, and, you know, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of dead, sick children and women that aren’t even mentioned?’” (Interview, 01-24-2012)

¹⁴ Steven was a third-year Anthropology major who had completed coursework at St. Lucia on Indigenous Peoples of North America (Interview, 01-12-2012). He showed considerable interest in native history and spirituality and had been reading independently beyond the assigned works, recently finishing Mary Wingerd’s *North Country: The Making of Minnesota* (2010) which he brought to class and consulted in his exhibit writing work.

¹⁵ Steven made this comment in an exchange with Alan, Jennifer, and Sarah where all four agreed that equal representation of white and Dakota sides would not be appropriate for the exhibit because of the historical silencing Alan named (Focus group, 01-20-2012).

Passing the Wreath: Round One

Such visions of open controversy in the J-term classroom remained just that, visions. Students were overwhelmingly respectful and class discussions were shot through with polite utterances. In the first round of the wreath-passing discussion, reconstructed below from expanded fieldnotes,¹⁶ I managed to capture eight instances of respectful affirmations prefacing what fourteen speakers had to say, discourse suggestive of the ceremonial frame on the one hand, but of the tone of mutual respect always in play in J-term settings. “I really like Jennifer’s comment,” “I really agree with what Alan said,” “I wanted to say what Sarah did,” all came from this first round of fourteen speech acts, as did affirmations about the course — “This is what I love about college courses,” “I’m excited to go back [to Fort Snelling] now”¹⁷ — and respect for Waziyatawin — “I really respected her arguments,” “I respected and agreed with a lot of what she had to say,” “I appreciated the firm stance she took.” Along with such polite talk came an initial reluctance to speak. J-termers sometimes needed prodding as they did on this day after Dr. Lenz read the first wreath-passing prompt — “What is your reaction to Waziyatawin’s recommendations for justice?”

Dr. Lenz waited. When no one moved to take the wreath, she joked, “Hello? Coffee anyone?”

¹⁶ Comments from one student, Nikki, were not recorded on January 24 as I understood at the time that she did not want to participate in the study. On the last day of class, she told me that she did want to participate after all and signed the consent form. She had not signed previously or come to focus-group discussions because she thought participating would involve extra work that she didn’t have time for (Interview, 04-27-2012).

¹⁷ A field trip to Fort Snelling was planned for the following day.

Stephanie soon motioned. She took the wreath and spoke briefly about the difficulties that would be involved in taking down Fort Snelling and returning land to the Dakota. “How on earth could we get that to happen?” she asked.

Jennifer spoke next, also briefly, supporting the authoritative classroom position toward *What Does Justice Look Like?* set on the first day, but also making a move to distance herself from it — “This is what I love about college classes, well partially college and partially St. Lucia. We get the chance to read really polarized texts like this. It’s radical although I don’t really like that word. This has been really cool for me to read, and I think from all the texts you can find middle ground.”

Curiously, Jennifer often applied the term “radical” to herself in a positive way when taking positions advocating for social justice. In a focus-group discussion attended by seven of her classmates four days earlier, Jennifer had taken a bold stance against Gary Clayton Anderson’s assertion that white Minnesotans had once carried out ethnic cleansing against the Dakota, but definitely not genocide. Jennifer railed — “I think it’s a cop out to call it ethnic cleansing. I’m sorry. I’m- I’m just- I’m gonna just- I’m gonna be the radical one here and I’m just gonna say it’s- its a cop out” (Focus group, 01-20-2012). Regarding whether white audience members should ever question what Dakota speakers had to say during the J-term, Jennifer proclaimed in the same focus group, “I’m gonna be firm and radical here but I’m gonna just say this because I need to say it, white people need to shut the hell up and sit there and listen” (Focus group, 01-20-2012). In our first interview two days before that, Jennifer had described herself with pride, saying, “I’m far more of a radical than I think that you’re gonna talk to anyone” (Interview, 01-18-2012).

If given the chance to fashion a museum exhibit panel unedited by the instructors, she claimed, “I think that I would make far more radical pronouncements about what was going on” (Interview, 01-18-2012). For Jennifer, claiming not to like the word radical in her contribution to the wreath-passing discussion suggested, then, not liking its use as way of destabilizing *What Does Justice Look Like?* as a source for students.¹⁸ Expressing distaste toward the authoritative classroom iteration of “radical” implied critiquing an unacknowledged bias in the teaching, a slightly risky move for Jennifer. After carefully slipping the critique in, Jennifer seemed to try to give something back with her final remark about “middle ground,” reaffirming Dr. Lenz’s “fairly balanced perspective, which is what we’re looking for.”

Christina spoke next. The only non-white student among the fifteen, Christina seized the opportunity provided by the ceremonial format to offer a kind of confession vis-à-vis Waziyatawin — “Even though she mentions the impossibility of her goals or ideas, I think what she’s saying is really important. It’s been hard for me to position myself in this class. I’m Mexican, and my family comes from Mexico. I see what she means when she writes these things. Even though her suggestions may be impossible, I rally for her.” With three days left in the J-term, this was the first time Christina, a third-year student majoring in Communication Arts and English Education, had brought her non-white ancestry to bear on formal, large-group discussion.

¹⁸ To be fair as fair as possible, Dr. Lenz could use “radical” in a positive way when referring to herself. For example, when taken to task publicly by Dr. Chris Mato Nunpa for using the word to describe Waziyatawin’s book at the public unveiling of the museum exhibit in March, she told the conference workshop audience, “as a 1960s hippie, radical is not a bad word for me” (Fieldnotes, 03-10-2012).

When I had asked Christina four days earlier about her ancestry and how she felt with frequent talk about white privilege going on in the course, she told me — “That’s a good question. I haven’t thought about- (.) um, a little. Uh, cause like there’s comments sometimes in class, like we’re just a bunch of white people, and I- sometimes I’m like, ‘No I’m not’” (Interview, 01-20-2012). She had kept her no-I’m-nots to herself until this discussion. For Christina, seeing what Waziyatawin means yet sensing an “impossibility” in her goals, seemed less a response to what the author had actually written and more a personal response to the normative racial identity that had prevailed during the J-term. Normative whiteness had made minority positioning “hard.” Though self-consciously white and critical toward the violent social power that had accompanied white identity historically, majority J-termers often did not have the opportunity to examine the politics of race unfolding before them be it in classroom discussions, public lectures, or various exchanges with members of the community. Not unpacking the politics of race or working actively to find strategies for disrupting a white resistance to social justice could lead to expressions of helplessness like Stephanie’s opening statement above — “How on earth could we get that to happen?” With her turn, Christina echoed the sense of “impossibility.”¹⁹ For Christina, locating and voicing her minority racial position in these final days of the course meant acknowledging even more barriers between her and her classmates as she told me in interview — “if I was going to be on one side, I wouldn’t be-

¹⁹ In their opening remarks, Stephanie and Christina seem to grapple with the author’s comment: “While these dramatic stages may seem radical and impossible, they are in fact, essential to creating a moral and just society in which Dakota and non-Dakota can peacefully co-exist and respectfully share this place we call Mnisota Makoce” (p. 9).

you know, back then, it would not- I wouldn't have been on the white side, because it's not my skin color and beliefs and everything" (Interview, 01-20-2012).

A series of defensive comments about *What Does Justice Look Like?* followed Christina's confession. Holly took the wreath and said she appreciated Waziyatawin's boldness, but the writing reminded her of the saying "an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." Tom extended this thinking, saying, "the solution seems to be for whites to go east, get in boats and sail home." Mitch expressed confusion about Waziyatawin's proposal for land cessions, but invoked his father's occupation as a farmer and added that he didn't think his father would like to lose his job. Anna echoed Tom's concerns, saying, "If we give land back, where do we go?"

The next speaker, Lori, slowed things down. The Baha'i spiritualist, Lori savored her turn by holding the wreath up to her nose, closing her eyes, and taking in the scent. "Sweetgrass is my favorite," she said, a performative move that seemed a kind of appeal to the ceremonial frame. She said she respected what Waziyatawin had to say and read a passage from the bottom half of page 174 where the author makes clear that she is not pushing an eye-for-an-eye agenda — "Those of us clinging to traditional Dakota values are not interested in turning the tables and claiming a position as oppressor, as colonizer, or of ruthlessly exploiting the environment for profit." After reading, Lori continued to work against the caricatured understanding of *What Does Justice Look Like?* that had taken shape in the previous speakers' defense of property — "She says she doesn't want to return to the conditions that set this up. She doesn't want to turn into that which caused

pain in the first place.” Lori handed the sweetgrass over to Dr. Lenz, just past the midway point of the wreath’s first circuit.

Dr. Lenz sent it further on without comment.

In the wake of Lori’s intervention, the next four speakers made sure to note that they either respected Waziyatawin’s proposals or agreed with something a previous speaker had said. The first to go, Alan, the one working for atonement, followed a thread introduced by Lori — “Oppression affects the oppressor too. It robs you of your humanity. I think Fort Snelling should go away. I think the land should go back to the Dakota. A symbolic act like that would rile things up, but in a positive way. It would create the opportunity for discussion. It’s wrong to just do nothing.” Next, Sarah re-inserted a notion of balance to the discussion, stating that this is “a double-sided history.” Still, she thought, the names of nineteenth-century colonizers like Alexander Ramsey and Henry Sibley should be removed from public places. Steven then politely challenged Sarah’s assertion of balance. He granted that “settler society is so massive” that it would be impossible to remove, yet he added, “it’s important to take a stand and push the envelope, maybe to the point where there’s no middle ground.” Monica, the next to go, agreed — “This is meant to be a dialogue for change. You have to push the envelope drastically for the smallest change to take place.” The last two speakers, Rachel and Tracy, both returned to the idea of Waziyatawin herself being “extreme.” Only Rachel granted that “what she says has to be said for change.”

When Rachel wrapped up this first round, it looked for a moment as if Dr. Lenz was not going to share her own reactions to Waziyatawin’s recommendations for justice.

Passing the wreath silently on had marked a barrier between student and teacher, suggesting that it was not the teacher's place to share "reaction," only to provide occasion for it for students, a contradiction considering her own status as a fellow "learner." When Dr. Lenz began to speak in the direction of her purpose for follow-up discussion — analyzing narrative strategies employed by Waziyatawin — Steven looked around the circle and held a shrug of his shoulders as if to ask, "What gives?"

Students prodded Dr. Lenz to share. She explained herself as having a currently evolving understanding of *What Does Justice Look Like?* At first, she said, she "thought it was so extreme she figured the author was just going for a reaction," but after speaking with a scholar more familiar with Waziyatawin's work, she came to understand that the author "was dead serious about returning Minnesota state park land to the Dakota" and eliminating Fort Snelling. After considering Waziyatawin's proposals in light of her personal knowledge of truth and reconciliation in South Africa, and her experiences visiting concentration camps in Germany, Dr. Lenz was now "much more amenable to her idea because it [Fort Snelling] was built on sacred land. The concentration camps weren't," she explained. "I'm shifting my thinking." She was careful to qualify this shift however — "Still historic places are really important. Eradicating them can be a form of genocide too. It depends on how they're telling the history there."

This first and strangely late-coming reference to genocide since the wreath had set in motion emphasizes one more important way this discussion was framed in the sense of a specific *frame* discourse shaping *script*, the things that get said and how they get said (Fairclough, 2001, p. 132). As this kind of *frame*, the discussion prompt "What is your

reaction to Waziyatawin's recommendations for justice?" elicited script that mainly attended to Minnesota's future as Waziyatawin proposes it, not the state's past as she proposes it. While the "recommendation" frame provided a way into controversial subjects for the participants — whether Fort Snelling should be razed, whether Sibley and Ramsey's names should be erased from public places, etc. — it limited the potential for the first seventy pages of *What Does Justice Look Like?* becoming central to the script, that is, Waziyatawin's thoroughgoing case that settler society perpetrated genocide against the Dakota people in the 1860s. What students actually thought about this, whether they agreed or not, whether the instructor agreed or not, all remained undisclosed. White denial of genocide had been lingering since Anderson's visit to St. Lucia College two weeks earlier. Though students had brought the question up on various occasions since then, his argument had not been examined in large-group discussion.²⁰

²⁰ Students brought the politics of genocide up on various occasions in class discussions planned for other subjects. On the first class meeting after Anderson's lecture, Harwell led discussion on the day's assigned reading by Kenneth Carley, focusing on whether "war" is the appropriate term to use regarding local battles in 1862. Early in the discussion Holly said, "Anderson talked about the line between war and genocide being blurry. When Ramsey talked of 'extermination,' was that then genocide?" Harwell answered, "I really want to come back to that. So what's war?" When Harwell failed to return to the topic, Jennifer brought it up again late in the session, within five minutes of the end of class. "Why doesn't Anderson call it a genocide?" she asked. Harwell restated the argument Anderson made, that white officials exercised restraint in their treatment of Dakotas following the battles of 1862. As to her inclination to call the history a genocide, Dr. Lenz then said, "I'm still making up my mind. I'm closer to it than I was before." She referred to herself as someone who had studied genocide for a long time, adding "I don't think there's such a fine line between genocide and ethnic cleansing." She went on to make some statements about the politics of the Armenian genocide without going further into definitions or the local politics (Fieldnotes, 01-12-2012). Discussion of the distinction Anderson made or why he might have made it never went deeper than this in classroom discussion. The local politicization of genocide came up once more after a talk delivered by local historian John LaBatte at BLCHS's annual meeting held Sunday,

With the second prompt Dr. Lenz had prescribed for this last day of discussion — “What suggestion [for justice] would you make different from Waziyatawin’s?” — it looked as if the ways that genocide in Dakota homeland had been politicized would remain beyond the J-term classroom script.

Expanding the Thesis

I introduce and return to the concept of discursive frames to demonstrate how frames can work as tools to set the conditions for certain scripts. In the wreath-passing session above, certain utterances mediated meaning in relation to the “balance/imbalance” frame, others mediated meaning in the “ceremonial frame,” others the “recommendations” frame. For the students, these frames were initiated from the principal site of authority, teacher talk, but a site implicating extra-institutional points of authority like the *Star Tribune* and the Blankenship County Historical Society. Once initiated, the students all did their own discursive work individually and collectively to negotiate meaning within the frames, sometimes affirming them, sometimes questioning them and contesting them.

January 22, on the St. Lucia campus. In anticipation of the event, Harwell told the class that LaBatte was “vehemently opposed to the idea of genocide” when referring to 1860’s Minnesota (Fieldnotes, 01-18-2012). The day after LaBatte’s talk, Mitch said in class, “I thought it was interesting about the distinction between genocide and ethnic cleansing not being talked about.” Harwell said LaBatte’s “response is that you can call it whatever you want to” (Fieldnotes, 01-23-2012). The subject was then dropped. As Dr. Lenz told me when looking back over the course, “I so profoundly disagreed with his [Anderson’s] definition of what was and wasn’t genocide that I kind of wrote it off after that” (Interview, 04-27-2012).

Like all tools, frames are put to use for specific purposes. When those purposes affect historically colonized people seeking things like healing, reconciliation, restorative justice, and decolonization as many Dakota public figures are today, the frames that shape public understanding need to be examined carefully.

As seen, discursive frames can serve the purpose of privileging certain forms of knowledge over others, making some knowledge central to script while cutting out other forms of knowledge altogether. With frames as powerful as the “balance” or “recommendations” frames established, various forms of talk can suddenly seem normal or abnormal, appropriate or inappropriate, balanced or imbalanced. Such etiquette indicates that *politics* are in play, *politics* in the sense of social goods being at stake (Gee, 2011, p. 210). In the case of Jennifer, who wants to do well in the J-term course, challenging the balance frame by casting doubt on Dr. Lenz’s use of the term “radical” implies risking her position as a successful student (a social good)²¹ who is working for a high grade (another social good). To maintain the perception of her success, she proceeds to evoke “middle ground,” a sensible political move for her. By initiating certain frames for the classroom, Dr. Lenz is also performing the same sort of political work as Jennifer but in relation to authority located elsewhere. By starting the class session reading from the *Star Tribune* column and then suggesting to students that the course is helping to bridge the divide between white and Dakota sides, the balanced work of the J-term may be deemed appropriate in a statewide context. All such references to positive publicity for the high-profile course indicate that social goods were also at stake for Dr. Lenz and St.

²¹ Dr. Lenz referred to her as “a tremendous student” (Interview, 01-12-2012).

Lucia College. As noted above by Anna, “they have to like be so careful of the wording in what they present because they don’t want to like lose funding and piss anybody off” (Interview, 01-27-2012).

Comparing the discursive political work Jennifer and Dr. Lenz both perform in relation to authoritative etiquette brings me back to my initial use of the term “frame” in reference to contextual levels, e.g. national, state, regional, community, college, and classroom levels. As James Gee explains, the question of where to draw the boundaries for analysis can pose a “frame problem” for researchers (2011, pp. 67-68). This study’s solution to the frame problem is to take up the large, state-level frame identified in Dr. Lenz’s reading from Lori Sturdevant’s column in the *Star Tribune*, that is, the fearful position of the public educator caught between warring sides, a figure who needs the wish of “good luck” before trying to say something about the U.S.-Dakota War, but who would probably be better off not saying anything at all. This study seeks to connect classroom politics to the larger politics of race regarding the U.S.-Dakota War. What social goods are at stake when balance is evoked? How is the balanced or neutral stance a *politicized* stance that veils the struggle for social goods? How do these discourses relate to the historic struggle for foundational social goods like land, natural resources, and racial prestige that once shaped the war and continue to shape the kind of inequality identified by Sandee Geshick as quoted in my Introduction?

Crucially for all that follows, the normative public educator of the U.S-Dakota War that Lori Sturdevant imagines caught between sides is not just anyone, but a speaker occupying a privileged position of knowledge production — first the *Star Tribune* writer,

second the public historian working for the Minnesota Historical Society, then “anyone else planning to publicly commemorate this year’s sad sesquicentennial.” Civic leaders, school teachers, regional journalists all come quickly to mind as do professors like Dr. Lenz and county historical society directors like John Harwell. Sturdevant’s message pertains foremost to professionals and others working within historically white institutions who have the ability and means to orchestrate public commemoration. While the history may be “too formative to ignore” for these people, as Sturdevant writes, the idea of ignoring it is still there. Sturdevant is not an angry e-mail writer embroiled in the ongoing legacy of the war, only one who receives messages from such people and might just as well delete them. While it might sound safe to say her imagined commemorator is not a white descendant of people killed or otherwise affected by the war, it is an even safer thing to say her commemorator is not a descendant of Dakota people killed or removed from Minnesota in the 1860s. Her imagined public educator is most decidedly not among voices calling for healing, reconciliation, cultural revitalization, or restorative justice heard today in works like *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors: The Dakota Commemorative Marches of the 21st Century* (Wilson, 2006) or the film *Dakota 38* (2012) — people who look to 1862 and journey back to painful places like Mankato and Fort Snelling in efforts to transcend racial discrimination, poverty, domestic abuse, suicide, alcoholism, and cultural loss that have gone on for too long in their communities.

As imagined, the generic planner of public commemoration of the war in Minnesota has apparently not felt the adverse effects of colonization and can resign such perspective to one “side,” perhaps even set it aside, crop it out of discussion as it were.

Ostensibly caught between sides but in fact aligned with institutions that historically benefit from settler colonialism,²² this public educator — the imagined non-descendant untouched by war — can afford to take positions commonly thought of as appropriate and professional when speaking, positions commonly thought of as reasonable middle grounds between extreme ends of any given argument and thus deemed *balanced*, *neutral*, and *objective* because of it. But to pursue a long line of criticism that examines the history and politics of such stances in colonial contexts (Freire, 1970; Said, 1994; Giroux, 2000) — criticism encapsulated by Bishop Tutu’s proclamation that *if you are neutral on situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor* — this study examines *balance*, *neutrality*, and *objectivity* as discursive frames central to an oppressive form of regional education that continually reconstructs an ongoing situation of injustice, the “living wound” that is the U.S.-Dakota War.²³

²² The most straightforward setting of the state-level *balance* frame by a historically privileged colonial institution came in 2012 when the Minnesota Historical Society worked to construct a “balanced” exhibit for the sesquicentennial year as reported by Joel Picardi in a story for Minnesota Public Radio News titled “Finding balanced view of the US-Dakota War of 1862” (Picardi, 2012). In the TPT production *The Past Is Alive Within Us*, both Stephen Elliott, Director of the Minnesota Historical Society, and Daniel Spock, Director of the Minnesota History Center Museum in St. Paul, speak openly about their institution’s roots in a regional settler colonialism that constructed white wealth and prestige by exploiting Dakota Indians. Spock, for example, states, “When you look at the history of our particular organization, you realize just how complicated our role as an organization has been. Our founders are the same men who negotiated the treaties. They are the same men who benefited financially from those transactions. Our organization is founded by these men in part to, you know, memorialize their achievements.” See *The Past Is Alive Within Us: The US-Dakota Conflict* (1:19:58).

²³ Various commentators have made this comment including author Thomas Maltman in an address delivered at St. Lucia during the J-term. Accordingly, the introductory panel of the J-term museum exhibit begins by saying the war “represents a living wound” for “some families of victims.” One hears this discourse repeated throughout current media

As this work argues, in the regional public pedagogy of the U.S.-Dakota War, *balance* and its related discourses provide white educators an assortment of reliable yet decidedly partial frames to give courage when entering the public arena of embattlement suggested by Sturdevant. Of course, such discourses are not limited to the context in question; *balance*, *neutrality*, and *objectivity* have long been identified as widespread discourses that mask political agendas, making those agendas seem apolitical even as they proceed to uphold exclusionary institutional practices (Giroux, 2000, pp. 139-140). Perhaps the most famous or infamous example of this effect in recent decades has been Fox News with its overtly conservative “fair and balanced” approach to current events and the culture wars. The present study, however, explores various regional iterations of *balance* that work in different ways to frame script about the U.S.-Dakota War — as a reasoned middle ground affirming status-quo social relations; as political reaction to multicultural education about native-American history; and finally, as a specific educational corrective to ignorance about white victimhood, i.e. the high number of white civilians including settler women and children estimated to have been killed by Dakotas in 1862.

As Dr. Lenz rightly suggested on the first day of class, *balance*, as locally expressed, can be located exclusively in traditional white sources like Kenneth Carley’s history. Rather than being constructed by synthesizing information somewhere in the middle of “extreme sides,” or even by simply making meaning after consulting a variety of native and white sources, *balance* as a frame discourse in white communities directly

production on the war, for instance in the artist Jim Denomie’s reference to the war as “a still unhealed wound” in the TPT documentary *The Past is Alive Within Us*.

affected by the war is best achieved by digging further into foundational white sources from which Carley's history derives. In tracing this local tradition, which goes into graphic and often sensationalized detail about atrocities allegedly committed against whites, a raced sense of "justice as fairness" emerges (Rawls, 1993) with roots in settler society's social-contract (Mills, 1997; Seth, 2010), a contract that historically involves a "moral wall" (Namias, p. 39) violently dividing "civilized" and "savage" racial identities. My analyses of the current public pedagogy and its bearing on J-term experiences reveal ways this wall persists, but sometimes in unexpected ways that can position even white war descendants today among the potentially threatening, unreasonable, unstable, or imbalanced. As I argue, convenient assumptions of white benevolence, equity, and democracy overlay white Minnesotans' divisive sense of justice regarding the war, effectively hiding social contingencies like race that once shaped the violence and continue to shape how "we" Minnesotans (a key pronoun in this study) relate to one another. Ultimately, this study seeks to offer explanations for vital questions posed by Sandee Geshick about racism today and Waziyatawin as she anticipated Minnesota's coming sesquicentennials in 2008 — *What does justice look like?* Indeed, what does justice look like to successful white students and educators when they come together to commemorate the U.S.-Dakota War?

Chapter Three

Reopening the Wounds of 1862

It is unconscionable to teach about Minnesota history without keeping the suffering of the victims of genocide at the forefront of the conversation.

— Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like?*, 2008, p. 76.

You do not want to appear too political; you are afraid of seeming controversial; you need the approval of a boss or an authority figure; you want to keep a reputation for being balanced, objective, moderate; your hope is to be asked back, to consult, to be on a board or prestigious committee, and so to remain within the responsible mainstream; someday you hope to get an honorary degree, a big prize, perhaps even an ambassadorship.

For an intellectual these habits of mind are corrupting par excellence. If anything can denature, neutralize, and finally kill a passionate intellectual life it is the internalization of such habits.

— Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 1994, pp. 100-101.

* * *

Juxtaposed this way, these epigraphs seem to form an indictment of the pedagogy witnessed in Chapter Two — struggles for social goods like high grades and acclaim from media outlets and politicians making students and educators lose sight of a situation of injustice. I did not put independent thought or moral judgment aside as Corrine Marz

encouraged me to. At the same time, I do not mean to use the epigraphs lightly or arrive at judgments too quickly. I want to devote time in Chapter Three to examining how the epigraphs might not fit for framing what I saw and heard and participated in. As you may have wondered, I did sit in the circle on January 24. I do not remember exactly what I said as I tried to jot down everything related by the people sitting next to me and then speak coherently when the sweetgrass came my way — something about radicalism but needing radicalism for social change, I think. I hope.

Indeed, things moved so quickly in the classroom that I often doubted my emerging judgments. Much of this chapter involves my attempts to triangulate and see if the epigraphs fit, to find out more from Dr. Lenz personally about her approach and then to question others about the enactment of a neutral (yet biased) pedagogy. As suggested in previous arguments and the title to this chapter, I suspect that something important is going on in this pedagogy regarding the reproduction of racial divides rather than healing the wounds of 1862. First, I want to move back to my first interview with Dr. Lenz nearly two weeks before the wreath-passing session when I asked her what would keep a Holocaust scholar from taking up a radical position when it comes to Dakota history. I then return to the *What Does Justice Look Like?* discussion and more recent interview data from Dr. Lenz to understand better the politics of descent and race that unfolded in the classroom and behind the scenes. Next I take my questions to the students in the last focus-group discussion to find out whether they thought Dr. Lenz had tried to take a neutral stance on regional genocide, and if so, why. The chapter ends with a portrait of instructional silence on genocide shaping student work.

Dr. Lenz as Preservationist

The main question I had going into my first interview with Dr. Lenz grew out of the seeming inconsistency between her concern for social justice, something she takes pride in according to her online biography, and her need to marginalize Waziyatawin's work. While listening to her introduce Carley and Waziyatawin's histories so dichotomously the first day, I wrote the question down in my field journal, intending to take it to her soon — "what would prevent a Holocaust scholar from embracing a 'radical' politics when teaching this particular history?" (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012). Related questions dealt with fears she might have had concerning controversy breaking out during the public lectures which were being filmed, or over the museum exhibit that would soon be going out into the world with the College logo on it. Dr. Lenz responded to my main question in the following way —

From my twenty years as a dean, I would say that faculty in general are a conservative lot. Yes, by and large, they're Democrats and they maybe lean a little left in their personal politics, but very often in terms of their scholarship and certainly in terms of their role within the institution, they're conservative, and I mean conservative in kind of a good sense, in the sense of preservation, of maintaining tradition, um, so making change in higher education is very hard precisely because faculty pull against it very often, um, and here I'm thinking about things like curriculum, committee structure, relative role of president and faculty within a liberal arts college, those kinds of things. (Interview, 01-12-2012)

Framing this question as I did in the third person made it difficult to come around to what Dr. Lenz thought on a directly personal level, something I wasn't able to do until our

second interview together; yet my distanced framing revealed a great deal about how she positioned herself in terms of the curriculum she had devised and teaching it within the institution at hand. Twenty years serving as dean¹ had taught her that the institutional politics of higher education operates separately from American politics and that colleges and universities have their own internal traditions that insulate them to some degree from mainstream political battles that often effect change elsewhere in society. Only this way, or so the thinking went, could a faculty member vote liberal as a citizen and then turn around and lobby against, say, a colleague's politically "radical" course proposal on the job. Pulling against change in the name of institutional tradition was something Dr. Lenz valued —

Faculty are interested in maintaining the status quo for those things and, um, and I (.) in general think that's a good impulse because it prevents having these sort of radical swings in higher education, but, um, I think that often dominates the scholarly world as well, so if you write something that's going to be viewed as radical, it's much harder to get it published. (Interview, 01-12-2012)

Fresh off the publication of a new book and poised to win the college's faculty achievement award for scholarship that May, Dr. Lenz spoke confidently about what it takes to succeed in higher education. According to Dr. Lenz, staying true to the disciplinary tenets of scholarship increases one's odds of publishing and thus one's chance of securing a role, if not a prominent one such as hers within the institutional structure. Once there, the institution's status quo gets maintained through conservative

¹ Dr. Lenz had served for 12 years as dean at another college prior to coming to St. Lucia.

acts of preservation. Important to the scenario she provided, I believe, is her focus on perception — what’s “radical” doesn’t have so much to do with whether or not critical inquiry reveals the “radicalism” to be a legitimate response to a situation of injustice, but, rather, whether the politics is “viewed as radical,” as she put it, presumably by others in the academy. Waziyatawin’s book, which was published by an alternative press² and calls for the dismantling of some long-standing Minnesota institutions as part of reparations the state should make for its history of oppressing Dakota people, would accordingly lie outside the bounds of the institutional scholar’s “good impulses.”

The acts of separation occurring in this interview — the primary one between politics inside and outside the institution, and the secondary one between “good” scholarship and “radical” scholarship — speak to a fundamental dilemma facing intellectuals working in higher education in the post Civil Rights era, namely, how to connect classroom praxis explicitly and meaningfully to sociopolitical struggles going on in the larger society, especially when higher education has not been as insulated from external politics as Dr. Lenz suggests (Ohmann, 1987, p. 131).³ Indeed, my thesis

² *What Does Justice Look Like?* was published by Living Justice Press in St. Paul which, according to its website, publishes “books that take the restorative justice dialogue to deeper levels by addressing racism, historic harms, and other conflicts between Peoples. To this end, [the press] privilege the voices of those not otherwise heard.” Retrieved from http://www.livingjusticepress.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={5F87648C-D1F4-472E-8A8F-4E837F6FF795}

³ In *Politics of Letters* (1987) Richard Ohmann writes of the moral dilemmas critical educators have faced since the 1960s, particularly teaching in small private colleges like St. Lucia: “The danger I see in our present situation, after such a long string of gains, is a *new* kind of isolation. Acceptance in the academy came to us just as the movements that had fueled our thinking were breaking up, losing steam, or changing direction. So our respectability — precarious and partial, of course — coincides with our greater distance from vital popular movements; cynics might say the latter explains the former. Trustees

regarding discourses of balance and neutrality creeping in and shaping classroom pedagogy run counter to the insular view; in ways I pursue in later chapters on the regional white public pedagogy, my thesis can be said to simply provide a situated example of a nationwide trend toward “value-neutral” education, a demand consistently placed on higher education since 1968 (Shor, 1986) and often cleverly packaged in democratic-sounding language, sometimes even in constitutional principles (Giroux, 2010, p. 60). What I hope to make clear in this reading of Dr. Lenz’s responses is that the preservationist identity and its conservative habits run exactly counter to the kind of justice Waziyatawin and other critical educators like Peter McLaren (1995), Henry Giroux (2006), and Sandy Grande (2004) advocate for — the creation of a more just social order. External political demands for value-neutral education pass without comment precisely because they pose no threat to the privileged institutional identity Dr. Lenz values. Yet, the interests of this identity and its sociohistoric tendency to capitalize on Dakota people and their resources for its own gain did not go without comment during the J-term. As Glenn Wasicuna put it to one lecture crowd — “There are a lot of people in organizations out there who want to help preserve and understand, but as Dakota people we have to- we have to be the ones that heal ourselves, understand our history, and present our point of view” (Lecture, 01-05-2012).

and administrators can congratulate themselves on harboring critical thinkers, so long as they produce scholarly articles and an enhanced reputation for the university rather than strikes and sit-ins. I am concerned that we may become harmlessly respectable” (p. 131).

The Biased Enactment of Value-Neutral Pedagogy

I wish to return to the *What Does Justice Look Like?* discussion first to highlight the importance of Dr. Lenz's passing of the wreath in silence. Recall that just before the wreath came to her, Tom, Mitch, and Anna had made a conservative move in the discussion expressing a white defense of property. Their defense simultaneously distorted understanding of Waziyatawin's message. At this point, Dr. Lenz offered no comment, leaving Lori to redirect by reminding peers of what Waziyatawin had actually written about her motives for decolonizing Dakota homeland. Four of the next five speakers extended Lori's thoughts, commenting on respect, oppressor/oppressed relations, and the need for social change. The first round of discussion closed on this liberal note, but not without balanced qualification. The final two speakers reiterated a need for change, but they also reaffirmed the authoritative classroom position that Waziyatawin was radical, or "extreme" as they put it.

In Dr. Lenz's *socially symbolic act* (Jameson, 1981), the silent passing attempts to resolve an unresolvable contradiction, i.e. the critical educator trying to *educate* within a self-imposed frame of balance and neutrality. By naming this a contradiction, I take the words *educate* and *pedagogy* to mean not just informing people with facts but going further according to what the respective Latin and Greek roots of the words denote — *to lead*. As critical educators working with this understanding observe, "education is inherently directive and must always be transformative" (Macedo, p. 25). Following this understanding of what it means to educate, "There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate

the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes ‘the practice of freedom,’ the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Shaul, p. 34, emphasis Shaul’s). ” I argue that the former effect of conformity into the logic of the present system takes place as the wreath passes through the instructor’s hands in silence. Continuing to look into classroom talk will help explain the contradiction better and show how the teaching of the J-term could be conceived of as politically unbiased, as the students took it, despite its clear bias for and against certain forms of knowledge.

To be as fair as possible, there are undoubtedly elements of good classroom practice involved in the events described. Dr. Lenz did not try to tell students what to think while holding the wreath. She stayed true to the structure of the ceremonial frame and did not interject. She allowed assertions to hang in the air so that students could think about them, provided space for all voices to be heard, and best of all, allowed for peers to guide and learn from one another. Yet in follow-up discussion, Dr. Lenz offered no queries or introspection into what had been said. An air of honor and mutual respect prevailed regarding student comments, perhaps in keeping with the imagined “native-American pedagogical approach.” Here, the white defense of property went unacknowledged as a white defense of property, that is, its part in the historically violent struggle for social goods was never made explicit. Similarly, the implicit acknowledgement of genocide behind Alan’s call for social change, for example, was not explicitly identified either. In the end, both unexamined arguments amounted to equally

valid perspectives. By not helping students unpack their assumptions or taking stock of the political implications of what had been said, Dr. Lenz could be perceived by students as having presided with disinterest over the co-construction of meaning that unfolded, *this despite having set narrow frames loaded with interest*. For this reason, I characterize the classroom pedagogy as *politicized* (Giroux, 2000, pp. 139-140) in that it failed to openly acknowledge its own political agenda against restorative justice (which demands straight talk about genocide) and for the preservation of colonial institutions (white property).

So while Dr. Lenz provided space for students to struggle and learn from one another within the pedagogical boundaries set, as all good teachers do, she enacted a key dynamic identified in *What Does Justice Look Like?* — that public educators in Minnesota quickly resort to the principle of equal validity for all perspectives when commemorating the U.S.-Dakota War.⁴ Within the given J-term forum, no perspective would be privileged over another, from the threatened white landowner (Tom and Mitch) to the identifier of historical oppression who says it's wrong to do nothing (Alan). Here, the sense of “equity that appeals to Americans” would prevail, as Waziyatwin has observed in similar contexts (2008, pp. 75-76). When it comes to *perspectives* on the U.S.-Dakota War, the balanced educator's role is strictly to facilitate them from a site of institutional power — to “give” perspectives time to speak, to present or display perspectives in ways perceived as equitable for students or an imagined general white

⁴ Waziyatawin's (or anyone else's) observations about moral relativism and its relation to a deep-seated conviction of equity among Americans went unexamined during this class session and the J-term.

audience, all the while trying never to betray one's own biases or educated moral perspective.

My purpose here is not to argue that Dr. Lenz actually lacked morals or was one who fully realized the role of the balanced (yet biased) public educator; my purpose rather is to understand more thoroughly the contradictions and contingencies that can be involved in a situated classroom balancing act. On numerous occasions, Dr. Lenz had expressed deep knowledge of and objections to colonial oppression. She had once drawn analogies, for example, between U.S.-Dakota War commemorative displays and Holocaust memorials in Germany, noting Minnesota's shortcomings (Fieldnotes, 01-12-2012). On another occasion, she had agreed with Alan that Minnesota military officials had been free to engage in drumhead justice⁵ in the 1860s knowing there would never be any future scrutiny by a third (non-U.S.) party. "The subtext here is empire," Dr. Lenz explained. "No one was watching, like Alan said. There was only us, carrying out acts of colonization" (Fieldnotes, 01-12-2012). On the day of the *What Does Justice Look Like?* discussion, Dr. Lenz made an analogy to the politics surrounding the Armenian genocide, explaining how narrow financial interests have kept some countries from formally acknowledging it (Fieldnotes, 01-24-2012). She also pointed out this day that the students had been witnessing first-hand from recent Dakota speakers the kind of factionalism Waziyatawin discusses in Chapter 4 (p. 121), agreeing with the author's assessment that the effects of divide-and-conquer tactics used against the Dakota in the nineteenth century are ongoing. "There's the concept of 'colonization of the mind,'" she explained,

⁵ A summary form of military justice conducted under a sense of urgency in the field as a response to suspected crimes or offenses committed during action.

“where the oppressor inserts into the mind a sense of inferiority that will justify the oppression” (Fieldnotes, 01-24-2012). None of these statements (or many others she made) could have been said without awareness that she and the class were studying a history of large-scale violence and oppression.

At the same time, Dr. Lenz never disclosed reasons for her clear bias against *What Does Justice Look Like?* nor did she ever let students know in a straightforward way whether or not she actually thought genocide had occurred in Dakota homeland. The latter point was always inferred. As she explained in our final interview together, disciplinary experience, specifically peer-review feedback, had taught her that “Holocaust” needs to be reserved for the genocide of Jewish people under Nazism (Interview, 04-27-2012). Dr. Lenz told me she once used the term in a manuscript she had co-authored about a memoir by a Catholic survivor of a German concentration camp during World War II. She said she learned “a really hard lesson” when two Jewish reviewers wrote back to say that the primary source in question “was not a Holocaust memoir because the woman was Catholic not Jewish.” Dr. Lenz said, “I was really initially devastated by that and I really fought back against it, and then I gradually came to understand” (Interview, 04-27-2012). From this, I understood Dr. Lenz to think that Waziyatawin was stepping on disciplinary toes as well as ethnic toes as she felt she had once done by applying “Holocaust” as a frame of reference for understanding another genocide. While Dr. Lenz granted that she personally “would use the more broad term genocide to what happened to American Indians,” she said “in the case of the Dakota,” the term Holocaust “just seems inappropriate” (Interview, 04-27-2012). Trying to

preserve “Holocaust” in this way seems inevitably to imply a disparaging message for Dakota people. As historian Peter Novick points out in *The Holocaust in American Life* (1999), “A moment's reflection makes clear that the notion of uniqueness is quite vacuous [...] and, in practice, deeply offensive. What else can all of this possibly mean except ‘your catastrophe, unlike ours, is ordinary’” (p. 9).

Dr. Lenz was quick to agree in our follow-up interview that semantics like Gary Clayton Anderson had modeled by drawing a hard line between ethnic cleansing and genocide could make one diminish the violence being studied by rendering it abstract. Yet semantics seemed to matter deeply to her given the terms (“hard lesson,” “devastated”) through which she recalled being disciplined as a Holocaust scholar. Recounting this conversation helps to show how taking up a neutral and balanced position in the classroom involves much more than merely repeating a dominant discourse circulating in a larger contextual frame. In the given case, constructing balance by privileging certain texts and resigning others to the “fringe” involved personal conceptions of what is appropriate and inappropriate, disciplined and undisciplined, professional and unprofessional for scholarly practice.

Wreath Passing: Round Two

As in the first round of wreath passing, the *What Does Justice Look Like?* discussion continued to unfold only as script could have when orchestrated by one harboring unacknowledged objections to the book’s content. Immediately following Dr. Lenz’s description of herself as “amenable” and “shifting” favorably toward

Waziyatawin's proposals, student talk returned to white resistance and a need for balance. Sarah began by noting friction with a friend when trying to explain to her what decolonization was. Jennifer told of having experienced the same thing after returning from the White Privilege Conference the previous year:

Sometimes shock-and-awe campaigns don't work. People don't understand that mentality. You need to find a common starting point. I rage against extreme rhetoric. I like how the literature in this class has been balanced. If this was all we read about the Dakota War, a lot of whites would be turned off.

Tom brought the question of ancestry to bear on Jennifer's comments — "This book wouldn't unify Minnesota. People like my dad would be like, 'Oh, so you hate me? Well I hate you too.'" Jennifer allowed that *What Does Justice Look Like?* "is essential to the dialogue," but added, "I don't think this book would be a good starting point."

"Is there a book that would be a good start?" Dr. Lenz asked.

"I think the Carley book would be a good starting point," Jennifer said. "You have to understand the meat of the topic first. The people of Minnesota need the ABCs first, then this."

Here, Dr. Lenz noted Carley's datedness, telling of her recommendation to the editor of the Minnesota Historical Society Press that "a 2012 version of something like Carley, a good introductory text" was needed.

Steven brought discussion back to *What Does Justice Look Like?* "I agree in some ways with Jennifer," he said. "It was maybe extreme with the rhetoric, but there's something important she's saying about the genocide of the Dakota people."

Dr. Lenz took this cue to begin discussing narrative strategies from Chapter One, the genocide chapter, drawing attention to analogies the author makes between the treatment of the Dakota in the 1860s and the treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany. Dr. Lenz opened by nuancing the phrase “extreme rhetoric” recently introduced by Jennifer — “One of the things she does that can lead to alarming rhetoric is that she’s borrowed tropes from genocide literature to talk about what happened to the Dakota. What terms does she use this way?”

From there students identified key terms used by Waziyatawin — “Holocaust,” “ethnocide,” “concentration camp,” “forced death march” — all within the Carley = balance / Waziyatawin = imbalance frame renewed with “alarming rhetoric,” a phrase that sounded both ambiguous as to its application even in Germany and impossible to utter if the crimes against humanity described by Waziyatawin were being taken seriously. Nevertheless, “alarming rhetoric” can be traced as a frame discourse undergoing various iterations from the “radical, provocative book” of the first day of class, through instructions the previous Friday to prepare for this “most radical,” “out there on the fringe” work, continuing on through student talk in the first round of wreath passing to include forms like “polarized,” “impossible,” “eye-for-an-eye,” and “extreme” — terms variously affirming, contesting, and nuancing the frame, yet working in unison to reveal it as a kind of ideological wreath being passed from instructor to students and back again, all for the purpose of reconstructing Waziyatawin’s *outré* status.

Troubling for me as a scholar of race was the lack of guidance for students struggling with questions about ancestry and descent, keeping in mind Fields and Fields’

(2012) definition of racism as the ideology surrounding ancestry-based double standards (p. 17). Already I have shown examples of a politics of descent at work in the classroom, from Christina, who confessed having difficulties positioning herself as a J-termer because of her Mexican-American heritage, to Tom and Mitch who both evoked their fathers as potentially territorial land owners. Although students did encounter alternatives to the political obligations that ancestral group identification seemed to suggest — primarily through various political and spiritual messages conveyed to them by Dakota authors and speakers — the day-to-day classroom proceedings, beginning with teacher talk and constructions of frames of understanding, provided little to no guidance for how to identify and resist politics of descent that seemed to come natural.

In the second round of wreath passing to the prompt, “What suggestions [for justice] would you make different from Waziyatawin’s?” students again offered each other advice while brainstorming ways of overcoming racial injustice. Alan said, “we need to get rid of the reductive view of land, start having discussions about the land and natural things that unify and heal people.” Lori said, “I believe we’re all spiritual. We need a spiritual education to see that we are all kind, equitable, and that we all have a sense of justice in us.” Tom defied his private conservative politics by making the only reference to the advice Waziyatawin presents to non-Dakota allies (pp. 91-94). “Truth telling has to be done first,” he said, explaining that this needed to happen in classrooms every year in everyone’s education. But even this ended with a move toward sameness and unity — “This is isn’t just a Minnesota problem. Every state has its history of genocide.” Holly spoke next, saying, “We should stop discrediting anyone’s opinion. If

you know about this, then you should be able to have a voice. Waz's opinion is just as valid as anyone else's, anyone in this class. Accept people and quit labeling, like white and middle class. I'm here and you have to give me a chance."⁶ At once this plea seemed to try to encourage the class to listen more carefully to Waziyatawin but also render anyone's else's opinion about 1862 equally valid.

Amid these calls for unity, equity, and relativism came expressions of ancestry-based malaise and fear. Anna said, "I'm just sitting here, feeling inadequate. I'm not Dakota. I don't have an idea about what needs to be done." Mitch echoed her sentiments — "I don't know where to start. I'm not Dakota either." Stephanie wrapped up the round by identifying the need to transcend the politics of descent, but from a troubling position of fear — "I reacted a lot like I did when I read Malcolm X. Once he said he thought all white people are devils. I felt the same about Waz's anger. We have to get over the points where we say 'your ancestor did this to my ancestor.' We have to come together as a new generation." Dr. Lenz followed by saying that a Holocaust survivor once said, "'We can forgive, but we can never forget.' Hate can be corrosive and at some point you have to try to let the hate go." Angry descendants of slain white settlers were not mentioned. It sounded like advice for Waziyatawin.

Focus Group: The Students Critique and Endorse Instructor Neutrality

At the beginning of my interview with Jennifer the previous week, she launched into her assessment of the course and teaching without me even asking:

⁶ Waziyatawin was commonly referred to as Waz in the classroom for uncertainty about (and lack of effort in learning) how to pronounce her name.

I think that both John and Professor Lenz have done a fantastic job with (4.5) ((sighs)) with how they approach the course and the readings that we have done, and they have not pushed- I don't feel like I have had an agenda pushed on me, like pro-Dakota or pro-settler. You know, like Professor Lenz was saying today, you have an option to go, you know, speak to someone that thinks it's not a genocide and who is not sympathetic to the Dakota, and then you- we have a speaker that's coming that is going to- or we have a reading- a reading that is more sympathetic, so I feel like I'm kind of getting a very balanced approach (Interview, 01-18-2012).

Jennifer's assessment did not change. In a follow-up interview, she told me she was "extremely positive" about the J-term and the success of the museum exhibit (Interview, 04-26-2012). Her enthusiasm and centrality to the course had enabled her to take a part-time job working for Harwell at BLCHS that spring.

I found the neutral instructional stance toward regional genocide difficult to grasp, even after my first interview with Dr. Lenz. It continued to feel elusive at the end of the course for all of the critical things she had actually said about distant genocides. As seen, even in my later attempt to pin Dr. Lenz down, she granted only that she "would use the more broad term genocide to what happened to American Indians." Whenever the frame threatened to narrow and include the Dakota, things tended to grow unclear. Teacher talk readily touched on genocides in Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and Rwanda. Rarely did it touch directly on southern Minnesota, and when it seemed like it might, things began to feel a little inappropriate.

Students on the other hand were often crystal clear about what they thought. I have shown a couple of examples suggesting a classroom-level political spectrum. Jennifer, the self-proclaimed radical, told me forthrightly though with some anxiety, “I think that it was a genocide;” Tom, the settler descendant who had “seen this thing” that was his hometown heritage and who flaunted his veteran status and the Ron Paul bumper sticker on the cover of his laptop, even Tom had no trouble saying that what happened to the Dakota people in the 1860s amounted to genocide. I had heard no students take issue with the claim. Moreover, many had spoken against anything smacking of genocide denial expressed outside the classroom in public lectures and field trips. Had Dr. Lenz, and Harwell for that matter, been as neutral as it seemed on this issue? If so, were students as pleased as Jennifer seemed to be about neutrality regarding this situation of injustice, to invoke the phrase by Bishop Tutu?

I brought this question up in the last focus-group discussion attended by seven J-termers just before the final class meeting, three days following the wreath-passing session. Midway through the focus group, Mitch had taken issue with Corrine Marz who had delivered her lecture that same week on the post-1862 years. She had used the occasion to promote artwork on the cover of her monograph *The Dakota Indian Internment at Fort Snelling, 1862-1864* (Monjeau-Marz, 2005). In focus group, Mitch wondered about that title and Marz’s use of the term “internment camp” in her speech. He told the group about having taken his question to the author herself who told him, as Mitch paraphrased her, that she was “all for people calling it [...] what they want, what

they feel.”⁷ Mitch continued — “She said that she kind of shies away from concentration camp because it like has references to World War II, and I was like, ‘okay,’ and then she like started- she just like kept going on and on and on about like all these different facts ((mutual laughter)) [...] but um I was talking to Holly right afterwards and Holly, you know, brought up a good point that like maybe instead of calling it whatever you want, you should call it what it is” (Focus group, 01-27-2012).

On this point Holly seemed to have argued for something a bit different than on Tuesday when she had told the class, “We should stop discrediting anyone’s opinion. If you know about this, then you should be able to have a voice. Waz’s opinion is just as valid as anyone else’s, anyone in this class.” I asked Holly about this right then and she said she still thought anyone should be able to have a voice, including Corrine Marz; yet looking back, the principle of equal validity for all perspectives seemed to weaken a bit in this case where history was being sanitized outside the classroom. Importantly, Harwell advised using “internment camp” over “concentration camp” in the museum exhibit work and edited student work accordingly, receiving no call-it-what-it-is pushback from Holly

⁷ Mitch’s account of Marz’s response is important considering the extent to which Marz has promoted use of “internment camp,” attempting to elevate it to a culture-wars debate for U.S.-Dakota War scholars who haven’t attended properly to the facts. David Nichols, author of *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics* (1978) commented recently in the TPT documentary *The Past Is Alive within Us* (2013), saying, ““By 1864, the Secretary of the Interior under Lincoln was saying, ‘concentration of the Indians on reservations is the settled policy of the government.’ You like to say, ‘Well, we didn’t have concentration camps,’ but they used that term. That’s what a reservation is” (1:29:47). Not only have professional Dakota historians used “concentration camp” accurately for years, but so have professional white historians like Roy Meyer (1967, p. 137).

or her classmates, at least as I recorded.⁸ Such conflicting moments of conviction as Holly's attest to the situated aspects of student ambivalence during the J-term. In Holly's case, witnessing a politicized presentation about the Fort Snelling concentration camp outside the confines of professor-student power relations provided occasion to voice opposition.

I took this opportunity in the focus group to ask whether the students thought the J-term instructors had been "calling it what it is" in their teaching. I brought up the wreath-passing session and recounted briefly with students a few of the terms Waziyatawin applies in her history — genocide, concentration camp, forced death march. I then talked about the question of the warrant for these terms being left up in the air.

- 01 **Rick:** Um, this is kind of a dangerous question, and you don't have to answer me, but like, if you put that question to John or Dr. Lenz, what kind of an answer do you think you'd get from them?
 About whether it's warranted, like Waziyatawin's language about
 05 the tropes of Holocaust. What do you think they'd tell you?
 Steven: ((sigh)) I think they would be (.)
 Rick: Like, yes or no? It's warranted or not. What do you think they'd say?
 Steven: I think they'd try to get out of the yes or no.

⁸ In preparation for the final drafts, Harwell devised a special introductory panel listing key terms used throughout the exhibit, prefaced with "These are a few of the terms we've chosen and why." For "Internment Camp," the panel simply reads, "Camp Lincoln in Mankato and Fort Snelling in St. Paul both held Dakota people after the war. We acknowledge that some people call these places concentration camps." It fails to say who or why.

- 10 **Others:** ((many speaking at once)) Yeah. I do too. ((Holly and Sarah heard most audibly)) [Yeah.
- Rick:** [What's that?
- Steven:** I think they'd try to get out of the yes or no.
- Rick:** Do you?
- 15 **Holly:** Yeah.
- Steven:** And I think that's part of their position in academia and- strong opinions don't have a real big place in the academic realm.
- Rick:** ((to whole group)) Do you feel like that? Any- anybody want to weigh in on that one? I'm really interested in this(hhhh).
- 20 **Sarah:** I think (2.5) um I think that Professor Lenz might lean toward yes
- Others:** Yeah. Yeah. ((Holly heard most audibly))
- Sarah:** and John might lean toward no (1.5) but (2.0) I- [I can't speak for them at all.
- Rick:** [You don't have
- 25 to tell me why. You don't have to tell me why]. I just want to know what you think.
- Sarah:** I just- I feel like John kind of- almost(hhhh) I don't mean to be mean to John, I think he's (.) um wonderful but it's almost like he works for (1.5) these institutions that um- I think he has a very
- 30 enlightened perspective but yeah he works (.) on (.) you know (.) things that are probably not savory to (.) just like anyone at MHS.
- Rick:** What do you think, Alan? Do you agree, disagree with that? What do you think they'd say?
- Anna:** I- I'd agree with Steven in that they wouldn't really answer. I think
- 35 Professor Lenz has a little bit said that she's- (.) would lean toward yes but I don't think she would ever say- definitively say yes because part of it is they might not want us to just all say yes

40 because, “Oh, my professor told me to,” but- and they want us to
 make our own opinion, but I think part of it is she still might be
 thinking through this as well. I mean, I don’t know how much they
 knew- she knew about it before like two and a half years or
 whenever when they started planning this, so-

45 **Christina:** Right. And she said that, like she said that reading this book again
 made her kind of like go back and consider Fort Snelling and what
 that meant and like all these terms and what that meant and after
 listening to all the speakers and you know her- you know like
 meeting with Glenn and Gwen and um Sandee,⁹ like what that
 means for her, so she’s getting- you know she’s trying to immerse
 herself I think as much as we are in this and she’s, you know, with
 50 her experience with studying the Holocaust and other genocides,
 like you know-

55 **Steven:** Yeah, I think it- and this is like just a connected idea, but- and
 maybe pulling off that point, but uh I think it’s- I felt like I was-
 I’ve been learning with my teacher- teachers more than I ever have
 been before, and that’s a really cool thing, and I think the fact that
 we’re getting out of the classroom and doing some untrad-
 non-traditional things is what’s behind that, but that’s something I
 really value.

Rick: Mitch or Holly? Either of you agree? Disagree? Don’t know?

⁹ Glenn Wasicuna was the Director of Dakota Studies for the Tiospa Zina Tribal School for the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate reservation at the time of this study. Dr. Gwen Westerman is a professor of English at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Lenz and Harwell consulted Mr. Wasicuna and Dr. Westerman when planning the course and both spoke during the St. Lucia lecture series. Sandee Geshick is a member of the Lower Sioux Community often consulted by state media outlets reporting on the U.S.-Dakota War. Lenz and Harwell took Ms. Geshick on as an advisor after the first lecture on January 4. She eventually held a roundtable discussion with students at the Lower Sioux Community Center and helped edit the museum exhibit before it went to production.

- 60 **Mitch:** I was going to say that I kind of enjoyed not having a definitive answer from either of them. It's just like, I don't know. We're all capable of being influenced and it's an important part of, you know, college and growing up, I guess
- Holly:** Yeah.
- 65 **Mitch:** to form your own opinions about stuff. And what better time to do it than in this j-term class?

Perhaps a striking thing for some readers is the point of caution from which I initiated this part of the discussion, speaking to my participation in the co-construction of classroom authority in the focus groups. Generally, I tried to avoid directly inviting critiques of the teaching in interviews and focus-group conversations for fear of undermining the instructors' work (although I asked more about critiques when students brought them up); thus, the "danger" in raising this type of critical question which felt safe enough to do on this final day.

Striking for me in this exchange is the students' awareness of the sources for instructor neutrality on a fundamental situation of injustice, and then their eventual endorsement of that neutrality. First, Steven begins by sighing (line 06) and repeating with disapproval that the J-term instructors "would try to get out of the yes or no" (lines 09 and 13). Having moments before just shared the view that silence surrounds the question of domestic genocide because it challenges "America's ability to exist," Steven suggests here that core beliefs about national identity are at stake in his instructors' tendency to equivocate. According to this view, Lenz and Harwell are sacrificing educated, independent thought to orthodox group interests. Perhaps sensing that this is an

overly harsh critique of them personally, Steven offers an explanation in institutional practices — “the academic realm” implies a certain “position” for professors where “strong opinions” have no place (lines 16-17). Steven has, of course, witnessed this firsthand in the displacement of Waziyatawin’s highly educated “strong” opinion. Sarah then extends Steven’s analysis to Harwell as a representative of the historical societies, attempting to erase all personal implications with niceties — “I don’t mean to be mean to John, I think he’s (.) um wonderful” (lines 27-28); “I think he has a very enlightened perspective” (lines 29-30). After careful pause, Sarah then identifies the source of neutrality in “these institutions that um- but yeah he works (.) on (.) you know (.) things that are probably not savory to (.) just like anyone at MHS” (lines 29-31). With great caution, which includes a peculiar reluctance to even name certain “things” that public historians at the Minnesota Historical Society must work on, Sarah nevertheless identifies taste as a key factor determining what gets said and what does not get said about state history at such institutions. With the phrase “not savory,” Sarah implies that regional genocide is an inappropriate topic for public professionals like Harwell, a picture reminiscent of Lori Sturdevant’s need to keep the public call for extermination out of her column.

At this point, Anna introduces two notions that turn the exchange away from a critique of the instructors’ or even the institutions’ responsibilities to break their neutral stances on a situation of injustice: 1) the risk of indoctrinating learners, and 2) Dr. Lenz as an equal learner or peer with students when it comes to the question of regional genocide. As Anna puts it, “I don’t think she would ever say definitively say yes, because

part of it is they might not want us to just all say yes because, ‘Oh, my professor told me to,’ but- and they want us to make our own opinion, but I think part of it is she is still thinking through this as well” (lines 36-40). Indeed, Dr. Lenz had run these ideas together herself in our first interview when I asked her if she had any worries about sparking public controversy — “for me as a scholar and teacher, um, it’s about basic human courtesies, and sending the signal in various ways that you can muster that you’re open to different perspectives, you know, that you don’t have an orthodoxy that you’re trying to prove, that you’re a learner” (Interview, 01-12-2012). Here, “muster” says a great deal about the arduous self-silencing work a learned person like Dr. Lenz must perform to maintain the neutral position — send courteous signals to let people know their perspectives are equally valid however misinformed they may be;¹⁰ set aside interpretive or theoretical knowledge that could smack of “orthodoxy” and disrupt status-quo understandings; hide certain knowledge that could position one foremost as an *educator*, i.e. an unequal learner who directs students.

Embedded in Dr. Lenz’s position as equal learner lay even more contradictions than I have space to unravel. Beyond being a career Holocaust scholar who had spent two and a half years planning the J-term course, beyond calling herself a “neophyte” and imagining the students as having essentially started from a zero point of knowledge, she recalled to me “a conversation with Germans once in which I told them that I was teaching the Holocaust, and without batting an eyelid, they said, ‘Why don’t you teach

¹⁰ This idea was sometimes supported by student comments as when Lori said, “When you know a lot about something (2.5) it can become a burden because it closes you off to other perspectives. So we all have to be aware of those areas where we know a lot(hhhh) so that we’re not doing those things” (Interview, 01-23-2012).

the genocide that occurred in your country?’ And that was twenty five years ago that I had that conversation” (Interview, 04-27-2012). Despite Dr. Lenz’s decades spent grappling with both the facts and the politics of genocide, a period longer than most of the J-term students had been alive, endorsement of her neutrality on the topic was won with Anna’s powerful contribution to the focus-group discussion suggesting that Dr. Lenz should not be indoctrinating students and that she was an equal learner to them. The equal-learner argument even turns Steven toward a positive view of the neutral pedagogy and away from the biased institutional interests he so incisively began to critique.

As in the first round of wreath passing, Christina’s contribution to the discussion deserves special consideration, again for the sensitivity she shows to questions of ancestry and descent. Just before she speaks, Anna introduces a third important idea to the conversation, the question of the instructors’ prior knowledge (lines 40-42). Despite this, Christina continues to develop the position of Dr. Lenz as an equal learner, imagining that Dr. Lenz has only now started going back to consider the meaning of “all these terms” (line 45) Waziyatawin used in her book, what Dr. Lenz referred to as “the tropes of Holocaust.” But Christina seems to be juggling the question of Dr. Lenz’s prior knowledge to which she returns at the end of her comment (lines 49-51). As if trying to reconcile the inherent contradictions, she raises the idea that learning about regional genocide must begin with listening to Dakota people speak as Dr. Lenz had done with the students during the J-term — “meeting with Glenn and Gwen and um Sandee” (line 47) and “trying to immerse herself [...] as much as we are in this” (lines 48-49). At best, Christina’s comments suggest the impression that genocide study is discipline specific,

and that scholars who study distant genocides do not need to (can afford not to) know about genocides that occurred close to home. At worst, Christina's comments suggest the impression that knowledge of genocide against the Dakota is primarily governed by communities of descent or race. According to this view, only the Dakota people possess the knowledge whereas the white academics most likely to know cannot really find out within the white spheres where they normally operate.

As Christina had learned from observing the experts at work, racial divides overshadow scholarly practices like reading from a wide range of sources without fear, openly pursuing analogies to canonical genocides, and looking to modern international law in an effort to make sense out of past oppression. The persistent marginalization of *What Does Justice Look Like?* carried an implicit message about the unreliability of available relevant sources; after all, even this work by a Dakota author was “really out there on the fringe” for some Dakotas. Other similar classroom moments supported such notions as when Dr. Lenz warned students off David Stannard's *American Holocaust* (1992) — “[Gary] Anderson and others discredit the author as a crazy man” (Fieldnotes, 01-12-2012).

Importantly, Christina's idea about Dakota genocide as descendant-specific knowledge evokes an important way that observance of the local racial divide played a behind-the-scenes part in shaping silences about regional genocide during the J-term. As Dr. Lenz noted in a follow-up interview, the course had involved for her, “a lot of unfamiliar ground because I had had almost no contact with the Dakota community ahead of time” (Interview, 04-27-2012). Among that community was Dr. Chris Mato Nunpa,

whom she had not met previously but of whose work she had known about “for a long time,” as she explained it, by contributions he had made to an annual genocide conference she had once participated in although not at the same time (Interview, 04-27-2012).¹¹ In order to prepare, then, for the kind of course and museum exhibit conceived — ones that would stick closely to events of the six-week war which always highlights violence against settlers — certain avenues of inquiry and cross-racial dialogue would be opened and others would remain closed.

Neutral Education’s Effect on Student Work: A Prime Example

This tightly drawn epistemological frame, cropping out elements of Dr. Lenz’s prior knowledge and pushing talk of genocide to the fringe, placed some students in precarious positions in terms of the social goods they sought — good grades, praise for their work, a successful unveiling of the museum exhibit. This has already been shown to some extent in Jennifer’s anxiety and caution in class and Stephanie’s anger at not being able to speak about injustices suffered by Dakota women and children on her exhibit panel. I would add to these students Lori who co-authored with Anna the exhibit panel “Exile of the Dakota People.” Lori told me in our follow-up interview that her exhibit-writing work gave her new-found appreciation for how the Dakota may feel about a state-centric public history that seems to drop their people as a subject altogether after the 1863 removal — “they feel that there’s just a door shut in their face like as soon as- as soon as

¹¹ Dr. Lenz said their paths never crossed at this international conference. She was publicly taken to task for not reaching out when planning the J-term class by Dr. Mato Nunpa himself at the St. Lucia College social-justice conference workshop in March when the museum exhibit was unveiled (Fieldnotes, 03-10-2012).

their people left Minnesota, the curtain closes. It's the end of the act." She said the course gave her

a deeper understanding of why there's still so much tension between the communities in part because of the way that it's explored and explained even in a classroom setting, um and not really talking about- I mean I understand that it was- like in the J-term course it was about the war itself, but the professors even said that there was so much more to it, that they were going to look at what took place before and what took place after, but I don't think- I don't feel like we really explored what took place after, um as much as we could have. (Interview, 04-27-2012)

Among what took place after were the forced recruitment of Dakota scouts to help hunt down their own relatives, years of genocidal massacres on Dakota villages, the destruction of food resources for future starvation, and a campaign of terror carried out in the name of state security. Glimpses of this history have been shown in Chapter One.

Lori continued to explain the divisive effects of a white public pedagogy that refuses to speak with courage and from the heart about the 1860s, as Glenn Wasicuna encouraged people to start doing in his J-term lecture. Lori's account demonstrates how the traditional white historiography she participated in can be said to reproduce the living wound that is the U.S.-Dakota War:

And I understand the Minnesota Historical Society and anything pertaining to what takes place within Minnesota isn't as interested in what takes place, even if it's a group of people who lived here, once they leave because it's not Minnesota history. But for the Dakota people, it's their history and for those of them that still

live in Minnesota, that's something that every time it gets pushed aside creates a deeper divide between the like general public and their community. (Interview, 04-27-2012)

The “general public” and “their community” — this was a moment when euphemisms that unconsciously support the racial divide also seemed to tell the truth as that racial divide was being made visible. Like Christina, Lori had learned important lessons about white silences and their role in ongoing racially-divisive social practices.

As discussed in Chapter One, Lori advocated strongly for the equal validity or goodness of all perspectives and for applying those principles to the past. Rephrasing her philosophy in this interview brought her back to a positive assessment of the course and museum-exhibit work despite the story of deepening racial divides she had just told me — “I think if anything, I developed a more balanced perspective of um (3.5) kind of- (2.0) both the Dakota people and the settler- um- that they're- they're people. They're all people and they all made mistakes, and they all did right things, and they all just cared about their well being, their families' well being, and it unfortunately clashed” (Interview, 04-27-2012). After participating daily in the course with Lori and conducting two extended interviews with her, I read the pauses in this statement as places where she is thinking carefully about maintaining her philosophy despite the contradictory evidence she had just explained.

Conclusion

Pulling into the harbor of mutual respect and equality for all was never a straightforward affair for J-term students. The journey often entailed revealing insights into history, white racial identity, education, and the students' ambivalent positions navigating these contested waters. In this vein, the final focus-group discussion about instructor neutrality continued beyond the extended passage highlighted above, eventually ending in another collective endorsement of the instruction but not before going through another critical phase. There, Sarah acknowledged that "no class can be taught without a bias, so by- almost by trying to remain neutral, the bias is kind of like just sneaking in." She then amended this to say she did not think this exactly applied to the J-term — "I don't think Professor Lenz and John are trying to remain neutral on this. I think they've brought their own experiences in to us as a class even though they wouldn't say, 'Yes, this is what I think.'"

But it is precisely on situations of injustice that one must say what one thinks. From critiques of the teaching offered by students like Sarah and Steven emerge an image of an educator who has gone public with a situation of injustice, yet refused to engage as a public intellectual who would voice opposition to white discourses that seek to counterbalance social justice (Said, 1994, p. 100; McLaren, 1995, p. 172; Giroux, 2000, p. 210). To have done so would have perhaps meant being a rude host to speakers like Corrine Marz or being perceived as an indoctrinator by some of the students, audience members, and historical-society representatives. On the other hand, doing so might have meant finding different, unexpected successes with some of these people, drawing public

attention to ways they worked to defend white institutional and property-owning interests. Finding success in the J-term project as it was conceived, however, meant collaborating with historically colonial institutions established by the Ramseys and Sibleys of the world and which have long since benefitted from corporate backing¹² — the regional historical societies where discourses of neutrality and balance are particularly strong today as I will show in upcoming chapters.

In *Reflections on Exile* (2000), Edward Said makes the point that American society's present situation wherein "consensus and orthodoxy" hold such strong sway *requires* that intellectuals take oppositional stances publicly to advocate for those who are underrepresented politically and whose voices are generally unheard in the public sphere (p. 502). While the potential for controversy may prevent many from teaching or speaking publicly about the U.S.-Dakota War, that same potential invites others to take it public, most prominently Dakota public intellectuals like Waziyatawin, her father Chris Mato Nunpa, Gwen Westerman, Sheldon Wolfchild, David Larsen, and many others, each in his or her own way. This should never be represented to white students as descendant-specific work, for it is not. The public teachings of these Dakota educators, as I have witnessed it, does not voice opposition for opposition's sake. Nor does it simply

¹² Sponsors of the J-term lecture series and museum exhibit included St. Lucia College and the Blankenship County Historical Society whose published lists of corporate sponsors will ironically be withheld for the sake of anonymity. Other sponsors included the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources through the Clean Water Land & Legacy Amendment (<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/news/features/amendment.html>), the Minnesota Humanities Center (<http://www.minnesotahumanities.org/about>), and the Minnesota Historical Society through its Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grants project (<http://legacy.mnhs.org/grants>). For a list of the Minnesota Historical Society's corporate sponsors, see <http://www.mnhs.org/collections/manuscripts/business.htm>.

commemorate to remind the “general public” of where it has been historically. Rather, it raises inappropriate and perhaps even embarrassing questions at critical moments for people whose pride in their own sense of democracy and justice usually goes unchecked. This is how the intellectual confronts dogmas like white balance and neutrality rather than reproducing them (Said, 1994, p. 11).

It may seem unfair to point to the public intellectual as theorized by critics like Edward Said and Henry Giroux and hold it up as a kind of ideal to compare against Dr. Lenz and the J-term pedagogy. After all, she and John Harwell *did* go public with the U.S.-Dakota War. For this, they were commended for their bravery.¹³ They succeeded in creating a site of cross-racial dialogue. Yet curiously, the students came away not knowing what their teachers actually thought about a central issue controversial for whites, whether their “ancestors” or state founders had committed genocide. Even Sarah, the only one who argued against the idea of the instructors’ neutrality admitted that they would not actually say what they thought. For Dr. Lenz, described on a St. Lucia website as one whose focus is social justice and who investigates important and difficult issues with “tenacity,” the reluctance to take a position remains an unresolved and perhaps unresolvable contradiction.¹⁴

¹³ Dr. Lenz told me of a native scholar from a small Midwestern college who stopped her after one of the lectures and said, “You are just so incredibly brave to do this series.” She recalled answering, “No, it’s probably stupid,” and laughed. Such moments evoke the “Good luck” line from Lori Sturdevant’s column, emphasizing the sense of instructor anxiety during the J-term (Interview, 01-12-2012).

¹⁴ Dr. Lenz won an award for her scholarship the same year as the J-term class. A college announcement lauded her accomplishments as paraphrased. I withhold the citation for the promise of anonymity.

Alan, who thought deeply all month about his ancestors' potential complicity in genocide, remained mostly quiet during the focus-group exchange. He saved his thoughts till near the end to punctuate the problem Steven and Sarah had been drawing out:

I still think it's valuable to know what your professors think though. I mean, last year's social justice conference, there was a workshop right in here actually, and it was- I don't even remember what the workshop was really about. I only remember that the guy who was leading it talked about when he was in school back in the sixties, and he referred to it as a time when professors professed. And that stuck with me very powerfully because I don't know that that happens anymore. Um, and there are benefits of that [neutrality] but I think it also creates kind of like an artificial dynamic between professors and students because they can't be themselves in front of us. And I think there's so much value in getting to know someone, and so yeah if you have an opinion I want to hear it. We can talk about other perspectives and stuff, I don't know, especially professors that I respect a lot. I want to know their opinions.

Chapter Four

Denying Regional Genocide: An Emotional Politics of Descent

“General Pope has arrived,” the paper proclaimed, “at St. Paul, and proposed immediate and vigorous measures for the extermination of the Sioux race,” unquote. What is that? Well, it’s what we call in the business today- [...] That’s um the rhetoric of genocide. °The rhetoric of genocide.°

— Gary Clayton Anderson (Lecture, 01-10-2012)

I wrote in my notes when he said that, “genocide, it’s the thought that counts.”

— Alan (Focus group, 01-13-2012)

Now it so happens that when the colonized hear a speech on Western culture they draw their machetes or at least check to see that they are close at hand.

— Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1963, p. 8.

* * *

St. Lucia College sits high on an often windy plateau looking out over the Minnesota River Valley. Campus consists of twenty or so golden-brown, semi-modernist brick buildings. Some are done in the same limestone seen on houses and buildings throughout the heavily quarried area. Near the middle of campus sits a crown-shaped

church, its spire reaching up nearly 200 feet. A twenty-minute chapel service is held every weekday morning.

During the days of *Conflict and Remembrance*, new banners went up on the lamp posts to mark the school's 150th anniversary, each bearing the College logo and words associated with the school's values — Faith, Excellence, Community, Service, Justice (Fieldnotes 01-09-2012).

Students have to take two J-term sessions sometime in their four years of study. Freshmen are required to take one so they get priority when it's time to register. No freshmen signed up for *Conflict and Remembrance*. I asked about this in the first focus group (01-06-2012). Sarah told me “that's probably because most students thought it was more work, not like a total slacker, normal J-term.” Seeing six books on the list at the bookstore had maybe served as a sign to prospective students that *Conflict and Remembrance* would require more work than most offerings. Although the J-termers identified a few courses that were both difficult and popular, Anna said, “nobody wants to think during j-term.” Jennifer followed up by referring to what she felt was a glut of social-justice related activities on campus. Indirectly commending the students who signed up, she said, “I kind of cut students some slack cause [...] I feel like for students, I mean, you can get exhausted to constantly highlight oppression, constantly talking about inequalities.”

We talked about other J-terms in later focus groups. I learned about competing courses that year — Watercolor, Graphic Novels, Film Noir. Dr. Lenz had taught a course on Knitting a few years earlier. The students told me about a Parenting course

where you read *What to Expect When You're Expecting* and raise a virtual baby. "Why is it so popular?" I asked. "Because it's easy," was the answer. "Easiness is a pretty big priority for a lot of people," Alan explained. He told me there often was little incentive to enroll in hard, intensive J-terms because the credits rarely count toward the student's major (Focus group, 01-27-2012).

No History majors enrolled in *Conflict and Remembrance*. Stephanie realized this just after sharing reactions she encountered toward the perceived unsavory topic — "Everyone here at St. Lucia that has asked me what J-term I'm taking. I'm like, 'Oh, I'm taking the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862,' and they're like, 'Ew. Why? Gross.' Like 12 people" (Focus group, 01-20-2012).

Considering the level of privilege and pressure from peers and family to take something "fun" (Focus group, 01-27-2012), part of me has to commend the 15 students for signing up and sticking with *Conflict and Remembrance* as well. They worked hard. They grappled daily with the local public pedagogy and its demanding politics of race. Although the institutional circumstances sketched here suggest they were positioned favorably toward Corrine Marz's message of stopping short on independent thought regarding 1862, the students often responded critically to things dynamic lecture-series speakers and Dakota public intellectuals had to say.

Dr. Gary Clayton Anderson was one of those dynamic speakers. This chapter extends developing themes on white epistemology and ontology, analyzing barriers they pose to social-justice education by looking closely into Anderson's lecture on the military

commission Gen. Henry Sibley established in the field following the battles of 1862.¹ Borrowing a phrase from Kenneth Carley for part of his lecture title, Anderson recounted ways the trials amounted to a “travesty of justice” (Carley, 1976, p. 69); yet as he did, he also made the argument that genocide never occurred in Dakota homeland. In reading the lecture closely, this chapter examines contradictions in the public pedagogy enacted by Anderson, focusing on two conflicting identities he constructed for himself on stage — local white-descendant insider versus national Genocide Studies insider. By pursuing tensions between these two identities, I examine how Anderson sought to trivialize the importance of genocidal intent expressed locally in 1862, a rhetorical move made to direct fellow white-descendants away from acknowledging regional genocide altogether. The chapter proceeds then to contextualize the speech as an act of *epistemic violence* against indigenous audience members (Spivak, 1993), a reading based both on native response shared and what the J-term students told me. Ultimately, this chapter pursues yet another way the regional racial divide was reproduced during the J-term, but this time stretching far beyond the northern plains.

Separating Words from Action

January winds can be biting cold on the St. Lucia hilltop. January 10, 2012, turned out unseasonably mild, however — calm, azure sky, a whopping 50 degrees. Favorable conditions outside contributed to the largest audience for the lecture series estimated

¹ Like all of the J-term lectures cited in this study, Anderson’s was licensed through Creative Commons and made available to the public on a St. Lucia College website for approximately a year after it occurred. After attending the lecture, I transcribed it for analysis from the College recording.

between 250 to 300 people (Fieldnotes, 01-11-2012). Anderson's renown as a U.S.-Dakota War scholar of course contributed to the crowd size as well. Of the six speakers in the series, he clearly possessed the most academic prowess, having published many books on American Indian history and the West, among them *Little Crow: Spokesman for the Sioux* (1986); *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* (1988); *Kinsman of Another Kind* (1997); and *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land* (2005), a book nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Because of this body of work now spanning four decades, Anderson received a great deal of attention from St. Lucia College during his visit and was the only series speaker for whom a post-lecture dinner was held at the president's home.

While Anderson's speech emphasized the unjust nature of the military commission that sentenced 303 men to death by hanging in 1862, his main argument focused on the legal process that eventually restrained the government from carrying out such an extreme degree of retribution. Though he did acknowledge the retribution exacted upon the Dakota as "severe," Anderson spent much of his time tracing the evolution of military law from Hugo Grotius's treatise *On the Law of War and Peace (De jure belli ac pacis, 1627)* to the time of the U.S.-Dakota War in order to demonstrate how and why Gen. John Pope and Gen. Henry Sibley lacked the authority to execute all of the condemned men as they initially planned.

According to Anderson, when President Lincoln recognized the potential for grave injustice and ordered a review of the trial transcripts, the review followed United States Army code concerning the just treatment of prisoners of war established in the

“Rules and Articles for Government of the Armies of the United States” (1806). The code, as Anderson explained, stipulates that courts-martial be conducted much in the same way as civil trials with soldiers being formally charged, arraigned, and provided legal counsel, including the right to object. Only evidence provided directly from witnesses, rather than hearsay, should be accepted. As Anderson explained, the Dakota prisoners that came before the 1862 commission had not been arraigned. They had not been provided counsel or the right to object. Trial commissioners had permitted hearsay as evidence. They conducted proceedings in a hasty fashion, at one point trying 26 men in 5 hours. None of the Dakota understood they had gone before a court that was dealing out death sentences. According to Anderson, such injustices resulted in reprieves for the majority of the 303 condemned, rulings determined by the president and his lawyers following code handed down from Grotius through George Washington who had made the incorporation of Grotian values into U.S. military law possible by establishing the Judge Advocate General’s Corps of the U.S. Army in 1776.

For Anderson, Lincoln’s intervention provides an important example of legal checks built into U.S. policy by the nineteenth century that prevented violence against the Dakota from escalating into wholesale slaughter. These checks provided a “moral restraint” that Anderson believes also keeps the violence carried out against American Indians across the continent from amounting to genocide (Fieldnotes, 01-10-2012). Because U.S. policy favored removal over killing, Anderson argues *ethnic cleansing* is the appropriate term to use, a term he seemed to allow despite harboring distaste for its

application elsewhere, for instance in Palestine.² It is important to note that this is already a culturally defensive (Judeo-Christian) argument, and a purely academic one as well in that suspected perpetrators of genocide — individuals and states alike — cannot be prosecuted for events that took place before 1951 (Kiernan, 2007, p. 11).

Acknowledging that politicians, military leaders, and the press in Minnesota often called for extermination when the violence broke out in 1862, Anderson proceeded to attribute such language to the “rhetoric of genocide” which he attempted to separate from the practice of genocide. To help illustrate this distinction, he cited and expounded on a newspaper article from the *Mankato Record* printed September 20, 1862:

“Gen. Pope has arrived,” the paper proclaimed, “at St. Paul, and proposed immediate and vigorous measures for the extermination of the Sioux race,” unquote. What is that? Well, it’s what we call in the business today- my friend, uh, Ben Kiernan at Yale who writes about genocide in Cambodia- and I can quote chapter and verse from many other historians out there at Stanford and Harvard, etcetera. That’s um the rhetoric of genocide. °The rhetoric of genocide.° Well, what’s the difference between the rhetoric of genocide and genocide? Well(hhh), there’s a major difference between words and actions, right? Did genocide occur in Minnesota? No. Did it occur in North America? No. (.) It didn’t. But you can find all kinds of rhetoric of this sort particularly in Minnesota in 1862 and it does

² Anderson: “Uh, it’s now international law clearly that it is a crime to forcefully remove people. And indeed ((sigh)) that crime has been identified by journalists. It starts really in the Soviet Union. Um, it’s been identified as ethnic cleansing. Ethnic cleansing is really a Russian term that’s used first to identify the forced removal of Christian Armenians out of a place called Azerbaijan. And then it’s applied in Yugoslavia in the 1990s. And now it’s been applied recently believe it or not in Israel when it comes to the Palestinians. It’s a term then that we’re coming to grips with just now and beginning to understand.”

have an impact on General Sibley. I don't think there's any question about that.
(Lecture, 01-10-2012)³

Before delving into this questionable separation between words and action, and looking at how the argument threatens to undermine itself by admitting the “impact” of extermination discourses on the most powerful white military leader operating in the field during the battles of 1862, I would like to take a step back and look at ways the quote as a whole represents the contradictory subject positions Anderson established for himself as a speaker. In doing so, this analysis reveals what is at stake for him and his implied audience in making an argument against genocide. It also shows how this argument differs dramatically from interpretations of American history found in the very sources Anderson refers to.

Claiming Authority: Local Insider Becomes National Insider

My reading of Anderson's construction of contradictory identities involves references to *subject positions* and *positioning* following Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré's concept of “the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines” (1990, p. 48). While only the question-and-answer part of the lecture could be considered “conversational” in a literal sense, Anderson continually produced different “selves” on stage through anecdotes and story lines alternately shared and not shared by the audience.

³ All of the quotes from Anderson that follow in this chapter come from this single lecture.

Thus, I consider Anderson's subject positions "jointly produced," yet through monologic connections only sometimes affirmed through the audience's resonating laughter.

This process began early when Anderson constructed shared local identity through inclusive use of the pronoun *we*⁴ — "This is part of Minnesota's history we're talking about. And believe it or not it's *all* of our history. I grew up in Minnesota. I'm a Minnesotan. Um, I was a Moorhead Spud ((audience laughter)). Um, and we had a pretty good football team back then." He proceeded to explain that he first came to St. Lucia College in 1969 "still wearing a football uniform uh with a big C on the helmet," having once played for Concordia College against St. Lucia — "And uh, I won't go into that game. You can look it up if you like ((audience laughter)) Um, I don't want to embarrass anybody here ((audience laughter))." Through regional references and evoking his participation in the long-standing sports rivalry, Anderson positioned himself as a local insider, a move made to appeal to a specific implied audience — majority white, middle-aged or older, attending perhaps out of independent rather than professional interest in local history.

In forging his local-insider identity, Anderson reached even further back to the days when he had grown enraptured by books his grandmother kept on a shelf at her home in Ashby, Minnesota — *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*, the two-volume set providing scenes from the Dakota Territory included earlier in Chapter One.

Important for Anderson was that his great grandfather had purchased these books new in

⁴ My discussion draws on Norman Fairclough's explanation of "inclusive" and "exclusive" uses of the pronoun *we*, inclusive being when *we* refers to both the speaker and the addressee, and exclusive being when *we* refers to the speaker and one or more others, leaving the addressee out (2001, p. 106).

1890. While this earliest subject position might be considered pre-academic, it presented Anderson as forever studious regarding the war and thus carrying vast amounts of knowledge on the topic today. Just as importantly, it presented him as having begun his study through genealogical ties, a position aligned with independent historians who often approach the war this way (Monjeau-Marz, 2008; LaBatte, 2008; Dyslin, August 22, 2012; Bachman, 2013). In this early part of the lecture, then, local storylines and anecdotes framed by inclusive use of the pronoun *we* helped Anderson assure audience members that he was still one of them despite his status as a nationally recognized academic.

The account of his youth in Minnesota was not merely one of football games and reading about the war, nor did Anderson try to construct his personal history as untouched by the grim history he had come to talk about. Early on, he told of traveling with his mother to Indian reservations in North Dakota when she worked for the Catholic Family Service,⁵ bringing indigenous children back to Fargo for medical examination in preparation for their adoption to families in the Baltimore area:

And I would ride along with her out to see the priest of Standing Rock or whatever and we would go pick up a baby in some isolated part of the reservation. Uh, she just wanted someone along to, you know, shovel snow if she got stuck. Uh, and I would hold the baby as we would race back to Fargo to the clinic and have that baby examined.

⁵ Anderson pointed out his family's Norwegian Lutheran background despite his mother working for the Catholic Family Service.

The topic of genocide, then, the definition of which includes “forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” as established by the 1948 U.N. Genocide Convention and applied today in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute, 1998), threatens to strike emotional chords tied to Anderson’s primary ancestral relationships, potentially staining fond memories of growing up in Minnesota, reading the history of the “Indian wars” in his grandmother’s house, and riding in the car with his mother across the prairie, unaware of the harsh critical light her work could be cast in. As I will discuss later in more detail, Anderson did not shy away from this fact.

To enhance his local-insider position, Anderson spoke in a colloquial manner reflected in the fragmented sentences and frequent *uhs*, *ums*, and *wells* of the large block quote above. He had papers on hand for reading quotes from various sources but he otherwise appeared to speak off the top of his head and in a folksy way designed to connect with non-academics. His seemingly extemporaneous delivery led to a number of inaccuracies that many, myself included, would consider insignificant, for instance the title and date of publication of Grotius’s *On the Law of War and Peace*.⁶ Such errors passed as the kind of bagatelles scholars can sometimes make while still demonstrating impressive commands of history. Judging from the J-term students’ reactions I will later share — their repeated respect for what Alan called Anderson’s “massive knowledge

⁶ Anderson: “And Grotius wrote a treatise in 1637. He called it *The Rights of War and Peace, Including the Law of Nature or Natural Right and of Nations*, 1627.” Another example comes soon after: “Here we are then in the fall of 1867 with General Sibley. And Sibley, um, is going up the Minnesota River and he has theoretically all of this background behind him. How’s he going to respond?”

base” (Focus group, 01-13-2012) — this colloquial delivery seemed only to enhance the speaker’s aura of authority.

With his local-insider self constructed, Anderson presents himself with a problem by raising the topic of “the rhetoric of genocide” — how to remain connected and folksy and at the same time discuss a nuanced academic question that could put him and many white audience members in a historically uncomfortable place. On this point, he attempts to remain friend and insider, but somewhat awkwardly by positioning himself with genocide scholars working at the national level — “Well, it’s what we call in the business today- my friend uh Ben Kiernan at Yale who writes about genocide in Cambodia- and I can quote chapter and verse from many other historians out there at Stanford and Harvard, etcetera. That’s um the rhetoric of genocide. °The rhetoric of genocide.°”

If Anderson’s talk were to go into definitions of genocide or the relationship between genocidal intent (words) and genocidal practice (action), both of which are required for a verdict of genocide, this would be the place to do it. Instead, Anderson seems to balk. Self interruptions break the fluency of his sentences and he shies away from academic discussion, choosing instead to drop a name and conjure abstract scholarship as it is likely to loom in the minds of non-professionals, that is, as emanating from commonly revered institutions like Yale, Stanford, and Harvard. The specific reference to his friend Ben Kiernan, author of *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (2007), keeps his identity in the realm of affable insidership, still tenuously connected to local insidership with the many Lutherans in the crowd who presumably know what it means to “quote chapter and

verse,”⁷ as Anderson claims he can do. But “what we call in the business” results in an unavoidable distancing of local insiders with its shift to an exclusive *we*, leaving the audience out of this first-person subject. On genocide, then, Anderson constructs an exclusive, professional authority for himself and he promptly wields it in the series of patronizing rhetorical questions and answers that follow — “Well, what’s the difference between the rhetoric of genocide and genocide? Well(hhh) there’s a major difference between words and actions, right? Did genocide occur in Minnesota? No. Did it occur in North America? No. (.) It didn’t.” Anderson’s quick, authoritative-sounding delivery gives the appearance to those who have not seriously taken up genocide scholarship that a consensus has been attained by *us*, the eminent scholars who work at eminent institutions. Anderson knows best simply because he knows those scholars personally and American history so well.

Clearly, contradictions threaten Gary Clayton Anderson’s local-insider and national-insider selves. Asserting exclusive *we*, but then shying away from a nuanced discussion of genocide reveals his privileging of the former identity over the latter. The local white-descendant self does not want to compromise its authority by opening the messy can of worms that the historiography of genocide actually is. Scott Straus, professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, has counted as many as 21 different definitions of genocide, each applied for various legal, political, and moral purposes resulting in a complexity that has led another genocide scholar, Anton

⁷ On its website, St. Lucia defines itself as church-related liberal-arts college grounded in Swedish Lutheran heritage. Part of its mission is to work toward a more just and peaceful world through Christian faith.

Weiss-Wendt, to write, “Nobody has dared to put it plainly: the debate on definition of genocide is futile!” (2008, p. 44). Entering the quagmire of genocide scholarship could undermine the authority Anderson seeks to maintain through a combination of colloquial discourses and an air of academic certainty. As a way out of the tension between local-insider authority and national-insider authority, critical thought gets disfigured into what Anderson reproduces as a common-sense notion for local insiders — “Well, there’s a major difference between words and actions, right?” At least one local, me, wished to say something equally commonsensical like “the pen is mightier than the sword.”

From “the Rhetoric of Genocide” to “the Discourse of Genocide”

While an entire history of sociocultural thought poses challenges to Anderson’s easy words-from-actions separation — from Aristotle through Giambattista Vico to twentieth-century thinkers such as Lev Vygotsky, V. N. Volosinov, and Antonio Gramsci⁸ — Minnesota history provides ample evidence to call the move into question. Although prominent Minnesotans swayed by the frontier papers failed to convince President Lincoln that 303 men should be hanged, word of mouth and the press convinced politicians like Alexander Ramsey and military leaders like Gen. Pope and Henry Sibley that they should. These men held power to order and carry out genocidal

⁸ For Vico (1668-1744), language developed from wordless social *activities* such as religious ceremonies (1744/2001, p. 402). Vico’s was an early formulation of a material approach to language expressed in various ways through the twentieth century, for example, the word/sign as a tool and artifact (Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 38-49), as a concrete means of social interaction (Volosinov, 1929/1986, pp. 84-93), and as inseparable from the workings of social power and cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1985, pp. 167-187). For a concise summary of this empirical tradition emphasizing language itself as activity and practice, see Pennycook (2010, p. 135).

measures on the ground after 1862. Not only did they and many other influential whites agitate for extermination, but Gov. Ramsey promoted and Gen. Pope planned Gen. Sibley and Gen. Alfred Sully's punitive expeditions into the Dakota Territory in 1863-64 for the protection of Minnesota's borders, resulting in the destruction of Indian camps and villages depicted in Chapter One. They went out convinced by *words* that the Dakota needed to be exterminated, acting on rumors and reports of "outrages" that had been feeding the "rhetoric of genocide" for months. They came back boasting of large numbers of Indians either killed or doomed to die from starvation. Sibley, for example, had the following statement read to troops following the 1863 expedition:

It would be a gratification if these remorseless savages could have been pursued and utterly extirpated, for their crimes and barbarities merited such a full measure of punishment [...] The military results of the campaign have been fully accomplished; for the savages have not only been destroyed in great numbers, and their main strength broken, but their prospects for the future are hopeless indeed, for they can hardly escape starvation during the coming winter. (Heard, p. 334)

Anderson's line of argument against this as evidence of genocide would likely say there simply weren't enough Dakota people killed in Sibley's expeditions to uphold the charge. Yet the military produced the records from the campaigns of 1863-64 and a standard body count establishing genocide for the time is beyond difficult to locate.⁹ Sibley's

⁹ For the military's inability and perhaps unwillingness to estimate the "true toll" of Indians killed in the Dakota Territory at this time see, for example, Clodfelter, 1998, p. 143.

statement, and others like it from the 1860s,¹⁰ provide clear links between the rumors of “barbarities” (rapes, mutilations, atrocities) that fueled the “rhetoric of genocide” (words of genocidal intent) and the carrying out of massacres against the Dakota and other indigenous people (genocidal action). Anderson’s friend at Yale, Prof. Ben Kiernan, has no problem labeling actions performed by Sibley and Sully in the Dakota Territory “genocidal massacres” (Kiernan, 2007, p. 355). Kiernan does not argue that ethnic cleansing and genocide are mutually exclusive categories, but rather that they often overlap when protected groups are targeted for violence (p. 16). Similarly, Prof. Michael Mann at UCLA has no problem including Ramsey and Sibley in a chapter on “Genocidal Democracies in the New World” from his book *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (2005, p. 91). This is because Minnesota leaders who engaged in ethnic cleansing also resorted to *genocidal practices* in the 1860s.

The sociocultural reading I propose according to these links between rumors of outrages, expressions of genocidal intent, and genocidal actions underscores the importance of Anderson’s own claim that Sibley was “terribly influenced by the newspapers,” *influenced* meaning to have affected not only the person’s thoughts but his behavior. Rather than “the rhetoric of genocide” which seeks to trivialize words by separating them from events,¹¹ the *discourse of genocide* approaches language as

¹⁰ Expressions of genocidal intent among Minnesota leaders based on rumors of rape or “outrages” can be found throughout the literature. For Gov. Ramsey, see Gilman, 2004, p. 177. For Henry Sibley, see Heard, 1864, p. 334 and Wingerd, 2010, pp. 318-319. For General Pope, see Bessler, 2003, p. 49 and Wingerd, 2010, p. 313.

¹¹ Speaking, writing, and publishing “rhetoric” all constitute physical acts. The question is whether propaganda promoting genocide can serve to establish genocidal intent. Propaganda was considered, for example, in the case of Milomir Stakic, a high-ranking

organically integrated with social practices underway. Symbolic of the inseparability of language from social practice in the discourse of regional genocide in the 1860s are local newspaper editors who were quick to espouse extermination and then leave their presses to go join the extermination campaign themselves (Meyer, 1967, p. 124; Lewis, 2011).

By setting up discussion of genocide and genocidal intent and then quickly dismissing it with the authority of his exclusive *we* (“what we call in the business”), Anderson seemed to wager that no one in the audience would have enough expertise and confidence to challenge the move. This relatively safe bet on audience ignorance echoed the one made by the angry professor at the Mankato History conference who figured no one would have read Richard Fox or really known whether mutilations occurred as reported in the early histories of the U.S.-Dakota War.

The question of ignorance and how Anderson played on ignorance offers an illuminating path to understanding how race and politics worked together in his talk. In *Impure Acts: The Practical Politics of Cultural Studies* (2000), Henry Giroux writes about ignorance not as a state of innocent unknowing, but rather as an intentional state of unknowingness among educated people who consciously and even sometimes passionately decide what not to know and how not to know it. Drawing from Shoshona

Bosnian-Serb politician tried and acquitted of genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in 2003. Susanne Malmström writes, “such [propagandistic] statements could be used as evidence for inferring genocidal intent even if they ‘fall short of express calls for a group’s physical destruction; a perpetrator’s statements must be understood in their proper context’.” The Tribunal concluded that “‘ethnic slurs and calls for ethnic cleansing might reasonably be understood as an implied call for the group’s destruction’” (Malmström, 2010, p. 281).

Felman's book *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture* (1987), Giroux writes,

educators must think about the role of desire in both ignorance and learning. "Teaching," [Felman] explains, "has to deal not so much with lack of knowledge as with resistances to knowledge. Ignorance, suggests [Jacques] Lacan, is a 'passion.' Inasmuch as traditional pedagogy postulated a desire for knowledge, an analytically informed pedagogy has to reckon with the passion for ignorance [...] Ignorance is nothing other than a desire to ignore: its nature is less cognitive than performative ... it is not a simple lack of information but the incapacity — or the refusal — to acknowledge one's own implication in the information." (Giroux, 2000, p. 104)

For Giroux, choices not to know made through the various discursive subject positions people willingly take up are closely tied to how oppressive and racist ideologies perpetuate themselves in society — "At stake here is not only a pedagogical practice that recalls how knowledge, identification, and subject positions are produced, unfolded, and remembered, but also how they become part of an ongoing process, more strategic so to speak, in mediating/accommodating/challenging existing relations of power" (Giroux, 2000, p. 105). Coming after his account of riding with his mother to Indian reservations to bring native babies back for adoption, Anderson's dismissal of the importance of genocidal intent must be read as part of an emotional need not to implicate himself and loved ones in genocidal acts, a need that does several other things to accommodate existing power relations — legitimate the transfer of indigenous children to another

group, diminish the historical trauma of Dakota people, (re)construct ignorance about what genocide even is.

By willfully trivializing the importance of genocidal intent through a storyline of Western values and restraint, Anderson's local-insider position extends through history past the 1960s when he had come to campus donning the helmet with the big C on it, and back into the 1860s when the war's earliest historians crafted their works to laud conquerors like Henry Sibley (McConkey, 1863). In conveniently tracing Minnesota leaders' restraint from President Lincoln back to President Washington and through a kind of "homogeneous empty time" to Hugo Grotius (Benjamin, 2003),¹² Anderson manages to celebrate a Great Tradition even as he tells a tale about a "travesty of justice" presumably uncomfortable for whites.¹³ In such circumstances, something apparently must be done "to comfort descendants of the 'settlers,'" as James Loewen has written (1995/2005, p. 91). According to Anderson, Grotius gave us the values of just war, including the just treatment of prisoners of war; George Washington infused those values into U.S. military code; and Lincoln's intervention in the trial system ensured that justice

¹² Anderson's decontextualized descent of Grotian ideals through "homogeneous empty time" — time not of any historical-material present but of a positivistic linearity that provides for "natural," free-floating progressions (Benjamin, 2003) — gave the sense that the humanistic values in question derived simply from the goodwill of benevolent men. A less biased account would include the emergence of Grotian rights from the exceedingly opportunistic and territorial context of Dutch colonial expansion in the East Indies, a history that bears important implications for establishing private property for whites in North America (van Ittersum, 2006).

¹³ Anderson: "I suspect that most of you didn't know much about those trials when you came in here. Uh, legal justice. Um, I don't think so. I don't think anybody can look at that and say that was a fair trial. I think the foundation of it was crooked to begin with. Um, I mean, Sibley set it up so he could try and execute all these Indians and he wanted to do it. He was ready to do it."

(not genocide) more or less prevailed in 1862. In the context of Giroux's connection between the desire to ignore and oppressive education, Anderson's (re)construction of ignorance about regional genocide seems to develop naturally from his white-settler descendant subject position, an identity seemingly pleased with existing relations of power.

Erasing Indigenous Perspectives

The story lines Anderson used to comfort his white-majority audience worked in divisive ways associated with the classroom pedagogy analyzed in Chapters Two and Three, namely, to reproduce historic racial divides. Interestingly, by providing a genealogy of values all the way back to Hugo Grotius, the racial divides Anderson (re)constructed ended up marginalizing more than just Dakota audience members. In this section, I will go a little deeper into Anderson's narrative to fully contextualize its epistemic violence (Spivak, 1993)¹⁴ as identified by an unexpected listener.

As Anderson told it, his privileged view of this history grew from a serendipitous find at the National Archives. While recently searching through the Continental Army Command's files, he came across a letter book written by Henry Sibley during the days of the U.S.-Dakota War. There Anderson read an exchange between Sibley and an army officer stationed at Glencoe, Minnesota, who wanted to declare martial law in 1862.

Anderson comments:

¹⁴ I take Spivak's (1993) phrase *epistemic violence* simply to mean the *violence of knowledge*.

Well Sibley tells him “You don’t have the authority to declare martial law. Period.” Well that got me thinking when I looked at that(hhh). Where does that authority come from? How does it really work? And you know what? There are actually laws out there that do in fact give us a clear pattern for how a military army is supposed to operate in the field. Where do they come from? Believe it or not they start in Europe. And they start a long time ago in Europe. And those of us who study history, oftentimes we’ve gotta go back to the Renaissance to find the origins of things like this.

The search for origins, conducted by way of the exclusive pronoun *we*, leads Anderson back through a series of iconic figures commonly included in histories of Western humanism — Michelangelo, Martin Luther, Henry the Eighth. From them Anderson locates the beginnings of the individual, developed through the bequeathing of authority and rights upon “him,” including the right to own property through which Anderson attempted to connect the audience:

And he [Henry VIII] gave those people a deed in fee simple, which is what the vast majority of you have on your house today. It really didn’t exist before that. By 1700 there are 200,000 gentlemen in England who have land and they had deeds in fee simple. The emergence of what we call the natural right to own private property.

This positioning of the audience as insiders to Western humanism, i.e. property-owning beneficiaries of the emergence of “natural rights” which, as Anderson added, “also improved the right to life,” continued with discussion of the author of *The Law of War*

and Peace, a Renaissance man with ties to local Swedish identity few had presumably considered:

There was king at the time who was fighting the Thirty Years' War. He happened to come from a place called Sweden. And when he went into battle, he took two books with him and he put them underneath his pillow at night. And you can pretty well guess that one was the Bible, and the other was Hugo Grotius.

Anderson went on to tell that from Grotius's treatise, human rights extended to war:

... warfare then becomes humane. I know that sounds bizarre, but (.) and we've lost track of that(hhhh) to some degree today, but nevertheless, in Europe that was true. And indeed it spread to America.

From here it is but a short way to Gen. Pope and Gen. Henry Sibley who must abide by the Rules and Articles for Government of the Armies of the United States, published by the United States Army which, as Anderson strongly emphasized, "wrote it down, code." In this phrase lay an exertion of epistemological dynamics central to the white public pedagogy analyzed — a violently established Euro-American authority backing today's white property-owning identity, and the objective researcher's function tracing genealogies of that authority for white-descendant consumer communities.

Clearly, Anderson constructed this particular storyline for both the inclusion and amusement of white, male, Swedish-Lutheran, property-owning Minnesotans. But what about indigenous people who had likely been asking questions like *to whom?* and *for whom?* all along, especially on the point of natural rights improving the right to life? By

constantly shifting between inclusive and exclusive *we*, and conveying privileged assumptions through his imagined *you*, Anderson performed all sorts of identity work for and against various audience members, a most interesting case being a visiting professor from a university in northern Scandinavia. I introduced myself to Dr. Meret Thomasson immediately following the lecture as she stood in line waiting to ask Anderson a question. Having lived in Norway and traveled Scandinavia, I recognized Dr. Thomasson as of Sami¹⁵ descent right away by her bright colorful clothing and curled-toe boots, formal attire worn because of her plans to attend the dinner for Anderson at the president's house later that evening. Dr. Thomasson told me she had come to St. Lucia that month to teach a J-term course on Sami language and culture. She explained she was standing in line so that she could ask Anderson why he had felt the need to give little laughs when discussing points particularly painful for native people (Fieldnotes, 01-13-2012). I told her I was interested in hearing the outcome of that conversation and she agreed to meet soon for an interview.

I sat down with Dr. Thomasson two days later. She told me I could call her Meret. When I turned the recorder on, Meret stressed the need for anonymity because of potential backlash from Anderson in the future — “It would be terrible if Clayton came to me after a couple of years and said ‘Oh you were the person who, uh’” (Interview, 01-12-12).¹⁶ Her anxiety made me aware that the politics of race at work in this public pedagogy could render anyone vulnerable, though of course not equally. As a *visiting*

¹⁵ Traditionally known by white society as “Laplanders,” the Sami people are indigenous to northern regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia.

¹⁶ All of the quotes that follow from Meret are taken from this single interview.

indigenous female scholar seeking to build positive cross-cultural relations that month at St. Lucia, Meret sensed Anderson would naturally have the upper hand as a *local*, *privileged white male* scholar should conflict ever arise between them over what she was about to tell me.

Meret's question about Anderson's laughter did not come up right away. Instead, she wanted to talk about discussion that transpired at the president's house regarding his erasure of indigenous perspectives:

I was going to ask him about if- about the other perspectives that you can have in this kind of story. The other- indigenous peoples' perspectives, their own stories, how they've been like processing everything that has happened and if that would have any, uh, inference on his work. And I got my question answered before I asked it, because I, uh, because it was Gwen [Westerman] who asked this, who said something or said something about her perspective, or the Dakota people's perspective, and he said that he couldn't give less for things that are not- that there are no real records. So that for him, if it's your grandmother who's telling you stories or if people are singing or if there is the folklore, then it doesn't have the same- it's- it's not as important as all the papers that you can find in the archives and you should know exactly every paper as an historian. So that was my answer already. So I didn't want to ask him anything.

I took Meret's phrase "couldn't give less" as an assessment of white colonial disregard for native oral traditions after native knowledge has been appropriated for the purposes of conquest (Ludden, 2008, pp. 78-89). I asked her why she hadn't asked Anderson about his laughter which seemed to fit the empowered attitude. She said she realized at the president's house how nervous he seemed when talking to Dakota scholars. She thought

his laughter probably had to do with anxiety rather than irony. When I asked her what she had wanted to say to Anderson, she returned to the theme of the epistemic power of colonial documents:

Well I would- I would just say to him that I respect all of the results he gets from all the papers he finds in the archives, and I would- then I would remind him of who wrote those papers, who wrote those documents. And- and I wish it would be enough for him to understand that. I'm sure he understands that there is another perspective, but he has got the authority and the power to say that that perspective doesn't count because it's not written down. And probably at least, it's- that's the way it has been for the Sami people. We haven't been able to uh write down our own history in the same way as those who had the skills to write. So they wrote it for us but from their perspective. So it's probably exactly the same thing here. So as long as there is nothing that you can have as evidence from your own group, then he's just going to regard it as it's nothing.

In this Meret of course identified a central dilemma reported by J-term students in the museum-writing project — whites writing Dakota history “on behalf of them,” as Lori had put it. For Meret, parallels between the oppression of Dakota and Sami people abounded. She told me about the Kautokeino Rebellion in Norway ten years before the U.S.-Dakota War and its familiar backdrop of land appropriation, cultural assimilation, and economic exploitation all foregrounding violence against trader/merchants. It ended in a brutal show of white “justice” in the form of beheadings (Salvesen, 1995, p. 135). She shared her assessment of the situation in Sweden today where white historians know ahead of time the kinds of evidence that archival documents will provide them with which then reproduces a blindness to indigenous perspectives on Scandinavian history.

Ultimately, Meret's response to Anderson's lecture was ambivalent. On the one hand, she spoke of the epistemic violence Anderson's sanitized genealogy reproduced by linking the local history to Grotius and King Gustav II Adolf. On the other hand, there was the ethnic-cleansing thesis that she found potentially generative for her future work:

... when he started talking about [...] the king of Sweden, and said that in Europe everything was about the individual's right and all of this, and of course he never-he would probably not even know the indigenous context of Scandinavia and how much damage the kings did towards the indigenous people there, taking their land, making them move. And now when I go back to Sweden, I will actually be able to use ethnic cleansing for- as a term for those, that has- there has been another term in Sweden. It's called the forceful movement of people. So this would be ethnic cleansing too. So half of the Sami population was forcefully moved to other places because there was not enough land for raising reindeer. The state did this and then they took the land and put up mines and all of that. So if he had known, maybe he could have said that even though things came from there, the individual's right, that they were already at that time not looking at indigenous people's rights. Already in the 1600s, they were just completely ignoring that. So it wouldn't be so strange that things that come from there here, that it would also be the same here.

Phrases Meret used throughout the interview in trying to account for Anderson's exclusion of indigenous perspectives ("he would probably not even know;" "if he had known") raise important questions about how partial histories like his come about, for Meret also says of Anderson, "I'm sure he understands that there is another perspective." In this lies not only a contradiction but a kind of psychological puzzle related to the desire to ignore described above by Henry Giroux. Does a scholar who spends so much

time attending to the history lack the capacity to account adequately for indigenous perspectives and implicate himself in events because of how he is raised, educated, and disciplined, or as Meret suggests with the Swedish historians, does he keep producing the same kind of work consciously refusing to do so?

In ways related to this puzzle of simultaneously knowing and not knowing, historian Ann Laura Stoler writes of *colonial aphasia*, a collective disorder affecting both colonizer and colonized though in different varying ways shaped by race and power; Stoler describes *colonial aphasia* as “a difficulty in speaking, a difficulty generating a vocabulary that associates appropriate words and concepts with appropriate things. Aphasia in its many forms describes a difficulty retrieving both conceptual and lexical vocabularies and, most important, comprehending what is spoken” (2011, p. 125). Following analyses of unknowingness offered both by Stoler and Giroux, I want to highlight two angles to the contradiction — a) a “scholarly disposition” shaped by the racialized epistemology my study analyzes (Stoler, 2011, pp. 122, 129), that is, the public demand for white *balance* and *objectivity* that continually reproduces the same “appropriate” yet exclusionary frames of knowing for the community; and b) *intimate* political obligations Anderson actively keeps according to his local white-descendant subject position. In turning to Dakota reaction to the lecture, I focus below on this intimacy, the emotional bonds shaping Anderson’s aphasia when it comes to genocide.

Contradictions in the Emotional Defense

When Anderson ended his lecture, audience members used question-and-answer time to voice frustration. One woman asked why the state-sponsored bounties issued against the Dakota people would not provide evidence of genocide. Anderson said because few Dakotas were killed as a result of the bounties. Someone else asked what Minnesota should do about this troubling history, adding “before America can progress, it has to deal with, you know, issues that have not been addressed.” Anderson’s most direct reply was “Minnesota has got problems, uh, historically. Uh, you’re not in the same league as the state of Texas, trust me. ((audience laughter)) Make you feel better?”

Eventually, Dakota documentary filmmaker Sheldon Wolfchild took the floor and made a courageous five-minute plea for everyone to read David Nichols’s book *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics* (1978). Drawing on details from the book, Wolfchild repeated the genocidal import of Lincoln’s charge to Gov. Ramsey when denying him federal troops to help put down the uprising in 1862 — “Attend to the Indians.” Wolfchild let the words hang for a few seconds. He then launched into Nichols’s thesis that men like Ramsey and Sibley were the beneficiaries of a corrupt Indian system. Wolfchild pointed out that Sibley made \$145,000 off the 1851 treaty,¹⁷ the equivalent of four million dollars in today’s money. As trader and politician, Sibley worked for years to position himself so that he would reap rewards when the Dakota relinquished their lands by a design of trade, debt, and bailout explicitly outlined by

¹⁷ Nichols confirms Wolfchild’s claims (1978, p. 19). I would add that the violence made Sibley first a colonel and then a brigadier general, roles involving a new kind of authority for him with which he soon grew “enamored” (Gilman, 2004, pp. 168, 184).

Thomas Jefferson in 1803. In emphasizing “how that system was in effect for people to make money through the treaties that were taken from our people,” Wolfchild reminded the audience that white Minnesota’s campaign of extermination was not necessarily about racism or retribution but rather a struggle for social goods carried out by a handful of power brokers leading up to 1862. At one point, Wolfchild referred to them as a “gang.” “So as a Dakota, that’s the way that we look at this,” he said, calling attention to the Eurocentric nature of Anderson’s presentation.

J-term students told me they sometimes grew uncomfortable in moments like these; they had during Corrine Marz’s lecture as well, sitting near Dakota people who expressed discontent with what was being said (Fieldnotes, 01-25-2012). Melodramatic as my epigraph by Fanon about machetes may sound, “residual anger” lurked in such exchanges.¹⁸ Fanon writes, “The supremacy of white values is stated with such violence, the victorious confrontation of these values with the lifestyle and beliefs of the colonized is so impregnated with aggressiveness, that as a counter measure the colonized rightly make a mockery of them whenever they are mentioned” (1963/2004, p. 8). Indeed, Wolfchild seemed to craft his five-minute response to deride Anderson’s inability to account for Sibley’s motives in not making peace with the Dakota, as an audience member had asked Anderson to do. Anderson confined his answer to Sibley’s belief that Dakota fighters had raped many white women and his subsequent shock at finding that not to be the case. Wolfchild spoke to broaden the context of Sibley’s motives to include

¹⁸ Jennifer expressed wonder that more “residual anger” had not been expressed by Dakota people (Fieldnotes, 01-12-2012).

the time before the war, not just “during or after,” as he emphasized. Alan noted the tension between Anderson and Wolfchild in this exchange — “Like I was listening to what Sheldon was saying, but I was watching Anderson and he just got redder and redder” (Focus group, 01-13-2012). Anderson’s response to Wolfchild — “Sibley had his hands full.”

I go into these tensions to note a moment of emotional instability for the speaker; challenges presented by critical audience members were forcing Anderson to make choices between the contradictory subject positions he had constructed for himself. In their article on position theory, Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré draw on the work of Erving Goffman who once used the metaphor of *footing* to describe points of discursive instability when a speaker’s positions come into question. Paraphrasing Goffman, they explain, “We gain or lose our footing in conversations, social groups, and so on, much as we gain or lose it on a muddy slope” (p. 54). For them the metaphor provides a way in to conceptualizing the kind of slipperiness that can accompany shifts between the contradictory “possible selves” co-constructed in conversations:

In making choices between contradictory demands there is a complex weaving together of the positions (and the cultural/social/political meanings that are attached to those positions) that are available within any number of discourses; the emotional meaning attached to those positions which have developed as a result of personal experiences of being located in each position, or of relating to someone in that position; the stories through which those categories and emotions are being made sense of; and the moral system that links and legitimates the choices that are being made. (p. 59)

The progressive exposure of these contradictory demands in the contentious Q and A eventually came to a head when someone asked Anderson to explain the difference between ethnic cleansing and genocide. “A great question,” he said, “and indeed most Americans today don’t know the difference between the debt and the deficit so why would they know the difference here, I guess ((audience laughter)).”

The fact is that, um, when the Genocide Convention convened in 1948 and they put together the convention itself, everything from ((sigh)) soup to nuts were thrown in, including the kidnapping of children. That was genocide too. Indeed, quite frankly, what my mother was doing in North Dakota by adopting Indian children out to Baltimore was genocide. That’s why the vast majority of countries didn’t sign off on it. Because it was just totally unusable. It was in the 19- (1.0) 1990s that- I almost lost my podium

Indeed, this confession threatened a literal loss of footing as the podium teetered over the front edge of the stage for a moment. Anderson didn’t need to return to this personally unresolvable dilemma. In doing so, however, he came across as honest about what was at stake for him, the risk that his mother’s “humanitarian” work might be construed as genocidal practice.¹⁹ Here his speech seemed openly political, a forthright disavowal of genocide like Dr. Lenz’s disavowal of Holocaust as a frame of reference for Dakota

¹⁹ Of course many view the practice of adopting babies away from reservations in the light shed by criterion (e) of Article 6 of the Rome Statute. Waziyatawin accounts for criterion (e) with statistics and commentary on the ideology that rationalizes transfer of Indian children because native families are deemed “poor, without the appropriate ‘necessities of civilization’ such as indoor plumbing and electricity, or because their home was considered to have too many extended family members inhabiting it” (2008, pp. 59-60).

history when I asked her in interview. Yet like Dr. Lenz, the things Anderson failed to make clear in public revealed how deeply politicized his lecture was.

After the podium teetered, Anderson proceeded to say that in the 1990s “with the Yugoslavian war we began to look at this and we decided, ‘Well, we’ve gotta have some kind of an international legal system to deal with this.’ Lawyers got together and began to talk about it. In 1999, they came up with what becomes the Rome Statutes.” It was here that Anderson delivered *his* definition of genocide, passing it off as the Rome Statute’s:

Genocide is defined clearly (1.0) as the efforts of a government or a group of people who have the sanction of a government in a country (1.0) to plan- (.) develop (.) a policy, and the key word is policy (1.0) written down which has the intent, and that’s the next key word, to kill all people of a religious or ethnic group within their country. That’s genocide. Now what’s the difference? Ethnic cleansing comes under the s- (.) the- the- the- article seven which is called crimes against humanity and it involves the forced removal or the forced deportation of people from lands that are legally theirs.

By referring to Article 7, Anderson made it clear that his source remained the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, an important reference because otherwise much of what he said does not match the source. Article 6, which defines genocide, contains no reference to “efforts of a government.” It does not refer to killing “all people” of the national, ethnical, racial or religious group but rather destroying them “in whole or in part.” Article 6 does not refer to any “government,” “sanction of a government in a

country,” “plan,” or “policy, written down.”²⁰ “Plan” and “policy” come under the category of War Crimes (Article 8). “Government” and “sanction of a government in a country” are nowhere to be found in the articles defining the crimes of *genocide* or *deportation or forcible transfer of population* (“ethnic cleansing” is not a category in the Statute). As for *deportation or forcible transfer of population*, Article 7 refers to a population “lawfully present” rather than a population on “lands that are legally theirs” as Anderson rendered it. During the course of misrepresenting the Statute in these ways, Anderson’s account left out the fact that its definition of genocide reads exactly the same today as it did in the 1948 U. N. Genocide Convention, still including criterion (e), “Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.” It left out that 120 countries²¹ were signed on to the Statute in 2012 and had accepted criterion (e) by doing so.²² It left out that their signing on didn’t have anything to do with the development of a more “usable” definition of genocide.

²⁰ The definition from the 1948 UN Genocide Convention and the 1998 Rome Statute read: “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or on part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

²¹ By February 2012, 120 states were “state parties to the statute of the court including all of South America, nearly all of Europe, and roughly half the countries of Africa. A further 32 countries, including Russia have signed but not ratified the Rome Statute” (Rome Statute, 1998).

²² In contradictory fashion, Anderson suggested hypocrisy in the Bush administration’s decision to withdraw U.S. intent to ratify itself as party to the Rome Statute in 2002.

These distortions recall elements of Stoler's description of colonial aphasia — “a difficulty generating a vocabulary that associates appropriate words and concepts with appropriate things” — strange for a lecture that seemed to privilege printed documents over spoken words. On the one hand, Anderson had come to deliver a talk on the trials rather than genocide and was perhaps not fully prepared. On the other hand, his categorical assertion in the lecture proper that genocide never occurred in Minnesota invited the question. In having to attend directly to the definition of genocide and at the same time provide an answer through authority aligned with the white-descendant subject position, Anderson had to address the importance of genocidal intent (“which has the intent, and that's the next key word”), the very thing he sought to trivialize. Sticking to epistemological conceit in this moment of contradiction reproduced a common-sense argument made by the most pedestrian of Holocaust deniers — that only governmental “policy, written down” can qualify as genocide. While the definition of genocide Anderson provided may follow certain social-scientific definitions rather than the one found in the Rome Statute,²³ it could also absolve Germany of moral responsibility today for the Nazis having perpetrated genocide against Jews in the 1930s and 40s.²⁴

²³ In *The History and Sociology of Genocide* (1990), Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn attempt to distance the concept of genocide from the definition laid down by the 1948 UN Convention with which Anderson takes issue. Their definition of genocide involves mass killing perpetrated by “a state or other authority” (p. 23). In this line of genocide theory Ann Curthoys and John Docker note a certain normative “hubris,” giving the false notion that a consensus is forming among genocide scholars, an effect achieved by Anderson's use of exclusive *we* in his lecture as well (Curthoys and Docker, 2008, p. 31).

²⁴ The parallels between Anderson's arguments and those made by current Holocaust deniers are uncanny. To take one example, a book review by Paul Grubach for an organization called “The Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust” posits that because “there are no authentic and genuine wartime documents that prove the Germans

No one took issue with Anderson's definitions. It would have taken someone well versed in international law to have stood up, challenged him, and attempted to sort this mess out in public. His bet that the distinction between ethnic cleansing and genocide would be cloudier than that between the debt and the deficit in the minds of his audience was a safe one precisely because of the arcane ways these crimes are defined and categorized by so many sources. In the Statute, genocide, for example, begins with "killing members of the group" but then the second example of the theoretically lesser crimes against humanity is "extermination," which can sound worse. What separates genocide from crimes against humanity is the very element Anderson willfully dismisses — genocidal intent — part of which must be determined through evidence of a "mental element," the *mens rea*, a legal requirement refuting the assumption that "rhetoric" belongs to a harmless, abstracted sphere (Malmström, 2010, p. 271).

With the authority of both the local white-descendant insider and the national Genocide Studies insider destabilized, Anderson made a most emphatic, emotional defense:

The federal government had deported people left and right, for god's sake, it is removal! A hundred thousand Indians living east of the Mississippi River were forced west of the Mississippi River. What is that? (2.5) °It's ethnic cleansing.° And ethnic cleansing works very, very well (2.0) uh as a definition.

had a policy to annihilate the Jews of Europe [...], the Nazi government never planned to exterminate Jewry, [and] the 'Final Solution' [was] no more or no less than their expulsion from Europe" (Grubach, 2007).

The pause at the end of this statement was chilling. Ethnic cleansing indeed worked very well in terms of efficiency, sweeping nearly all Dakotas out of the state in a matter of months and rendering it illegal by way of the Dakota Expulsion Act for Dakota people to live in the newly formed white-man's state. This law is still on the books. By the time Anderson tagged "as a definition" on to what had begun as a kind of outburst, all of the aspects of nineteenth-century Dakota history that had been silenced by his presentation came forcefully through for those who knew how to listen.

The emotion conjured in this most straightforward expression of the ethnic-cleansing thesis says a great deal about both the power and vulnerability of local white-descendant politics, its institutional backing but its grounding in childhood and even childlike identity. Indeed, the colorful story lines Anderson used to construct his white-descendant position early in the lecture ended up mattering deeply to the genocide denial performed, an aphasia rooted in the *racialized* emotional intimacy of the mother-son bond. As Anderson presented it, this bond was forged over the *rescuing* of indigenous children from their own relatives and people. The storyline began with his mother's supervisory role in the Catholic Family Service — "she was in charge of all the babies coming off the reservations in North Dakota — Standing Rock and, uh, Devil's Lake, and Fort Berthold." It continued through "humorously" melodramatic turns of speech that both reproduced and sought to dissociate death and kidnapping from their appropriate points of reference:

And I remember many times when mother used go, and she had a deal with the principal when I was 12-13 years old. It was in the middle of winter and it looked

like, uh, you know, death coming down from the north, 20 below zero, and a blizzard, and she would come in and steal me out of school.

It drew on Christianity, gave the image of the reservation as a place far from civilization, lent a sense of urgency to the “humanitarian” work being done, and presented Anderson as an unwitting though nurturing assistant:

And I would ride along with her out to see the priest of Standing Rock or whatever and we would go pick up a baby in some isolated part of the reservation. Uh, she just wanted someone along to, you know, shovel snow if she got stuck. Uh, and I would hold the baby as we would race back to Fargo to the clinic and have that baby examined.

It packaged Anderson’s professional work as something grown out of compassion:

And I saw the poverty. I saw the uh- it was desolate out there. Moorhead is desolate, but Standing Rock is more desolate, okay? And I just- I got to the point where I really wanted to find out more about what happened with history.

This telling of transfer of indigenous children to another group operates at two different levels according to the speaker’s contradictory subject positions. The first narrates in a traditional colonial way that says the babies were saved from an impoverished and uncivilized wilderness. The white speaker engages in the act from a state of innocence. The second level colors that narrative with melodrama informed by the national Genocide Studies insider who knows that the terms for twentieth-century transfers of children were shaped by nineteenth-century acts of kidnapping and death. By trying to keep the main

story line fixed in the politics of the first way of narrating, Anderson buries the potential for a thoroughly honest yet painful postcolonial account of genocide and its continuing legacy on the northern plains. I think his untold postcolonial narrative would have resonated with everybody.

Focus Group: Students Address the Limits of White Epistemology

The only time I attempted to influence J-term instruction came at the end of that second week after Anderson's lecture had gone unexamined in the classroom. The class took a field trip the following day, a Wednesday. Thursday entailed discussion of Kenneth Carley's history and whether "war" was an appropriate term to apply to 1862. Friday included my talk about the Mankato hanging and group work on the museum exhibit panels. Waziyatawin's *What Does Justice Look Like?*, which defines genocide, was still a week away.

That Saturday, after looking everything up, I embedded links to the Rome Statutes in an email to Dr. Lenz. I copied the definition of genocide from Article 6 into the message and wrote,

The Rome Statute doesn't seem to split hairs so much and begins with "intent to destroy." Notice that "intent" does not then lead to a discussion of the difference between action and rhetoric, meaning that the rhetoric is still important for its expression of intent. Also, elements "a" through "e" do not all have to be equally satisfied for "genocide" to have occurred, but any of them. I thought you might be interested in this. (Personal correspondence, 01-14-2012)

Dr. Lenz wrote back to thank me for speaking to the students on Friday. She ended by writing, “Thanks for sharing this info on genocide. You might want to look at the U.N. definition, too--that is the one many US scholars use. Best —” (Personal correspondence, 01-14-2012). Again, Anderson’s bet on audience ignorance seemed thoroughly safe in retrospect; not even a career Holocaust scholar seemed aware of or concerned by the fact that the 1948 U.N. definition of genocide reads exactly the same as in the 1998 Rome Statute. Only in April did Dr. Lenz tell me “I so profoundly disagreed with his definition of what was and wasn’t genocide that I kind of wrote it off after that” (Interview, 04-27-2012).

Sarah brought Anderson’s lecture up in Friday’s focus group — “I really respected, um Anderson, for the amount of research and the amount of knowledge that he has, but I was kind of disappointed in his perspective. Did- was anyone else feeling like-?” The way Sarah broached the topic encapsulated how discussion on Anderson transpired in this conversation and elsewhere with speakers saying something to account for his intimidating expertise as they proceeded to identify the limiting ways he had publicly modeled scholarship. Sarah took issue with the Eurocentric narrative of the rise of natural rights:

Especially when he came from- what he was saying about like just war and he kept on using that term, um, which is a term that encompasses this European westernized view of war. Um, and how the Dakota shouldn’t have been held by those standards. But I think based on what I’ve read that the Dakota had their own system of just war. And I guess you two ((addressing Alan and Steven)) would

probably know more about that, but just throwing that term out there and like claiming it for the side of the oppressors is just kind of- (Focus group 01-13-2012)

Alan agreed. With his experience studying white privilege, he noted Sarah's point as one of race:

Yeah, it did bother me. Like, again, I was impressed by how much he knew, but the way he presented how much he knew was a little- I don't know, arrogant almost in terms of "I know all this stuff, and I'm gonna tell you, and this is how it is. And all this stuff is written down so my interpretation is right, and-" I don't know, it was a very- it was just a very white presentation.

Mitch concurred with emerging themes — disappointment, Eurocentrism, epistemology, race:

It was kind of disappointing how much he focused on just like the terminology, like I get that words definitely have power and that sometimes you know you need to choose your rhetoric carefully, um, but yeah at the same time it seemed a little bit unnecessary, like with what he was talking about with like the rules that we follow in just war, like those are rules and concepts made up by old white men.

Holly identified a racial essentialism in the defensive positions Anderson took up when he fielded challenging questions from Dakota audience members:

And Mitch and I talked about it after the lecture, how like instead of like just, you know, talking about a disagreement, like he started to get defensive and like he started to almost- like it makes me really uncomfortable when people see

themselves as like a representation for their entire group like, “Oh, I’m part German so I’m going to talk for all German students at this school,” and he started to talk for like all white people, and I was like, “No, I might disagree with you” ((many laugh)) and it just like made me uncomfortable, and he was like, “I’m gonna represent all white people now when I answer your question.”

I asked students what they thought about the separation of words from action — “he was trying to make that distinction between the rhetoric of genocide and actual, you know, genocide being carried out, and I was just wondering how you felt about that.”

Alan was the first to respond:

I wrote in my notes when he said that, “genocide, it’s the thought that counts.” (4.5) because (4.0) there- I mean, we’ve- we’ve encountered a bunch of the rhetoric already (2.0) and even if like that rhetoric was coming from powerful people, it was coming from [General] Pope who was the general in charge of everything, it was coming from people like Swisshelm²⁵ who were powerful people socially (2.0) and so even if the government, I guess the ultimate like American white authority, didn’t necessarily pursue a textbook genocide, that- that rhetoric still obviously had an impact [...] Once you express that kind of intent (3.0) you have to own that, I think. Um and it seemed like Anderson was saying, “Well they said this but they didn’t really mean it. They didn’t actually do it,” (2.5) but they put it out there and people listened! (Focus group, 01-13-2012)

These statements by Alan were on par with those made the first day of class when he announced his ancestor’s suspected participation in the extermination campaign of the

²⁵ Jane Swisshelm was an abolitionist and women’s rights advocate from the eastern U.S. who came to Minnesota in the 1850s and headed local presses in the St. Cloud area. After the fighting broke out in August 1862, she agitated locally and nationally for extermination of the Dakota.

1860s. The pauses were dramatic. His classmates provided space for him to grapple with the moral implications of being a regional white descendant. Importantly here, without really knowing that a mental element (*mens rea*) is needed to determine “a textbook genocide” legally, Alan cut straight to the heart of the most problematic aspect of Anderson’s thesis — “genocide, it’s the thought that counts.”

In many respects, student response mirrored Meret Thomasson’s analysis of Anderson’s violent assertion of white epistemology. Christina noted his compartmentalization of knowledge as destructive to spirituality and kinship. Steven noted Anderson as “a man of definition” who liked “splittin hairs.” He chafed at the idea of Anderson representing the state of today’s knowledge production on the U.S.-Dakota War:

Let’s figure something out instead of spending- you know, it was like he was talkin about his next two projects. He’s gonna write a whole book on this. It’s like, when people go to grab a book to learn about the Dakota War, they might reach for him just because he’s an esteemed name, and they’re gonna be lookin at this. Is that what we want people to be pickin up and seeing here? I don’t know that it’s the most important use of his knowledge base. I think we all talked about that massive knowledge base and I just felt like he was underusing it. (Focus group, 01-13-2012)

Similar comments came from outside the focus group, with less-vocal students seldom quoted in this study — Monica, Nikki, and Anna — taking issue either with Anderson’s assertion of “white-man’s authority” (Monica interview, 01-23-2012) or his refusal to account appropriately for regional genocide (Nikki interview, 04-27-2012; Anna

interview, 01-27-2012). Jennifer, who did not attend the January 13 focus group, seemed to have keenly felt the exclusionary moves Anderson made from his national Genocide Studies insider position:

Yeah, he's a scholar. He's written all these books but his perspective is still gonna be white. He can't be Dakota. He can't have that history. He doesn't have those lasting scars. It's going to be influenced by his- his- his race. Point blank. At the end- and I'm sure he would argue with me. And I'm sure he would say that he's an objective, you know- you know, outsider. "I'm a historian, and I look-" and it's like, "Yeah, you're a historian. And guess what you have to look at historically? White people and white writing." (Interview, 01-18-2012)

Chapter Five

The White Public Pedagogy I: Suspending Moral Judgment

You've heard the accounts of wars, the battles, the sieges, the skirmishes, all of them from an objective point of view. [2.5] I'm not here to be objective. I cannot be objective when I have a personal stake in this history.

— Gwen Westerman, St. Lucia College J-Term Lecture, January 26, 2012.

* * *

This statement by Gwen Westerman to the J-Term lecture audience was the only critical public response to white objectivity I heard all month. It came as a direct reply to Corrine Marz's overview two days before on the various "perspectives" involved in studying the U.S.-Dakota War, an overview that ended with the historians' privileged view — "And then finally there is a view of historians who try to be very objective." As soon as Marz asserted objectivity, however, its foundation seemed to crumble — "And it is not very- it's not always possible to be objective because you, you try to look at each side and each viewpoint and see (3.0) what they- uh, you know, why they are thinking the way they do, and to look at the facts and, um, to try to decide for yourself what is the best, uh, viewpoint for yourself." Marz had nothing to say about why the objective historian could slip so quickly into subjectivity like that. Could it be because there were Dakota people in the room?

The crux of Gwen Westerman's lecture emphasized that Dakota people are still here in Minnesota — "We are doctors, farmers, teachers, lawyers, ranchers, engineers, inventors, poets, artists. We live in rural areas. We live in cities. We live in subdivisions. We live on reservations. We are your neighbors." Her message came after an overview of Minnesota's exterminationist past which included an indirect rebuttal to Gary Clayton Anderson's assertion that genocide never occurred here. Only then, with one celebratory day remaining for J-term students and instructors, did a professional educator speak clearly about the criteria for genocide, display international law for everyone to see, and discuss why it should apply when making sense out of the facts of Minnesota history. For students who had taken Waziyatawin's book seriously, Westerman added evidence to a growing indictment — "in the mid-nineteenth century, the legislature in Minnesota was considering a bill to encourage killing gophers and blackbirds. Pests to crops. One senator offered an amendment to this bill encouraging the extermination of the Dakotas as well." If genocide had never been enshrined into law and carried out as official state policy, its nearness to policy and its proclamation from the lips of policymakers suggested that something unsavory had indeed been practiced on the ground, or, more accurately, over the land in the 1860s.

Westerman's we-are-still-here message could well have been taken as a kind of success story for whites, proof that if Indians could never be white enough to be equal in the past, white society had certainly made room for them to live equally today. Yet, as discussed, Dakotas' unequal social status finds consistent expression today in public

knowledge produced by Dakota people, and in forms of knowledge produced by whites where Dakota people get a chance to speak. It informed Westerman's speech as well:

I drive a hybrid SUV. I live in a house. It's more economical to drive a hybrid SUV than it is to own a horse, or so I've heard. But I've been in a tepee. Yet those are the kinds of questions that we as Indian people today, that we as Dakota people today still get, because for some reason our image is stuck in that 1890 time period when Indians were elements of Wild West shows, later to be immortalized in the Westerns of the 1950s.

Indeed, as seen in the wreath-passing lessons, *partial* knowledge of Dakota people, that is, *incomplete* and *biased* representations of them were lurking (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 39), especially when a specific property-owning identity found defensive reconstruction. In these moments, encouraged by neutral (yet biased) instruction, the J-term devolved into oppressive pedagogy. On the other hand, Dakota speakers had addressed J-termers on at least five separate occasions, telling them about language loss, forced removals of children and families to boarding schools and segregated communities in the twentieth century, and about legal restrictions on Dakota ceremony until 1978 (Fieldnotes, 01-19-2012). Moments like these offered learning experiences in anti-oppressive pedagogy, moments when the students were encouraged to identify and confront oppressive social practices and to try to speak from the heart. This is one way the course could be said to have been politically "balanced," yet highly segregated by race and ideology with white educators playing the roles of disinterested providers of perspectives, positioning Dakota

people as tokens of their culture and that culture's interests (Mignolo, 2009, p. 160), positions that many willingly took up.

Westerman told me in an interview that she is one of only a few Dakota professors working in academia today (Interview, 01-11-2012). Reading Waziyatawin, J-term students learned that the Dakota people reside in an estimated .006 percent of their original land base of over 54 million acres. Statistics in *What Does Justice Look Like?* told that approximately 5,300 people claiming Dakota ancestry lived in Minnesota at the time of the author's writing, less than half of them citizens of federally recognized Dakota communities (2008, p. 61). Statistics comparing unequal material legacies forged in the nineteenth century are stark. Six of the ten poorest counties in the United States include Indian reservations in North and South Dakota ("List of lowest-income counties," 2015). Buffalo County, South Dakota, home of Crow Creek Indian Reservation where Minnesota authorities removed non-combatant Dakota survivors to in 1863 has been noted in recent years as the most impoverished county in the United States. U.S. Census Bureau data list its per capita income at \$11,405.¹ The county reports 80 percent native-American and 18 percent white populations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). By contrast, Blue Earth County, Minnesota, whose seat is Mankato, site of both the hanging and an 1862 concentration camp, shows 92.5 percent white and 0.4 percent native-American populations. Its per capita income is \$25,380 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). In Buffalo

¹ Other sources consulted list Buffalo County's per-capita income much lower than this, at \$5,213 ("List of lowest-income counties," 2015).

County, South Dakota, 39 percent² of the population lives below the poverty line whereas 16 percent do in Blue Earth County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Statistics from other Minnesota counties affected by the 1862 war show even starker contrasts. Brown County, Minnesota, for instance, whose seat is New Ulm, reports 98 percent white and 0.2 percent native populations. 8.8 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and the per capita income is \$26,576 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

This chapter's focus is on how and why modern white Minnesotans try to teach each other to be "balanced" and "objective" about a history that solidified this unequal social structure. Before giving examples from the local press, history, and the J-term, I wish to say that in interviews and focus-group discussions, J-term instructors and students readily dismantled this "zero-point" ideology when asked to comment on it directly. To Dr. Lenz's credit, when asked about perspectives and balance, she said, "I come back to thinking about the field that I've taught for years. No one asks that Holocaust studies courses be balanced and teach Hitler's perspective" (Interview, 01-12-2012). When asked about balance, Mr. Harwell remarked, "that whole fair and balanced thing is kind of a joke in that you have to be able to show multiple sides, but if something's wrong, it's still wrong. Like it's not imbalanced if something is unfair. You know, you can be balanced in showing how something is unfair. That doesn't make it imbalanced" (Interview, 01-20-2012). Such critical comments about balance made behind-the-scenes make it all the more puzzling that Kenneth Carley's history could have stood for "a fairly balanced perspective, which is what we're looking for" in the

² Other sources consulted list Buffalo County's poverty level at 49 percent ("List of lowest-income counties," 2015).

classroom, or that students could have spoken about Harwell urging them to balance their exhibit panels away from critiques of settler society. Jennifer, for example, was advised against making settlers look too violent:

I felt a lot of pressure from John to give the other side, because the rest of it is very one sided. And so- I mean ((sigh)) in- in wanting to have it be balanced, I think that was what was, you know, wanting to happen, but I feel like if I was gonna go all the way we should have just gone all the way and just- and just gone all the way and just done it. (Interview, 04-26-2012)

Here “the other side” stood for whites “trying to do good work” in 1862, as Jennifer recalled Harwell saying. Going “all the way” meant producing an exhibit that would have been appropriately critical in Jennifer’s view and advocated for social justice. In admittedly being almost haunted by such moments in my data collection, especially this one where Jennifer erases all sense of agency when describing the demand for balance — “in wanting to have it be balanced, I think that was what was, you know, wanting to happen” — I’ve grown convinced that something more is going on than simply trying to appease settler descendants or account for the uncommon story of so many whites being killed locally in 1862. A different and highly naturalized sense of “justice” seems to be afoot here, one that runs counter to the kind of justice Waziyatawin and other critical educators speak of today when encouraging people to identify the social and cultural roots of inequality and to work against oppressive social practices.

That’s what these next two chapters on the white public pedagogy are about, trying to get at the normative sense of justice that regional public educators seemed to

operate under in 2012 and to account for why no whites, including highly educated ones, attempted to address the white conceit of objectivity in public as Gwen Westerman did in her lecture. This first part on the public pedagogy, Chapter Five, seeks to historicize the claim that a source like Kenneth Carley holds “a fairly balanced perspective, which is what we’re looking for,” understanding *balance* as being equally respectful to all parties concerned and supporting that equal respect with *objective* (unprejudiced) consideration of the facts. First, how is this claim tied to a sense of balance operating among “us” outside the classroom when it comes to the U.S.-Dakota War? What is the history of this sense of balance regionally? Then, how does Carley’s history and his presentation of the facts serve to reproduce this sense of balance? Finally, to what degrees did various J-termers attain the sought-after Carleyan balance? Ultimately, this two-chapter journey through equal respect and the widespread suspension of moral judgment among whites in 2012 offers regional whitestream perspective on Waziyatawin’s question *What does justice look like?* and Sandee Geshick’s question about why racial discrimination is still going on regionally to the detriment of Dakota people.

The Public Call for Being Balanced and Fact-Based

On January 10, 2012, the Mankato *Free Press* delivered an editorial in anticipation of commemorative events planned for the sesquicentennial year. Calling “the lack of knowledge” about the war “remarkable,” the piece prescribed an approach to study for the community:

While the plight of native Americans has clearly been horrific, there were also deep scars for the descendants of the hundreds of settlers who were killed in 1862.

There is no great benefit in trying to weigh who was more at fault during the times that led up to and during the conflict. There is blame enough to spread around and plenty of stories of heroic and compassionate actions on both sides.

But as the time period is more closely studied this year, there is also no benefit in sugar coating or romanticizing the actions of either side. Learning and discussing the facts, as best they can be found and as fairly as possible, should be the goal in this sesquicentennial year. (“Dakota-U.S. War history,” 2012.)

This pronouncement came in direct response to a public event hosted by the Blue Earth County Historical Society the previous week in which, according to the editor, “Dakota Indians told of the difficult road they have had in regaining their heritage.” The speakers reportedly traced their struggles back to aggressive assimilation efforts begun by whites in the nineteenth century that resulted in the prohibition of Dakota language use and spiritual practices far into the twentieth century.³ The editor’s advice told readers, who presumably had not had *their* language or religious practices banned in the past, that when acquiring such knowledge in the coming year, they should keep in mind settler

³ For original coverage of the event, see Fischenich, January 8, 2012. The editorial column I analyze was an early installment in the newspaper’s year-long critique of the Blue Earth County Historical Society after deciding not to open its collection to public view during the sesquicentennial and instead to seek counsel from Dakota elders in planning events focusing on Dakota history and culture. One letter-to-the-editor cited in my Introduction, “A blond scalp is worth remembering also,” suggested one reason that this was a wise choice; the writer recalled a visit to the historical society in the 1960s when a curator nonchalantly pulled a scalp out of a drawer and tossed it to him. For people in the know about the history of the Society’s holdings (“Of days gone by,” 1902), pleas to open the collection sounded chilling — “I want the museum of my youth back for my children and grandchildren” (Rowher, 2012).

descendants and avoid weighing the historical trauma of “both sides” on the scales of justice. In following *their* task of being fair-minded citizens, readers should assume a prior position of balance and be ready to maintain it no matter what the hard-to-find facts might teach them.

Why should the implied reader of this column even bother learning about the U.S.-Dakota War? Because “you owe it to yourself to learn more about this tragic period of our local history.”

This subtle switch to the first-person plural by an editor addressing a community reporting a 0.3% American Indian population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015) suggests that specific assumptions are in play about “our” civic identity and its ways of knowing. The reader is racially unmarked in contrast to the “Dakota Indians” who spoke, and most likely imagined as white given the town’s 90% white population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015); but the reader is also literally “unmarked” in relation to the descendants of settlers, that is, unscarred by trauma. Indeed, the implied reader seems to stand in a kind of historical neutral zone between sides exactly like Lori Sturdevant’s imagined public commemorator in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*. Both configurations look something like this — Dakota descendants / the unmarked citizen / white war descendents.

This piece gives another example of how whites in southern Minnesota, both civically imagined whites and real ones, are strongly discouraged from pursuing questions of justice on the U.S.-Dakota War. “Justice” in the sense of distributing rewards and punishments fairly where wrongs have been committed or where controversy exists is not in play according to this formulation. That would involve

engaging ethics, moral discernment, and setting people's trauma on the scales to sort out a situation of injustice. But here, a public sense of justice already seems to exist with the unmarked citizen and his or her ability to maintain balanced fairness, however threatened that sense of fairness may be by messages brought to public forums by Dakota people. With this observation, however, come considerations of how the *Free Press*'s version is different from the *Star Tribune*'s. The *Free Press* evokes the deaths of white settlers in particular and the past scars of their descendants in an effort to counterbalance Dakota trauma. Scales *are* being used here, but in a competitive, binary way to restore a sense of equal validity and respect for "both sides." There is specific historical violence in this appeal unlike the picture presented by Lori Sturdevant. The Mankato appeal directly says that the specter of violence committed against whites should be enough to recruit citizens to fair-mindedness about whites' oppression of the Dakota people. It almost seems that if the slain ancestors of fellow whites are not kept in mind, something vital to the social fabric — the common sense of justice — could unravel. Rather than being similar to Lori Sturdevant's account of the political landscape on the U.S.-Dakota War, this piece seems more aligned with the socially symbolic act performed by the angry professor at the History conference in Mankato the previous fall. It makes a direct appeal to settler genealogy and the *white terror* (Mills, 1997, p. 76) experienced in 1862 in order to persuade toward "objective" (unprejudiced *and* fact-based) education, an education both taught and learned from the privileged or "unmarked" view.

The White Terror and its Relation to Suspending Judgment

In his article “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom” (2009), Walter D. Mignolo provides a history of “zero-point” epistemology — the rise of the objective, detached white observer. As European capitalism and colonialism developed from the 16th through the 18th centuries, according to Mignolo, theologians and eventually secular philosophers and scientists asserted the power to classify the rest of the world and its peoples, the purpose being both to enable and justify economic expansion and exploitation. Non-whites had little say in the empowered observer’s splitting of the world into European *humanitas* and non-European *anthropos* (p. 161), nor did they always have the means to effectively resist the classificatory methods used to dehumanize them and render their homelands *terra nullus*.

This history was in no way lost on J-term students. In his contribution to the lecture series, Glenn Wasicuna went into the history of names in order to contextualize “the colonial wound” (Mignolo, 2009, p. 161) — what Wasicuna called his people’s “brutal history:”

Somebody said, “You people are Sioux.” And we said, “OK. We’re Sioux.” A little later on somebody else said, “No, you guys are Dakota,” and again we said, “OK. We’re Dakota.” [...] We overlooked who we were told we are by the creator. The creator said we are *ikce wicašta*. *Ikce wicašta* in Dakota means “common man.” (Lecture, 01-05-2012)

Building on this, Sheldon Wolfchild visited the classroom and distributed readings on the Doctrine of Christian Discovery, an early iteration of the white colonial hegemony

Mignolo describes. Wolfchild explained that the Doctrine originated in a fifteenth-century papal bull and eventually found its way into U.S. policy, upheld by the Supreme Court in its 1823 *Johnson vs. M'Intosh* decision (Fieldnotes, 01-16-2012). The reading went further to say that the Doctrine “was essentially a racist philosophy that gave white Christian Europeans the green light to go forth and claim the lands and resources of non-Christian peoples and kill or enslave them — if other Christian Europeans had not already done so” (Toensing, 2009, pp. 1-2). Following Santiago Castro-Gómez’s work, Walter Mignolo explains how the idea of “the detached observer, a neutral seeker of truth and objectivity” (2009, p. 162)⁴ spread with colonial expansion, and of how notions of universals became naturalized for whites, successfully promoting a sense of socially abstracted knowledge and truth to the point where it continues to dominate Western methods of teaching and research (Mignolo, 2009, p. 160).

Histories like the U.S.-Dakota War show, however, that white conquest and the proliferation of white zero-point ways of knowing did not always go uncontested, nor do they today. As Charles Mills points out in *The Racial Contract* (1997), violent setbacks to white colonization have historically sent *ontological shudders* through the entire colonial social system, disrupting whites’ sense of themselves as superior beings entitled to rule over racialized others (pp. 85-86). From the Haitian Revolution to later rebellions in India

⁴ My argument will continually seek to identify this colonial figure in Minnesota’s provider of perspectives. Castro-Gómez defines this figure as “the imaginary according to which an observer of the social world can situate herself in a neutral observation platform that, in turn, cannot be observed from any point. Our hypothetical observer would be in a position to adopt a sovereign view of the world, whose power would lie precisely in being nonobservable and nonrepresentable. The inhabitants of the zero point (enlightened philosophers and scientists) are convinced that they can acquire a point of view toward which it is impossible to have a point of view” (qtd. in Ciccarriello-Maher, 2011, p. 41n8).

(1857) and Jamaica (1865) whose details sometimes bear striking resemblances to Minnesota's war of 1862, large-scale acts of resistance readily invoke what Mills calls *the white terror*, inciting "massively disproportionate retaliatory violence" in the collective effort to ensure that "the foundations of the moral and political universe" prevail for whites (p. 86).

Regionally, the links between disruptive attacks on whites by people they racialized, the resulting sense of social shock, and the need to restore the white moral order in retaliatory ways all converged soon after the fighting commenced in 1862. As Commissioner of Indian Affairs, William Dole, explained to the President on November 9, 1862, "No people were ever more justly exasperated than those of Minnesota; nor did circumstances ever more nearly justify retaliatory and vindictive measures" ("Sioux War," December 13, 1862).⁵ Scenes described from the Dakota Territory in the 1860s in Chapter One give evidence of the *scale* of vindictive measures carried out in the effort to restore what whites deemed "just." Focusing in on the local context affecting the J-term, the Mankato hanging formed part of this disproportionate retaliation as well, not for the number of Dakota people killed but for the symbolic import it bore for the region. I will explain a bit about its background here to build context for the role the white terror plays in shaping the common sense of justice that drives today's balanced public pedagogy.

As covered in Chapter Four, nearly 400 Dakota men were put on trial in the immediate aftermath of 1862's regional battles. The trials began at "Camp Release," where white captives were turned over to the military near present-day Montevideo,

⁵ The cited source misquotes Dole — "ever more justly retaliatory measures." I have verified the quote in Dole's letter printed in *The St. Paul Press* on December 7, 1862.

Minnesota. The trials then moved to the Lower Sioux Agency near Morton, about a 70-mile drive from Mankato today. Lincoln's intervention into the planned hanging of the 303 condemned men inflamed an exterminationist hysteria among newspaper editors, politicians, and the public that went on for weeks. Military moved the prisoners to a concentration camp in Mankato and then into a prison. By early December, civilian mobs were trying to take matters into their own hands (Bessler, 2003, p. 54). Their pent-up demand for vengeance would have to wait until December 26, as key military figures observed code and prohibited wholesale slaughter.

Eventually, Lincoln pardoned 265. The ages of the remaining 38 ranged from 16-70 ("Blood curdling scene," 1903). One of the youngest, the son of a French trapper raised by Dakotas, "protested to the last" as he was hooded and noosed, a "white" lad whom Dakotas claimed was condemned on the basis of his dark complexion ("Darrow, Pershing visitors," 1927). When the scaffold floor dropped, a moment of stunned silence gave way to an exultant cheer from a crowd of nearly four thousand.⁶ In the meantime, one of the nooses failed, sending a man to the ground with a broken neck. He was taken back onto the gallows and hanged a second time while others struggled in their nooses. Despite dying "hard" ("Hanging vividly pictured," 1934), some of the victims managed to hold onto each other's hands and clothing in what John Bessler has described as "a final show of solidarity" (2003, p. 61).

After approximately half an hour, military men cut the corpses down and transported them by wagon to the riverbank nearby for burial. Somewhere between the

⁶ Mankato's population was approximately 400 at the time.

gallows and interment, people stripped the bodies of their clothing and possessions — “So great was the desire for relics that crucifixes, wampum and ornaments were taken from the bodies before burial; others took locks of hair and a few cut off pieces of clothing” (“Execution of 38 Sioux,” 1896). By the river, they were dropped into a single grave like so many “sacks of wheat” (“Indians play cards,” 1924) with “only enough dirt thrown over them to say they were covered” (“Forty years ago,” 1903). Local lore tells of regional doctors like William Mayo descending after dark to take bodies for anatomical study, but one eyewitness nuanced this story — “As soon as night drew her sable curtain over the land, not only the physicians, but everyone seemed to catch the spirit of body snatching. There was money in it for the boys” (“Forty years ago,” 1903). Trafficking in bodies between soldiers and citizens was so brisk that “not one Indian body remained the following morning in the shallow trench in which they were interred” (“Darrow, Pershing visitors,” 1927). Together, the racist mob mentality and the exploitative acts committed against the 38 contribute more to the picture of a mass lynching than they do a formal act of state-sanctioned capital punishment.⁷

Awareness of the unsavory nature of the proceedings was immediate. Judge Lorin Cray, a prominent Mankato lawyer and businessman who had served among the military

⁷ Janet Dean (2005, p. 106) writes “we must recognize the execution of the thirty-eight Dakota men as a mass lynching” because of its reliance on rape rhetoric, linking it to dominant discourses justifying (to the white mind) lynchings in the South. In her study of the military tribunal proceedings, Carol Chomsky (1990) writes, “It has become a commonplace observation that the United-States-Dakota war trials were unfair” (p. 46). Her work only adds to this assessment, unsubstantiated charges of rape being a key theme throughout her study (pp. 22-33). Understanding of the hanging as something close to a lynching finds expression in Bessler (2003) and in public letters printed in local newspapers (Finch, 1971).

companies that day recalled his commanding officer telling the men to turn their backs to the scaffold just before the rope was cut. They refused for “the temptation was too great” (“Located site of hanging,” 1911). Despite uncomfortable knowledge that a large-scale atrocity had occurred, one that many witnesses said they hoped never to have see the likes of again, whites proceeded in the following decades to use the hanging to assure themselves of their supremacy on various identity fronts beginning with justice but also including notions of moral order, religion, racial prestige, epistemology. In 1902, a Mankato clergyman delivered an address on Old Settler’s Day, telling the crowd, “Though many incidents of that occasion reflect no honor on those connected with them, and will be sorely regretted by the next generation if not by us, yet it was a judgment of righteousness, however imperfectly administered.” That some Dakota had converted to Christianity in Mankato at the time of the hanging led him to conclude, “Thus, the message of law and love has gone forth to other tribes until we all are influenced and redeemed. No greater social revolution has taken place among any people than among the Indians tribes of our country within the last fifty years” (Baker, et al., 1903, p. 129). Mankato historian Thomas Hughes wrote in a similar vein about the significance of 1862 locally — “Mankato is noted in Sioux history not so much as the place of the hanging as the place of a new life, where a nation was born anew in a day.” Of the Dakota prisoners, he wrote, “In their defeat by the whites the Indians seemed to regard their Gods as also defeated, and their old superstition overthrown [...] The white man’s civilization appealed to them as something worth having. It made him so superior to the Indian” (Hughes, 1909, p. 135).

Just as disproportionate retaliation was being carried out in the Dakota Territory, whites carried out disproportionate ideological work like this to compensate for local exterminationist practices that were bound to make them look bad. Even the gallows were held up as evidence of a great white achievement — “The execution was successful in all its details, and reflects credit on the ingenuity and engineering skill of Capt. Burt of Stillwater, who was intrusted [sic] with the construction of the deadly machine” (Minnesota Board, vol. 1, p. 748). As Linda Frost (1996) has written, nationally published engravings showing implausibly long lines of soldiers ordered into geometrically perfect squares around the gallows bore a message to the nation that Dakota homeland’s space had been effectively re-raced; Minnesota forces stood ready to put down any rebellious threat posed to state or national whiteness (p. 18). In all such images and narratives, one notes not just bold assertions of white supremacy, but desperate attempts to quell both the white terror and perceptions of a lack of justice that would imply bad public relations; in these narratives came assurances to the white body politic that its borders were secure and the social fabric had been restored.

From these early defensive forms of knowledge production, often crafted by people directly involved in the disproportionately vindictive restoration, one hears the first local calls for citizens to suspend judgment. Isaac Heard, for example, a Ramsey County prosecutor and one of the war’s earliest historians, played an instrumental role as recorder in the military commission that condemned the 303 Dakota men to death by hanging. It was his hand that noted convictions down (Chomsky, 1990, p. 27; Bachman, July 2012, p. 12), death sentences often based on hearsay and in the absence of legal

counsel for the accused (Bessler, 2003, p. 45; Chomsky, 1990, pp. 46-56). How could Heard have performed his work with confidence? As he explained,

The fact that they were *Indians*, intensely hating the whites, and possessed of the inclinations and revengeful impulses of *Indians*, and educated to the propriety of the indiscriminate butchery of their opponents, would raise the moral certainty that, as soon as the first murders were committed, all the young men were impelled by the sight of blood and plunder — by the contagion of example, and the hopes entertained by success — to become participants in the same class of acts. (Heard, 1864, p. 257, emphases Heard's)

In short, a given white moral certainty told that the Dakota were savages whose savagery would spread at the sight of blood and plunder. Because of this, justice had ultimately been served.

Not surprisingly, Heard's *History of the Sioux War* (1864) contains some of the most sensational scenes from the white terror the historiography has to offer, depictions including a teen-age girl being pinned to the ground and mercilessly raped in front of her dying mother, a fetus being cut out of a woman's womb, and young children being nailed alive to various doors and tables (pp. 69-71). Regionally, some whites still cling to these stories (Mueller, 2012; Glotzbach, 2012) despite professional historians' efforts to dispel them as overblown, ideological rather than factual, and rooted in racism, or ancestry-based double standards (Blegen, 1963, p. 278; Meyer, 1967, p. 120; Folwell, 1924, p. 213). Commenting on such stories in the 1920s, William Folwell, for example, identified white savagery as a greater threat to the social order than any red savagery of Heardean

rumor.⁸ Yet Heard and other early historians' propagation of red savagery and the white terror seems to somehow abide in white lore today *along with public pressure to suspend moral judgment*. As Heard writes:

Some have criticised the action of the court because of the great number of the condemned. Great also was the number of crimes of which they were accused.

Many of the presses in the East condemned the demands of the people of Minnesota for their execution as barbarous in the extreme. For their benefit let me cite a few instances from the history of their own ancestors under similar circumstances. See how the investigation and trial above detailed, and the refraining of the people to visit death summarily upon the criminals, or upon any one of them, compares with their conduct, and then judge. (p. 270)

In this I read a plea to the reasonable citizen not unlike what the *Free Press* offered in 2012. From a site of institutional power, the white producer of public knowledge appeals to the citizen's sense of fairness in arguing that he should suspend judgment and consult the facts. These facts center on acts of violence involving white ancestors, a body of knowledge sure to keep the citizen from applying moral judgment that could lead to blame. Yet in a seemingly straightforward reconstruction of oppressor / oppressed relations that refutes white victimhood (not a common move locally), Heard calls out Easterners for ruthless acts of extermination committed by their forebears, a kind of

⁸ Folwell points to the New York City draft riots of July, 1863, to say “more than twice as many murders were committed and much more property was destroyed by white savages than by Indians during the outbreak of 1862” (1924, p. 213). As in the U.S.-Dakota War, the number of dead in the riots was initially exaggerated, making Folwell's claim seem suspect, yet his point ultimately holds — “Among our own people, moreover, lynchings are still too numerous. The Dakota Indians were human beings....”

sideways acknowledgement of what was transpiring in the Dakota Territory at the time he was writing — “On the 5th of June, 1637, the soldiers of Connecticut forced their way into the Pequod fort, in the eastern part of the state, and commenced the work of destruction. The Indians fought bravely, but bows and arrows availed little against weapons of steel” (Heard, p. 271). Because Heard and the court and other authorities had shown restraint and not visited death summarily upon the Dakota, Minnesota’s brand of extermination was more civilized than theirs, or so the argument goes.⁹

Suspending Judgment Today: Perceptions of the White Terror

In both appeals to fair-mindedness made by Isaac Heard and the Mankato *Free Press*, fellow whites’ ancestors function as representational devices signifying violence, either having once received violence as victims or meted it out themselves as

⁹ As seen in Gary Clayton Anderson’s lecture, restraint has provided some historians evidence to argue that genocide did not occur in the 1860s and that military officials’ treatment of Dakota prisoners amounted to humanitarianism and heroism, saving them from the elements, starvation, and vigilante violence (Marz lecture, 01-24-2012; Carley, p. 70; Bachman, November 18, 2012). Carole Chomsky’s work (1990) gives cause for skepticism toward either of these views, however. For example, the military tribunal was ordered to “summarily try” and “pass judgement” on the prisoners (p. 23). At one point, Sibley intended to execute immediately anyone deemed guilty despite already doubting his authority to do so (p. 25). Gen. John Pope, expressed intent to “exterminate them all, if they furnish the least occasion for it” (p. 23). Lincoln’s intervention prevented the 303 from being hanged before any question arose as to whether vigilantes might take them themselves. Interestingly, the press seemed to have no end of epithets for the President prior to the final order to execute 38. Promising a “carnival of death,” a Masonic group from Winnebago City just south of Mankato latched onto Lincoln’s advice to Gov. Ramsey referenced by Sheldon Wolfchild at Anderson’s lecture — “Lodge No. 28, ‘Sioux Exterminators,’ has among many other excellent regulations this good bye-law: ‘*Necessity knows no law.*’ ‘Old Abe’ knows the motto! So do we” (“Sioux War,” December 13, 1862; emphasis Lodge No. 28). Such utterances suggest locals were well aware that Lincoln retained an Illinois frontiersman’s orientation toward Indians (Nichols, 1974, p. 14).

exterminationists. The more one learns about white land encroachment, exploitative economic practices, and widespread settler beliefs about native savagery in the run-up to the U.S.-Dakota War, the more the former claim to victimhood grows untenable.¹⁰ Despite common knowledge of settler society's civilized / savage binary, the deeply scarred white-settler descendant functions via genealogical ties to past savagery as a fear-based neutralizing agent for today's white citizen-scholar of the war.

The public pressure to suspend moral judgment during the sesquicentennial seems astounding looking back over the newspaper stories. Late in 2011, the Director of the Blue Earth County Historical Society summed up her institution's approach to the war by saying, "We're not going to get into who was right and who was wrong. We're trying to stay as neutral as we can" (Ojanpa, December 22, 2011). The Director of the Nicollet

¹⁰ Isaac Heard's account of the "spark" of the uprising provides an important account of the ordinary settler's role in producing "savagery" through day-to-day racist insults, a dynamic hinted at but rarely explored in modern histories (Anderson, 1984, pp. 264-265). Heard tells that on August 17 at Acton, four young Dakota men visited the homes of Robinson Jones and Howard Baker in succession, already quarreling amongst themselves as to whether they should kill whites to prove their mettle to fellow warriors. After being denied whiskey by Jones and arguing with him about a borrowed gun, the four proceeded to Baker's where they asked for water and tobacco. Jones had followed them there. "They acted perfectly friendly until Jones came over and began talking with them," Heard writes. "Jones again accused the Indian of having taken his gun to shoot deer, and having never returned it, and again the Indian denied it. Mrs. Baker asked Mrs. Jones if she had given them any whisky, and she said 'No, we don't keep whisky for such black devils as they.' The Indians appeared to understand what she was saying, for they became very savage in their appearance, and Mrs. Webster [a visitor] begged Mrs. Jones to desist. The Indians, irritated by Jones, had now determined on murder. Presently Jones traded Mr. Baker's double-barreled gun with one of the Indians for his, and the Indians proposed that they should go out and shoot at a mark for the purpose of having the white men discharge their guns. Jones accepted the banter, saying, 'that he wasn't afraid to shoot against any damned Redskin that ever lived,' and they went out and fired at the mark." Eventually, according to Heard, the Dakotas fired upon and killed Baker, Webster, Jones and his wife (pp. 53-55).

County Historical Society used virtually the same words as the anniversary of the fighting drew near, saying, “I hope what people get out of this is there are lots of different perspectives. That doesn't make someone right and someone else wrong — people just have differing perspectives about the same events” (Krohn, August 12b, 2012). Within a week, Brown County Historical Society spokesperson Darla Gebhard echoed these sentiments — “We are not looking at this from the perspective of who’s right and who’s wrong, but simply what happened here” (Ojanpa, August 19, 2012). In some cases, suspending moral judgment sounded politically expedient, as with Gebhard, a New Ulm Junior Pioneer¹¹ paraphrased elsewhere as saying the U.S.-Dakota War “still runs through the veins of many,” meaning settler descendants from New Ulm (Dyslin, August 22, 2012). Other times, the claim seemed merely cautious, as with Blue Earth County where the historical society planned to devote much time in 2012 to Dakota culture. Some of the criticism hurled at Blue Earth County that year sought to reinforce the suspension of judgment; one letter, for example, bore the title “Museums are preservers, not interpreters” (Rowher, 2012), words that seemed to reverberate from the Brown County Historical Society Director’s statement, “We can't interpret the war. It's just so complex” (Fischenich, January 28, 2012). Politically expedient or fearful, situated histories of violence were shaping the suspension of judgment on both the moral and interpretive

¹¹ As its website explains, the Junior Pioneers “were formally organized by the children and descendants of the original settlers on Sunday afternoon, February 25, 1912, in preparation for the 50th Anniversary of ‘Dakota Conflict of 1862’. Its stated purpose is to “keep green the memory of the early pioneers who settled New Ulm and the vicinity; and to preserve as much as possible the usage’s and customs, language and ideals of the early settlers...” See Junior Pioneers of New Ulm and Vicinity website, <http://jpofnu.blogspot.com/> Retrieved March 19, 2015.

fronts — New Ulm being a proud “defender” community versus Mankato carrying its stigma from the hanging. Regardless of individual orientations, Professor Melodie Andrews of Minnesota State University, Mankato spoke honestly about the violence implied when speaking publicly about the war; telling a reporter before delivering a lecture on Mankato’s old hanging monument, ““My interest is in historical memory, public memory. I’m not refighting the war. Not at all”” (Dyslin, March 31, 2012).

For J-terms students, what might have amounted to an ordinary town / gown political divide seemed enhanced by the six J-term lectures where hundreds of older and largely silent whites came to hear the experts speak. In focus group, Jennifer raised concern about older white audience members giving angry looks but otherwise not responding as they declined to take pamphlets promoting the upcoming social-justice conference on native history. The pamphlet featured a sketch by the artist David Behrens, *Founding Fathers*, showing Mount Rushmore with images of Indians looming above the presidents’ heads — Chief Joseph, Sitting Bill, Geronimo, and Red Cloud. Jennifer moved from describing audience members’ rejection of the pamphlets to talking about an implicit racism she sensed in their silences:

there is a lot of unrest going on in the people that are attending these lectures, and they’re not talking about it, and I think that’s part of the problem is that there’s all this like- and you know, it’s the Midwest- it’s the Minnesota nice kind of BS that we’re dealing with here, and it’s like, “I’m not gonna out myself cause I don’t wanna look like a racist” and it’s like, “Well you are. You’re still sitting there and you’re just quiet.” (Focus group, 01-20-2012)

At this point she referred back to what she had told me in an interview two days before about being “more wary to” and “stepping around” not just white people but “the children of white people.” Holly explained her reluctance to ask critical questions at the lectures for fear of offending “all of the white old people sitting around me” (Interview, 01-26-2012), suggesting that perceived racist silences among the older set were breeding critical silences among the younger set. For Steven, the silence of the crowds caused uncertainty and an assumption about political negativity toward the J-term exhibit-writing work — “We kind of had that view that like- we were never really sure about like the townies that showed up, maybe they were just the people who weren’t talking, but had like, um- some not-so-nice things to say” (Interview, 05-03-2012). The students had this view, yet white “townies” never did express resistance to the J-term work, at least in ways I was able to capture. There was just the lone e-mail sent to the instructors discussed in Chapter Two.

Sitting among the overflow crowd just before the start of the first lecture on January 4, I felt something similar to what Jennifer and Steven later told me. With my knowledge of sensational letters written to the *Free Press* and having witnessed the angry professor’s symbolic act at the History conference in Mankato, I couldn’t keep from profiling the crowd. I noted a man behind me wearing an authentic-looking Union soldier’s cap bearing crossed gold rifles. A man sitting next to me was telling his neighbor about the number of whites killed in the summer of 1862, saying, “in today’s numbers, it would be around 15,000 people or so” (Fieldnotes, 01-04-2012). Mankato’s Abraham Lincoln impersonator was easy to spot nearby for the press coverage he had received. In my notes, I also expressed surprise that hardly any college students seemed

to be in attendance besides the J-termers, an assessment students confirmed in the first focus-group discussion (01-06-2012). Trying to check myself for my own biases, I nevertheless went on to pigeonhole the majority as looking like “heritage people who carry with them an angry settler mentality” (Fieldnotes, 01-04-2012). To the audiences’ credit and against my expectations, not once did an audience member publicly voice the kind of vitriol that had gotten me involved as a researcher in the first place. Still, political savagery from local white descendants seemed to lurk for J-termers, including me. When I made the point interviewing Alan that the U.S.-Dakota war constitutes family history before History history for many people locally, his first reaction was “scary” (Interview, 04-27-2012).

Finding Carley’s Balanced Perspective: White Terror and The Facts

In a passage cited above, Isaac Heard gives simple and clear justification for conducting drumhead justice and extermination against the Dakota — “The fact that they were *Indians*...” etc. For Heard, there seems to be an assumption that the reader will understand what he is saying. Heard and other early historians of the war like Harriet McConkey, Charles Bryant, and Abel Murch all claim at various points to have the “facts” on Indians; Heard’s facts suggest that the Dakota naturally hated whites, that they raised their children to commit deeds of savagery, and that the sight of blood could spread their savagery like a “contagion.”

This last item about the sight of blood seems rather specific, yet it is a commonplace belief one encounters when reading the early histories. Bryant and Murch’s

A History of the Great Massacre by the Sioux Indians (1864), which endeavors to “state such facts as seemed connected with the massacre, in a connected form, and in the plainest possible manner” (p. *iii*), repeatedly depicts the Dakotas as bloodthirsty. At one point, the authors reproduce a public letter written by a U.S. district attorney on behalf of the citizens of St. Paul who were concerned that the Dakota prisoners might be released — “The Indian’s nature can no more be trusted than the wolf’s. Tame him, cultivate him, and strive to Christianize him as you will, and the sight of blood will, in an instant, call out the savage, wolfish, devilish instincts of the race” (p. 466).¹² In like manner, Harriet McConkey, a citizen of St. Paul, promises “truth” and “facts” in her volume (p. 18). One of her facts concerns the four young Dakotas who shot settlers at Acton — “the sight of blood infuriated their demon thirst” (p. 31).

The J-term students came across this thinking in Thomas Maltman’s novel *The Nightbirds* (2007) in a scene where Dakota adults urge village children to stone a captive blond boy to death:

One stone struck the boy in the head and dropped him to his knees. He knelt there and touched the wound on his forehead and when he took the hand away a squib of blood leaked down his cheek.

Blood changed the game. The children quit laughing. They found larger stones and hefted them. [...] And though the adults had to urge them on at the beginning, once blood was spilled, the children didn’t hesitate. Otter picked up a stone like all the rest.” (p. 288)

¹² Historian Mary Wingerd attributes these words to Henry Sibley (2010, p. 319).

I have no idea what historical basis Maltman has for spinning this particular yarn although McConkey, for example, relates a similar story of Dakotas allegedly mocking a boy as they torture him to death with sticks and knives, a story told to illustrate what McConkey believed to be in the Dakotas' "savage hearts" (p. 46). Stories like it exist, yet it should go without saying that savagery rationales expose the tales for the white-supremacist folklore that they are.

The J-term students did not say much about *The Nightbirds* or go into detail when discussing the book in interviews.¹³ Stephanie told me she found the book "traumatizing" and cited it as a key source that gave her a new-found appreciation for the settler experience, saying it helped "put things in perspective for me" (Interview, 01-24-2012). This was the impetus for her moving away from her previous judgment of settlers and their descendants which she looked back on as having been too harsh. Lori referred to *The Nightbirds* as playing an important role in the overall "balanced perspective" she took away from the course (Interview, 04-27-2012).

I draw attention to the trope of blood as a catalyst for "savagery" to emphasize how discrete racist beliefs prevailed as social facts for settlers at a time and place when most everyone felt the hunger for land and resources, needing rationale for dispossessing the Dakota people in short order. When the war's early historians emphasize the wealth that southern Minnesota lands promised, modern readers can believe them; as Isaac Heard writes, the extreme violence seen between the Dakota and whites did not occur in

¹³ The only day I missed of the j-term was January 16, a day devoted to discussion of Maltman's book. Students didn't talk about this scene in my informal follow-up questions to them when I returned.

northern Minnesota between whites and Anishinabe people because “much of their land is of such a nature as not to be speedily needed by the whites” (p. 342). Thousands upon thousands of whites were coming to Minnesota seeking their fortunes mid century. Accordingly, the Puritan’s red-devil stereotype for Indians was widespread by 1862 where agricultural resources were particularly rich. Of course, the spilling of the blood of whites only provided fuel for white racist ire. Notably, the red-devil stereotype was not so strong among the so-called sentimentalists back East who didn’t need it for local land grabs any longer. According to the Mankato editorial view at the time, “Their one-side philanthropy should not be permitted to stand in the way of the sacred right of the bereaved people of Minnesota to have justice meted out to the murderers of their parents, children, and kinsmen” (“Sioux War,” December 6, 1862).

In *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (2012), Barbara and Karen Fields make an analogy to witchcraft to explain how racism perpetuates itself as ideology, becoming fully naturalized as a set of common-sense beliefs shared even among the most educated living in the racist society. In the case of witchcraft, as Fields and Fields explain, even skeptics like Martin Luther could go on believing that “a person could steal milk by thinking of a cow and that his mother had contracted asthma via a neighbor’s evil eye” (p. 20). The beliefs keep finding support in “evidence” observed in the external world and believers keep chalking up reasons for events to unrelated signifiers like dark skin. Because of the ideology’s self-perpetuating logic, counterevidence gets overlooked or disregarded for what it actually is. Part of a captivity narrative reproduced in Harriet McConkey’s history of the U.S.-Dakota War, for

example, reads, “I had been in tight places before, among the Indians of the plains, but a kind of providence had always watched over me, and delivered me safely, and I now put my trust in that same Power, to deliver me from this most dangerous situation” (p. 58).

According to this belief system, no number of safe deliveries could ever work to overturn the conviction that Indians were anything other than dangerous “savages.” The thought of them being fellow human beings who had looked out for the narrator’s safety is not a consideration. While captivity narratives obviously had to work hard to make things look “dangerous” and “thrilling” for sales, it is nevertheless this kind of thinking that Heard appeals to with a line like, “The fact that they were *Indians*,....” It is this kind of thinking that accounts for even the skeptics of 1862 — people like Sarah Wakefield and Bishop Henry Whipple — calling the Indians savages in their writings while otherwise identifying and critiquing race-based double standards in the white-supremacist savagery ideology. Widespread naturalized racism thus compounds the dilemma the J-term students experienced when encouraged to consult the sources and come back with factual examples of settlers who were “doing good work” in 1862. Examples were hard to come by, and when they seemed to have been found, conflicting information could also be found to “complicate” the picture.

So what one finds in the early histories are not so much the “facts” about events that took place as settler folk beliefs about Indians promoted in order to justify exterminating the Dakota from Minnesota, with settler accounts and testimonies carefully selected and arranged to support those beliefs and intent. That said, these sources work very well for learning the facts about manifest destiny, and for this reason I encourage

citizen-scholars of the war to read them critically. Keeping Glenn Wasicuna's advice in mind — "Let's understand history. Let's look at it fearlessly. Not point any fingers. No guilt trips. Let's look at it and see what happened and understand" — I encourage citizen-scholars of the war to confront the sources and interpret the pornographic content in scenes of the white terror (Dean, 2005, p. 108). Mother Minnesota and her domestic space stood in need of swift masculine defense, as the early historians have it. To take it a step further, white womanhood needed protecting for fear that white women could give birth to non-white offspring and dilute the purity of the race (Mohanram, 2007, p. 34). Yet since 1862, tales of rape, womb slitting, and baby nailing have endured as bogeys to moral judgment and to developing critical consciousness of the local past.¹⁴

All this brings me to Kenneth Carley's balanced perspective.

¹⁴ In 1959, the Mankato *Free Press* mentioned a letter received suggesting changes be made to the controversial monument at the hanging site. The newspaper quickly printed an anonymous letter defending it — "who would not wish to seek revenge against a neighbor who comes calling, shakes hands with one's family, then unprovoked, shoots the daughter, rapes the women and girls, swings the infants by their heels against the wall, nails the older children to the cabin wall...." ("She wants marker displayed," 1959). In a way, this was Isaac Heard talking, minus his attention to racist insults used by settlers. Debate swirled around the monument on the 100th anniversary of the hanging when one letter stated — "It seems the women and children bore the brunt of the savagery. I suppose because they were so often caught alone and unprotected in the scattered homes of the settlers. Some women saw their husbands killed, then tomahawks sunk one after the other into the heads of their children while they were held screaming to watch. Some children were mutilated but still left alive and then nailed to fence posts to die" (Grams, 1962). These tales were retold in a public letter in 1971 when the marker was being removed — "Men, women and children slain, some scalped or dismembered, some babies nailed to a barn door" (Mann, 1971). Public letters referring to Dakota warriors as "rapists" continue (Forst, 1996; Gray, March 12, 2012; Mueller, 2012). Again, only two cases of rape were upheld by Lincoln's review. One wonders how many cases of rape would have been found committed in any random sampling of 400 men in 1862 or today. The rate "found" among those tried in 1862 was less than one percent.

Carley's *The Sioux Uprising of 1862* (1961), now published as *The Dakota War of 1862: Minnesota's Other Civil War* (1961/1976), continues to provide white students the "ABCs" of the war, as Jennifer put it in the wreath-passing discussion. In 1970, Carley helped resurrect Harriet McConkey's *Dakota War Whoop: or, Indian Massacres and War in Minnesota, or 1862-'3* (1863), an early history that had recently gone over 100 years without reissue. A few examples of McConkey's outlook have already been given in this section, but one of the purposes of her book is to extol the virtues of the white male heroes of the war, beginning with Henry Sibley in the frontispiece — "THAT THE LAUREL WREATH WHICH ENCIRCLES HIS BROW, MAY NOT FADE TILL EXCHANGED BY THE DIVINE HAND FOR A CROWN OF IMMORTAL GLORY, IS THE EARNEST PRAYER OF THE AUTHOR." Perhaps the most striking observation McConkey makes about the war is that the settlers of New Ulm, "a class of German infidels," deserved their fate because they practiced Catholicism and spent their Sabbaths drinking and reveling in a dance hall (pp. 81-82). In such ways, McConkey's text exudes Anglo-Saxonist white supremacy.¹⁵ Like the other early histories, her narrative is also steeped in the white terror of 1862 in ways designed to titillate:

Do you remember, reader, of the horrid "scare stories" of the nursery, about the Indians, and of the after lessons of our school books, and how the impression of terror mixed in the mind with the very name of Indian? You would have run then

¹⁵ McConkey's adulations of Sibley call to mind a remark Rhoda Gilman makes in her biography about popular perceptions of Minnesota's man on the spot that continued into the twentieth century — "There he stands as the benevolent embodiment of Anglo-American culture in the racially and ethnically diverse community around early Fort Snelling" (2004, p. 234).

at the sight of a passive Indian, and these impressions were now having their fruition of fear. You, no doubt, would have done the same. (pp. 76-77)

Despite all this and more, Carley provided the Foreword to the 1970 edition of *Dakota War Whoop*, calling it “a significant source of information on the uprising” and praising its comprehensive approach to events from the war’s beginning through the summer of 1863 (p. *iii*). Only after promoting the book this way does Carley begin to address its interpretive problems. As he notes, it fails to quote military reports verbatim and instead changes their language in ways that distort understanding (as if the reports weren’t already distorted); it erroneously attributes the uprising to meddling Confederate agents; and it fails to acknowledge white land encroachment and economic exploitation as causes of the war.¹⁶

But when noting the problem of McConkey’s portrayals of the white terror, Carley makes a significant interpretive move of his own. He writes, “McConkey told many atrocity stories in the interest, partly at least, of readership and sales. The Indians did get out of hand in their age-old way of fighting, but some of the atrocity tales are doubtless overdrawn” (p. *iii*). On the issue of the white terror, then, Carley is only willing to give a little in acknowledging the exaggerations of his ideological forebears; and while doing so, he must give a narrative wink to the reader suggesting that the Dakota were savages after all despite the economic intentions white historians shared in depicting them as such. But even this brief bigoted expression does not fully reveal the racism of

¹⁶ McConkey’s reading of the economics of the war, encapsulated by her phrase “the government-pampered Dakotas” (1863, p. 18), make the 1965 and 1970 re-issues of her book seem astounding in retrospect.

the interpretive move. Like with the angry professor's socially symbolic act at the History conference in Mankato, white savagery receives a pass as the comment is made — not just the genocidal violence carried out by whites in the Dakota Territory or in, say, the Mexican War before or the Philippines after, or in domestic lynchings that persisted into the twentieth century as noted by William Folwell, but in the war being conducted in Vietnam at the time of Carley's writing.

What Carley seems to be trying to handle in discussing "atrocities" are simply the culturally different ways that Dakotas waged war, ways presented in the white sources not only as "fiendish," "infernal," and "hellish," (Bryant and Murch, 1864, pp. 102, 272) but as "hideous" (Heard, 1864, p. 69) and "unearthly" (Bryant and Murch, 1864, p. 213) in ways causing "unpleasant sensation" (McConkey, 1863, p. 106; Heard, p. 93). These descriptions evoke at times Richard Fox's assessment of psychological debilitation among white troops, a race-based reaction. Similarly, white accounts of the hanging engage raced notions of taste, calling the dancing of the 38 on the scaffold "wild, gruesome, impressive" and their chanting "a weird, fantastic dirge;" this compared to the white spectators on December 26 who were said to have "behaved with perfect order and decorum" (Hughes, 1909, pp. 133-134). In such histories running right through Kenneth Carley, one gets the sense of Dakota resistance being not just "exotic" in the way a white anthropologist might traditionally describe an "age-old" custom among racialized people, but merely inappropriate. The pass then that white savagery receives in Carley involves a double standard that makes anything whites have done in warfare more civilized by way

of implicit, sensory-based contrasts, a key way race has always been constructed in America (Smith, 2006).

Not surprisingly, the “balanced perspective” today’s readers encounter in Carley is an undeniable settler’s perspective. In its current form, Carley’s history tells of Dakota warriors swooping down on unsuspecting and defenseless victims and of an ontological shudder of panic and terror rippling through white society (pp. 21-22). Anyone who comes to the aid of whites are deemed heroic, both whites and Indians in typical balanced fashion (pp. 15, 23). Although Carley can be counted as one of the historians working to dispel the atrocities and mutilations of Heardean myth (Carley, pp. 22, 42), his text nevertheless relies on such early historians as foundational sources and therefore cannot help but reproduce a highly gendered, implicitly sensationalized white terror. So Carley’s readers often encounter detailed and intimate stories of trauma suffered by white women and girls — Justina Krieger wounded, left for dead and to wander alone for thirteen days (p. 42); Julia Wright and Laura Duley forced by Indians to roam endless miles for weeks through the Dakota Territory before being ransomed over to whites in November (p. 24); Mattie Williams and Mary Schwandt taken prisoner and raped after seeing their would-be protectors murdered (p. 22), etc. Conversely, names and intimate details cannot be supplied for stories about the traumatic experiences of Dakota women and girls between 1862 and 1864 because the one-sided history of white knowledge production does not allow for it.

Such obvious imbalance continues to shape the white public pedagogy right down to the most local of its local iterations. As mentioned, the church-basement children’s

theater production ... *We Cannot Escape History* ..., for example, provided character representations of white women and girls from 1862 but no representations of Dakota women or girls. Still, the drama was promoted by the *Free Press* as “reasoned” and “objective,” its playwright quoted as offering “multiple perspectives” and not “arguing one side over the other” (Kent, 2012). The claim to “objectivity,” made again by the playwright immediately following its first performance, prevailed because the script had been “researched” (Kent, 2012). When I wrote the playwright to take issue with his claim to objectivity, he responded by saying, “It would have been a great help to me if more sources from Dakota women and children had been available. I eagerly anticipate the publication of the Dakota letters, along with many other historians. Hopefully, those will fill a gap in the historiography” (Personal correspondence, 05-25-2012). Despite acknowledging counterevidence, then, the hubris of the zero point — objective presentation of multiple perspectives — stands because the white sources were consulted. As in Corrine Marz’s crumbling into subjectivity after asserting the historian’s objectivity on the J-term stage, uncritical acknowledgement of a lack of objectivity was all over coverage of ... *We Cannot Escape History* The promotional article, for example, bore the telling title “Passion Play” (Kent, 2012).

Finally, Carley’s “balanced perspective” includes striking oversights concerning the oppressive socioeconomic relations behind the violence of 1862:

Settlers in Renville and Brown counties — the two areas where loss of life was greatest — were largely Germans. They had lived on friendly terms with the Dakota, whom they knew as wandering, usually hungry, beggars, and at first they

could not believe that the Indians were bent on anything as serious as murder. (p. 21)

While Carley accounts for causes of war, he periodically loses interest in questions like *how* German settlers could have come to know the Dakota as hungry beggars,¹⁷ betraying the blindspots of his own raced privilege as a historian. In depicting the Dakota in alignment with the settler view that they were simply “making trouble” (p. 22), he forgets what the sources have told him about settler *affluence* and how such affluence was built. Somewhat surprisingly, Carley’s sources, the early histories, do not commonly rely on the proverbial poor white farmer to tell the tale of tragedy. Heard, for example, writes that when the fighting broke out, “Poverty stared those who had been affluent in the face....” (p. 119). Similarly, Bryant and Murch write that “in one week from the morning of the 18th of August, all that scene of smiling beauty was an utter desolation, and, from a position of comfort and plenty, those thousands of flying fugitives were reduced, most of them, to utter want and beggary” (p. 273). On the one hand, early historians can be said to have overplayed white affluence, not just to set the stage for tragedy but to present a picture of people in dire need of government compensation for their losses, i.e.

“depredations” payments (Bryant and Murch, pp. 413-438; Heard, pp. 243-248). On the

¹⁷ Modern histories tell a very different story than Carley’s regarding Dakota-German relations (Anderson, 1984, pp. 240-243; Wingerd, 2010, p. 271). Recently, the TPT documentary *The Past Is Alive Within Us* (2013) emphasized the origins of New Ulm in 1854 — “An exploratory group from the German Land Company came upriver from Chicago to find a spot for settlement. They emerged where the Cottonwood River joins the Minnesota River and found an unoccupied Dakota village full of summer lodges. They moved in.” (27:00) Independent historian Carrie Zeman (2008, p. 139) cites local sources explaining this moment as a crucial one that not only dispossessed Dakota families but spread smallpox among them.

other hand, county histories are full of biographies of influential “old-settlers,” supporting the socioeconomic conditions Heard and Bryant and Murch describe. Not only were there wealthy people like the Wakefields and the Browns of 1862 prospering in direct relation and proportion to the poverty experienced by the Dakota people around them (Namias, p. 27; Lindeman and Nystuen, 1969), but there were also many affluent people in the region not directly implicated in the war who had hands in establishing oppressive white-Dakota socioeconomic relations.¹⁸ Even when narrating local history outside the context of the U.S.-Dakota War, regional whites have tended to say that “Minnesota was not settled by the lower class of people. It was settled by the best blood from the East” (Baker, et al., 1903, p. 12). In such comments, it is important to note what speakers mean by “settled.” In this example, uttered by a Yankee clergyman originally from Indiana who is lauded in a Mankato history book as “a splendid type of that noble heroic character, to whom our Western civilization is so largely indebted — the pioneer preacher” (Baker, et al., 1903, p. 294), “settled” means to have “founded” rather than simply to have immigrated to. Among what was founded by such men were not just towns, but a sense of racial prestige and the terms by which socioeconomic transactions

¹⁸ Hughes’ *History of Blue Earth County* (1909, pp. 31-35), for example, names well-to-do citizens from St. Paul who assessed the Mankato area prior to the 1851 Traverse des Sioux Treaty and proceeded to advertise it so that whites would pour in as soon as they “legally” could. Leading the way were entrepreneurs Henry Jackson and Parsons King Johnson. In gaining access to land for the new town, Hughes tell that Johnson, with his “Yankee wit,” bought off the Dakota leader *Ishtabkhaba* (Sleepy Eye) with the promise of a barrel of pork, recruiting help from a local “mixed-blood” trader to do so, a very typical sort of finagling that went on at the time. This particular one has been considered by past local historians as a contributing factor in the violence of 1862 (“Cites history of Mankato,” 1945).

would take place (Holmquist, 1981; Semmingsen, 1978).¹⁹ Herein lie the Anglo white-supremacist roots of oppressive relations that positioned recent white immigrants to America as second-class citizens, “mixed-blood” Indians as third-class citizens, and “full-blood” Indians as fourth-class citizens as reflected in the state’s first constitution discussed in the Introduction. While there undoubtedly were poor settler farmers caught up in violence they perhaps did not see coming or fully understand in 1862, there is ample evidence to support Waziyatawin’s account of the kind of “friendly terms” that Carley’s “balanced perspective” fails to depict:

I would suggest instead that these relationships of friendship are more comparable to that of the exploitative relationship between a master and slave in the old South. By 1862, our Dakota ancestors knew that we were viewed as an inferior form of humanity — that our weapons, language, spirituality, housing, dress, food, and every other conceivable aspect of our culture were seen as inferior. By 1862 when White settlers were plowing and farming our old lands and destroying our resources, our ancestors also knew there was a power imbalance. But more important, the Dakota people suffered constant trauma caused by invasion and

¹⁹ According to Ingrid Semmingsen in *Norway to America: A History of Migration* (1978), Norwegians, for example, “encountered Americans when they registered their claims at the land office and when they paid for their land. When they went to the nearest town to sell their wheat, they had to deal with Americans, who alone could furnish what they needed — from salt, sugar, and coffee to oxen, plows, and other implements. Most of those who had no means of their own had to seek out American employers to earn what they needed for their livelihood, especially before the passage of the Homestead Act in 1862 [...] Norwegians, like all other immigrants who knew no English and were ignorant of condition, had a sense of their own inferiority. Even in the Midwest — where society was simple and class lines were elastic, where authorities welcomed immigrants because the country needed manpower for its development — they were not accepted on equal footing. They had to take the heaviest jobs, which the natives refused to do” (pp. 86-87).

colonization — the very survival of the Dakota nation was at stake — and this trauma played a major role in the formation of Dakota-Wasicu friendships. (Wilson, 2006, p. 60)

A Balanced J-Term Perspective

As mentioned in Chapter Two, when commenting outside of class, J-termers were a bit unclear about Carley's bias. Jennifer took issue with him estimating white-settler deaths while seeming to be relatively uninterested in the question of Dakota deaths (Interview, 01-18-12). Lori said, "the Carley book that we read felt like it gave an accurate portrayal of things that took place, but some of the word choices and the going back and forth between some of the choices of words kind of gave me a funny feeling [...] It made me wonder what Carley's personal views were because I felt like in some capacity they seeped into what he was writing about" (Interview, 01-23-2012). Again, Lori's insights into the racially divisive museum-writing practices she had participated in show her to have had a strong inclination toward critical insight; yet, in a course whose syllabus listed study of "the 'linguistic turn' in history" as a primary goal, her comments especially regarding Carley's accuracy suggest that important opportunities were missed in teaching critical awareness of race, identity and their effect on language use and knowledge production.

I conducted my first interview with Dr. Lenz immediately following the only class session devoted to Carley's history. There, she related what she had been thinking of as a lack of settler perspective in the course as a whole — "John and I talked a lot about having a settler perspective and we never really succeeded. I think *The Nightbirds*

gives that to some extent but we don't formally have a speaker. But I think we're going to try to work Tom in to having a brief time to talk about his family's history because I think that's important" (Interview, 01-12-2012). At this point, Dr. Lenz proceeded to tell about the effect of reading Carley among the students:

and at least two students today said ((gasps)) "I didn't realize they killed women and children settlers. This is, you know, this is unsettling me." And so I do think it's important to acknowledge all of those perspectives, and I think the thing John did today with factions²⁰ was important and to some extent the captivity narrative²¹ will give some of that perspective as well. Um, but I come back to thinking about the field that I've taught for years. No one asks that Holocaust studies courses be balanced and teach Hitler's perspective. (Interview, 01-12-12)

This is as close as Dr. Lenz ever got in interviews to revealing what she knew about the going "perspectives" ideology, that the mantra of balance which teaches equal validity and respect for all perspectives betrays a dangerous line of thinking that can easily enable fascism. I read these comments as symptomatic of the contradictions involved in trying to enact the neutral pedagogy described in Chapters Two and Three, that Dr. Lenz understood well the oppressive politics at hand but engaged in them anyway to bring off a successful course.

Dr. Lenz's comments also reveal the extreme lengths she and Harwell went to in trying to appease a perceived demand for an oppressive settler perspective; as Dr. Lenz

²⁰ Harwell led discussion that day, at one point asking students to take stock of all factions involved in the war, both white and Dakota.

²¹ Sarah Wakefield's *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees* was on the reading list for the following week.

partly acknowledges, one simply cannot argue that the settler perspective was missing with names like Maltman and Wakefield on the syllabus, not to mention Carley and Anderson. As for speakers, Corrine Marz stood ready with copious details regarding the number of settlers killed and the locations of their graves today. She also made the case for their equal claim to historical trauma — “They were all the same. Everyone experiences the same.” Contextualizing settler “anger,” she pointed to the fact that Dakota aggression emptied western Minnesota of its white population in short order, leaving the region “abandoned . . . just as it had been before anyone had ever settled it” (Lecture, 01-24-2012).

Important in Dr. Lenz’s comments is her re-enactment of the *ontological shudder* that rippled through class that day and its “unsettling” of two students, noted with a gasp evoking the unsettled settlers of the past — “No people were ever more justly exasperated,” as Commissioner Dole wrote in 1862.

One of the unsettled was Nikki, a third-year Nursing major who did not agree to be interviewed until the course ended. On the first day of the J-term, Nikki had reported hoping “to learn why the U.S. wanted to put Native Americans on reservations instead of learning to coexist” (J-term “Pre-Test,” 01-03-2012). In April, she told me more about herself, that her grandmother was Ojibwe and part Cree and had taken her to powwows in Minnesota every year when she was growing up. In light of this background, she expressed something common among the students, that she enrolled in *Conflict and Remembrance* feeling strong sympathies toward the Dakota:

Rick: Do you feel like that shifted at all after?

Nikki: It did! When we read the book of the war of 1862, I-

Rick: The Carley book?

Nikki: Yes. I had no idea that- um- how many white settlers were killed, honestly. I thought it was basically just a massacre of Indian tribes. And so, when I was reading that book, I was going back and forth, back and forth, and then, like that next day we had the ceremony at the buffalo, and I was just- I had all these feelings cause I had no idea.

Rick: Okay. Okay. So Carley is maybe like most- the most memorable read for you because of that- that perspective?

Nikki: Yeah.

Rick: That perspective. Okay.

Nikki: And just that I mean they were killing women and children.

(Interview, 04-27-2012)

Nikki's "back and forth, back and forth" moment reading Carley describes exactly the kind of balancing act prescribed to the community by the *Free Press* early in 2012. As the local white-public pedagogy has it, citizens generally knowledgeable about the genocide of native-Americans must first consult the facts in sources like Carley before bringing such conclusions to bear on local history. In doing so, the reasonable citizen-scholar is bound to learn the "true" causes of the white terror of 1862—that Dakota warriors went on a rampage killing hundreds of innocent, defenseless, and largely unwitting settlers in brutal fashion, foremost women and children. Behind this educative prescription lies an assurance that the stories found in the traditional sources will provide all one needs to know about local justice, including the sense of justice behind current claims to equal suffering, the modern iteration of Isaac Heard's more civilized brand of extermination. The public charge to consult the facts seems like a safe bet, especially

when presented to contemporary whites disinclined to talk about race (Pollock, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2006). After all, it's unlikely that today's citizens, even well educated ones like Nikki, will have the interpretive tools needed to see what might be wrong with those sources and the racism, or ancestry-based double standards that shape their facts (Fields and Fields, 2012).

Finally, in referring to “the buffalo,” Nikki meant the hanging site in Mankato which includes a 64-ton limestone buffalo dedicated in nearby Reconciliation Park in 1997 (Figures 5.1-2).

Figure 5.1: Reconciliation Park

Figure 5.2: The Buffalo



Untitled Buffalo, Tom Miller (sculptor). Dedicated 1997. Author's photos

Recall from the Introduction another proclamation issued by the *Free Press* in 2012 — “The park, containing the buffalo statue across from the library, is to be a place where blame and judgment about the 1862 war can be set aside” (“Goal is to reconcile,” March 11, 2012). Early in the second week of January, Dr. Lenz encouraged students to organize a ceremony for this field trip which would be taken the day before discussing Carley. She

provided class time for students to plan together. Lori and Alan took the lead. Later that week, on a raw, blustery day with flurries driving sideways, we all walked around the Blue Earth County Library and Reconciliation Park grounds, reading the various markers and plaques. As I had done some research on the history of the local monuments, I shared what I knew about the space, told students where the gallows probably had stood and how the streets had been reconfigured in the 1970s, effectively obscuring things forever. At one point we stood in a semicircle near the buffalo. I read a two-page piece I had written describing what I understood to have transpired on December 26, 1862, at the end repeating what eyewitnesses translated the 38 as chanting from the scaffold, “I am here! I am here!” We held hands. Lori burned sage. Alan and Steven led a reading of the Lakota affirmation, *Mitakuye Oyasin* in English, *All My Relations*.²² Unknown then, Nikki was having her “back and forth, back and forth” experience. I think we all might have been doing something similar, each in our own way — playing Indian, seeking release from our contradictions (Deloria, 1998), feeling cold, sad, or guilty, embarrassed perhaps as we exercised our privilege, performing ambivalent American whiteness together.

²² Alan and Steven read from a version of the affirmation titled *Aho Mitakuye Oyasin* (Fieldnotes, 01-11-2012), which is not Dakota. I am uncertain of their source although examples are readily found on the internet. The affirmation was eventually printed under the slightly altered title *Mitakuye Oyasin* on Nikki’s panel, “The Dakota Way of Being,” originally defined on the syllabus as the “Dakota Culture (Pre-Contact)” panel.

Chapter Six***The White Public Pedagogy II:******Taking the Justice-As-Fairness View to History***

The proper role of a white curator is to facilitate the neutral presentation of Indian artists and their work, and to have no real opinion on the content. The proper role of white artists, well, they don't really have a role.

The code has been in effect for a couple of decades now, and to state things bluntly, it feels deader than disco.

— Paul Chaat Smith (2009, p. 73).

* * *

Lady Justice stands high over downtown Mankato, perched atop the old Blue Earth County courthouse building. She dangles her scales out over the citizenry, and those scales look balanced. When workers took her down for renovation in 1990, they counted eleven bullet holes in the dome underneath from shots fired since 1889 (“Blue Earth County’s ‘Lady,’” 1994).

Figure 6.1: Lady Justice

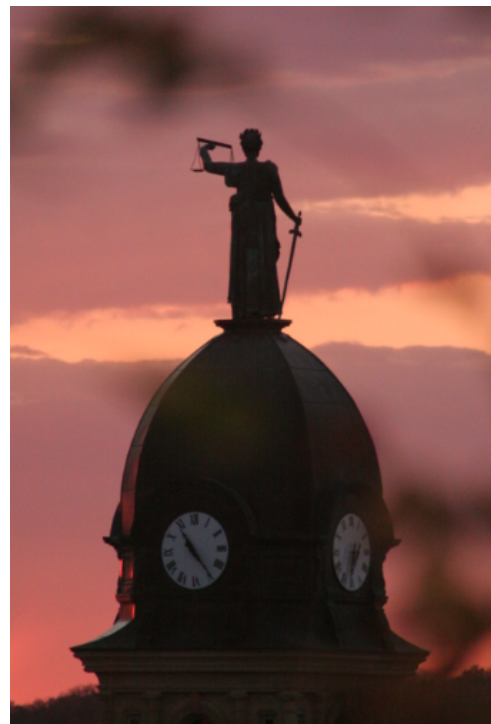


Photo: Jordan William Green.
Creative Commons.

Mankato's *Justicia* wears no blindfold, suggesting she sees differences that can lead to biased judgment even though she is not supposed to. Her right hand clutches the hilt of a sword. Once her scales blew away in a windstorm, leaving her only the sword for 64 years (Huggins, 1973).

This chapter continues to uncover the violence lurking just beneath the surface of the balanced (yet biased) white public pedagogy on the U.S.-Dakota War. First, I examine explicit use of the white terror as a neutralizing agent for educators who would attempt to take critical stances on the war in public. The example used to illustrate this dynamic involves journalistic enforcement of the hanging site as a interpretive-free zone over time. Looking carefully into the politics of a symbolic case enables me to contextualize this enforcement as part of a national public pedagogy that favors democratic thinking (equal validity and respect) over critical thinking (whose interests are being helped and harmed) whenever empowered white Americans come together to educate each other about their racially violent pasts. As I consider the national scope, I also return to local history to emphasize the situated aspects of neutralized public representation, especially at the hanging site, a place of uncommon violence and uncommon white neutrality since the war's semicentennial. From this analysis, the local *justice-as-fairness* view to history emerges (Rawls, 1993; Steele, 2005), providing more understanding of what whites mean when they evoke their own *balance*, *neutrality*, and *objectivity* on the war. Ultimately, this chapter hopes to arrive at regional whitestream perspective on Sandee Geshick's claim about racism today and Waziyatawin's question from 2008, *What Does Justice Look Like?*

On Being Neutral and Fair Locally

Since I moved to Mankato, the *Free Press* has covered the work of Stephen Miller, a local public-school teacher who periodically takes his fifth-grade students to Reconciliation Park to learn about the war and Dakota culture. Teaming up in years past with David Larsen from Lower Sioux Community,¹ Miller has publicly stated their joint purpose of making local history more meaningful for elementary students and of addressing the fact that there has been, according to the newspaper's paraphrasing of Miller, "little mention in the curriculum about the Dakota Conflict and its widespread impacts on southern Minnesota" (Kent, 2010). By having his students interact with Larsen and others concerning Dakota history, language, and social practices, Miller has used these learning experiences to promote messages of "acceptance, equality and co-existence" (Kent, 2010).

Across stories chronicling Miller's work, Larsen's role has sometimes involved teaching the fifth-graders specifically about the history the newspaper felt compelled to counterbalance with the editorial column analyzed in Chapter Five, namely, "the effort by Indians to regain their culture after a century of attempts to crush their language and history" (Krohn, May 16, 2012). Attempts by whom, the story does not say. A 2010 article reported that "Larsen told students how Native American children were once made to change their names because their teachers, of European heritage, couldn't pronounce them. He talked about the impact of words like 'Sioux' and 'squaw,' which were somewhat derogatory terms white settlers coined but have no meaning to Native

¹ Larsen is a former Assistant Director of American Indian Affairs at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

American people” (Kent, 2010). The phrase “somewhat derogatory” gives an idea of the care that can be taken to make the content palatable to today’s implied *Free Press* reader, a far cry from past coverage that could include Dakota commentary on “the psychological rape of the people” (Moos, 1986) when it comes to names and slurs.

At least twice in recent years, Miller’s work has been disparaged in violent letters to the editor by David J. Gray — once in the January, 2011 letter “Why is the white side in Conflict ignored?” discussed in the Introduction, and again in 2012’s “38 murderers don’t deserve memorial.” In the first letter written to denounce the coming publication of the Dakota prisoner-of-war letters, Gray conjured his great-great grandfather who fought to defend New Ulm in 1862; lamented the disappearance of the controversial old hanging monument; referred to the “murder, rape and thievery” allegedly carried out by the hanging victims; and proceeded to complain that “now grade-school children sit in front of a limestone bison to be indoctrinated as to how evil their predecessors were. How sweet.” In the second letter, Gray again lamented the disappearance of the old monument, called the hanging victims “murderers and rapists,” and complained that “Our young children needed to be indoctrinated with a particular one-sided point-of-view.” The purpose of this second letter was to argue against the monument proposed to the 38 — “If the city council, in their infinite PC wisdom, should approve this travesty of a memorial, let them also require a plaque listing the names of all 450-800 white victims to be placed along side it as a balanced reminder of why 38 Dakota were hanged in the first place.” Familiar themes run through these letters — balance functioning as a dominant discourse expressing a white-settler politics of resentment, critical pedagogy being

imagined as a form of anti-settler political indoctrination, and violence against white ancestors working as a neutralizing agent to critical reconciliation.²

In September 2012, the *Free Press* included Stephen Miller's pedagogy in a story encouraging citizens to get out and visit local historical sites related to 1862 — "To lend tangibility to U.S.-Dakota War history, SEE for YOURSELF" (Ojanpa, September 9, 2012). In this piece, the newspaper suggested various road trips for the historically unscarred implied motorist, pointing to Miller as an example of one who makes the war less abstract for people:

Miller said his goal is to enable his students to think critically about events of the past.

"When we teach history, we teach facts. All we can do is read them and then form your own opinion," he said.

"I try to plant the seed and see if it grows. There's no teaching; there's listening." (Ojanpa, September 9, 2012)

As publicly represented by the newspaper across time, then, Miller's teaching seemed to transform since 2010 from a combination of his own messages of peaceful co-existence with Larsen's critical pedagogy to an impossible approach of hoping to foster critical thinking while sticking strictly to the facts, refusing to teach, and not seeming to care about the outcome — "All we can do is read them and then form your own opinion."

² In a way, this and other terror-laced calls for balance made in anticipation of the new monument (LaBatte, February 10, March 23, March 31, 2012) prefigured Katherine Hughes's poem "Reconcile." Again, her piece ended with the line "Balanced by forgiveness," at best a more "appropriate" expression of the regional white-settler politics of resentment.

Presumably, students could form any opinions at all because those would remain, according to Corrine Marz's line of thinking, strictly *for them*, or "for YOURSELF" as this article's title indirectly suggests. Definitely not for others in any collective sense. Individual opinions derived from the facts and always sharply demarcated from the facts were sure to remain both individuated *and* equally valid. So why worry about them?

* * *

The balanced, neutral, and objective white public pedagogy taking shape in this study calls to mind white public pedagogy identified in other American contexts. In *Hiding from History: Politics and Public Imagination* (2005), for example, Meili Steele discusses how South Carolina legislators handled controversy in the late 1990s over whether the Confederate flag should still fly from the statehouse roof. Rather than take sides in public debate, engage moral education, and perhaps express opposition to the slave-owning past, legislators decided to put the question up for referendum and engage public democratic reasoning instead. Getting mired in individuals' interpretations of the past could have interfered with more pressing legislative business at hand, or so the argument went (Steele, p. 1). Together with public democratic reasoning and an official position of no position from the legislature came a corresponding educative approach to state history. According to Steele,

Education meant instruction in the basic skills and facts necessary for the global market along with an inculcation of respect for the law. The certainty of moral education could be divorced from historical ambiguity. Citizens did not need

cultural or historical orientation for deliberation about their public lives.

According to this way of thinking, there was no reason to get bogged down in the subjective self-understandings of individuals who could decide for themselves which interpretation of history to believe. If history were to go beyond facts, then this matter should be privatized — individuals could seek out their own interpretations, just as they could decide what novels to read or movies to watch.

(p. 1)

This type of “neutral” back-to-basics education has of course a long and ongoing history in the U.S. continually renewed since the post-1968 *conservative restoration* (Shor, 1986). The solution in South Carolina’s example was to bring the flag down from the statehouse roof, resituate it on the grounds, and erect an African-American memorial nearby (Steele, p. 2). Through this democratic process, legislators could be perceived as having acted fairly and provided space for the representation of equally valid perspectives. Arguably, Steele maintains that the example in South Carolina was not necessarily a “peculiar” one of trying to hide from a brutally racist history (Steele, p. 2), convenient as the process may have been for descendants of the oppressors. Rather, it was an example of citizens in a liberal democracy exercising constitutional ideals of “equal freedom and respect,” principles that “command a consensus unlike that of other values” in the public sphere (Steele, pp. 2-3). As these core ideals of the national identity tend to prevail whenever public institutions attempt to resolve competing socially situated interpretive claims, the effect is indeed to neutralize history, to hide from it, as Steele’s title suggests, keeping moral education distanced from public arenas like newspapers, classrooms, parks, etc.

Much of this explains the patterns of “fairness” I have tracked in the Mankato *Free Press*³ — polling readers about the form monuments should take in Reconciliation Park rather than acknowledging the justice of the new memorial (“Most prefer Dakota Conflict,” March 27, 2012); seeming to display “Dakota perspective” one day but following up with “settler perspective” soon after; and in the balanced middle where the power to produce public knowledge resides, appearing to take no position and prescribing no position to the community, even when “no position” is explicitly aligned with white property-owning interests — “the city park, owned and maintained by the city, is named Reconciliation Park for a reason. The park, containing the buffalo statue across the street from the library, is to be a place where judgment and blame about the 1862 war can be set aside” (“Goal is to reconcile,” 2012). One cannot help but note the historical function of such modern journalistic work. As Minnesota State University, Mankato, professor Charles Lewis writes regarding regional newspapers from the 1860s to today, “a free press is not really free. It serves to perpetuate rather than challenge those who dominate the status quo because media are not autonomous. The press is more of a guard dog for elements of the power structure rather than the mythical watchdog that helps to protect individuals from the power structure” (2011, p. 51). Most important here are the biased interests that both drive and find sustenance from “unbiased” coverage; how no position, be it promoted in the newspaper or classroom serves to support the historically colonial institution and the privileged positions within it; how democratic-sounding discourses

³ The *Free Press* took a similar position promoting public neutrality on the constitutional amendment proposed to ban gay marriage in 2012 (“City Council shouldn’t take sides” July 15, 2012).

provide political cover for undemocratic social practices. Bishop Tutu's dictum comes readily to mind when facing the journalistic zero point on local situations of injustice — the oppressor's side has been chosen.

Nowhere did such fair, balanced, and objective journalism become more evident during the sesquicentennial in Mankato than on December 26 when the arrival of the Dakota 38 + 2 Memorial Riders coincided with the new monument's dedication ceremony. That day's edition of the *Free Press* featured a front-page tribute to the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry for their fighting at Gettysburg in the summer of 1863 (Krohn, December 26, 2012a). The front page also included an article titled, "There was a mystique to the Minnesota men," promoting a new book about the First Minnesota authored by an "enthralled" Civil War re-enactor (Krohn, December 26, 2012b). Inside came an op-ed column by Bryce Stenzel, Mankato's Lincoln re-enactor and playwright who gave a defensive history of Mankato's old hanging monument, calling for its return since its mysterious disappearance from a storage site in the 1990s. Strangely, this piece failed to mention that a new monument was being dedicated that very day. To the left of Stenzel's column came an editorial acknowledging the importance of the day, but not without dropping a line shaped by the edition's settler-colonial frame — "The Dakota will come on their horses today and the whites maybe in their SUVs" ("We can build," December 26, 2012).

So as the new monument provided signs of overcoming the racism of yesteryear — a "hope that the lessons will come sooner and travel further than in the past" ("We can build," 2012) — settler conceits about white progress and its contrast to native tradition

would evidently abide. All of this “balanced” white identity work came in anticipation of the next day’s coverage of the new monument ceremony which was bound to include photographs of Indians on the streets downtown and critical comments made by them. The granting of equal validity and respect to the old-soldier identity on December 26 — unavoidably also the old Indian-killer identity — provided a key discursive site where local racism betrayed itself in 2012, making reactionary interpretive slips as it tried to promote multicultural education; evoking figures from the exterminationist past only to shelter them under an umbrella of patriotism; leveling the historically empowered and the historically dispossessed to equally competing interest groups.

* * *

In *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong* (2009), writer and curator Paul Chaat Smith speaks of the white position of no position in terms of a “code” he has witnessed working among fellow artists and curators:

The code strongly advises that Indian artists should be in a group show with other Indians. The code also advises that only Indians have authority to speak on Indian issues, and Indian issues should be about “land” or “identity” or “we are/have always been/ will always be here” and that Indians are “sacred” and so forth. The proper role of a white curator is to facilitate the neutral presentation of Indian artists and their work, and to have no real opinion on the content. The proper role of white artists, well, they don’t really have a role.

The code has been in effect for a couple of decades now, and to state things bluntly, it feels deader than disco. (p. 73)

Indeed, throughout the pedagogical situations analyzed so far in this study, sharply segregated roles have been in play with the J-term students only witnessing critical pedagogy from Dakota educators. As represented by the *Free Press*, the Miller-Larsen duo also appears to assign critical teaching to the Dakota educator while the white educator merely listens and sometimes espouses discourses associated with uncritical reconciliation. In light of the deadening white public pedagogy Paul Chaat Smith describes, and which the *Free Press* seems both to capture and shape with its representation of and resistance to Miller's work, Miller's claim of trying "to plant the seed and see if it grows" can be read as a kind of frustration. It seems to say *there can be no teaching from me on this subject, only listening to Dakota people. Hopefully this listening will plant the seed of critical consciousness among my white students because they need it, yet it is not my place to do the planting.* The white educator must not break the raced or ancestry-based political obligations his position implies. Judging from the *Free Press's* eagerness to print letters debasing Miller's work, even this harmless brand of objective pedagogy comes too close to anti-settler political indoctrination and merits symbolic counterbalancing acts rooted in the white terror.

Following the publication of these articles closely has provided answers to a question I posed in the Introduction as to why the newspaper would seem to take the Dakota prisoner-of-war letters seriously one day, subject them to scorn and ridicule later the same week, and then go on satisfied with an ensuing silence. As mentioned, "Why is the white side in Conflict ignored?" appeared five days after the *Free Press* gave its thumbs up to the translation project at North Dakota State University. Similarly, "38

murderers don't deserve memorial" appeared the day after the editorial column titled "The goal is to reconcile." In such moments of "fairness" it seems as if the scales of a highly situated style of justice are being thrust out over the heads of the citizenry — in one pan, a massacre of a Dakota village is taking place; in the other pan, a massacre of a settler township is taking place. For whites, the latter weighs heavy for the detailed, intimate, and sensationalized ways regional white communities have taught themselves about it since 1862. Still, both battles rage on as social abstractions in the white public pedagogy because the real cultural and historical contingencies that shaped both massacres cannot be addressed critically, in this case racism and its ties to land dispossession, extermination, and present ways of knowing, teaching, and learning about them. Trying to talk honestly and with courage about racism would dishonor white ancestors on the one hand, and disrupt "our" sense of civic equality as democratic Americans on the other. The result is an abiding silence among local white public educators. This is how the code that Paul Chaat Smith identifies manifests itself locally, in situated form.

White Neutrality at the Hanging Site: A History

White neutrality, silence, attempts to suspend moral judgment, attempts to dictate objective education to the community — all of this has a long tradition on the representational front in downtown Mankato. For many years, the site of the execution went with no marker of any kind. In the 1860s, the land where the hanging took place belonged to railroad interests; it eventually went over to oil interests, remaining private

property when commemorative activity began to emerge in earnest after the turn of the twentieth century. At that time, a 1902 newspaper article described the “exact spot” of the hanging in detail and told of potential donors interested in putting up a monument (“Willing to donate,” 1902). Still, years passed with no marker. When the fiftieth anniversary of the execution loomed in 1911, a bona fide committee formed with the objectives of “determining the exact location” of the hanging, as one article put it (“Call for meeting,” 1911) and “relocating the spot so that it can be suitably marked,” as did another (“Pipestone man,” 1911).⁴

Two Civil- and U.S.-Dakota War veterans convened the committee — General James Baker, founder of the *Mankato Free Press*, and Judge Lorin Cray, a local attorney with previous business ties to the site’s landowners (Hughes, 1909, p. 323; Baker et al., 1903, pp. 201-202). Cray and Baker began their work by making public calls only for soldier or citizen eyewitnesses to the hanging to come to Cray’s office and testify as to where they thought the gallows once stood and why (“Call for meeting,” 1911). Accordingly, newspaper articles chronicling the deliberations focused on what “old Indian fighters” had to say (“Located site of hanging,” 1911), a frame inviting circulation of white-supremacist lore — “He was a ‘dead Indian,’ but not desirable company” joked one eyewitness who told of a woman finding one of the 38 bodies beneath the floor of a house she had rented (“Located site of hanging,” 1911). Another who claimed to know the exact location of the central gallows pole proclaimed with vengeful gallows humor, “‘this is the place’ the redman had full swing” (“Neff and the Indian,” 1911). Despite this

⁴ This section relies on a history of the hanging monument by Andrews (2010) and an interpretive history by me, Lybeck (2015).

celebration of the aging exterminationist identity, the committee maintained a kind of objective air about its work, focusing on generating testimonies at the quasi-public hearing regarding where individuals thought the central gallows pole once stood and why. Triangulating stories and walking the ground together, the committee proceeded to claim a spatial absolute (“Located site of hanging,” 1911).

Significant among articles published about the committee’s work are traces of sociopolitical rivalry going on at the time. Reports on Cray and Baker’s committee began appearing a matter of months after Swedish-born Governor Adolph Eberhart enabled an anti-death penalty bill to pass on April, 22, 1911, the culmination of a decades-long abolition movement initiated and often led by Scandinavian-American politicians (Bessler, 2003, pp. 161-162). Not coincidentally, committee testimony included a tale about a Norwegian, “Ole,” who had allegedly accompanied a doctor to the burial site the night after the hanging to help him dig up a body. When Ole encountered an unearthed Indian leaning against a tree, the story goes, he grew frightened, “let out of him a whoop [...] and started on a dead run for town.” The path he supposedly took was used as evidence to help determine the site of the gallows (“Neff and the Indian,” 1911). By aligning Ole with the Indians through his “whoop,” and othering him further through his loss of mettle, this story let the public know what was at stake for this committee defined interchangeably in the papers as “old settler,” “old soldier,” “early citizen,” and “Indian fighter,” namely a white, colonial notion of the citizen as “someone who could put down a slave rebellion or participate in Indian wars” (Jacobson, 1998, p. 25). Suspect citizens according to this conception were foreign-born figures like Gov. Eberhart who in

December 1911 promised to meet with Dakota spokesmen concerning their efforts to reclaim Minnesota reservation lands confiscated by the state after their removal in 1863. According to reports, Eberhart vowed the following month to “do whatever he could to help them” (“Sioux Indians endeavor,” 1912).

The influx of Scandinavian, German, and other foreign-born immigrants to the region and the eventual rise of non-Yankee whites to positions of influence posed sociopolitical challenges to a local founder’s identity that defined itself in ethnic terms like those expressed by Gen. Baker at Mankato’s “Old Settler’s Day” in 1902 — “that lofty Anglo-Saxon spirit, which dares all things, accomplishes all things, [and] planted, in primeval solitudes, the rude foundations of this American colony” (Baker, et al., 1903, p. 123). Importantly, Gov. Eberhart had made Mankato his permanent place of residence and had read law in Judge Cray’s office prior to his admission to the bar in the 1890s (Hughes, 1909, pp. 390). Cray and Baker’s committee work can be understood then as reactionary insider activity undertaken with rising newcomers in mind, its object a corresponding political statement to a community whose orientations toward justice were changing.

Despite all the politics and racist identity work performed by the committee, when it came time to represent the hanging publicly, the resulting monument and inscription (Figure 6.2) seemed to make the plainest and most objective statement imaginable:

Figure 6.2: The Old Hanging Monument

Photo courtesy Minnesota Historical Society

In this one sees how white “neutrality” and “objectivity” can work to *politicize* public representation (Giroux, 2000, p. 140), that is, to hide or obscure the undeniable political agendas driving that representation.

HERE
WERE HANGED
38
SIOUX INDIANS
DEC. 26th 1862.

The monument’s “neutral” statement of historical fact did not prevent controversy from emerging over its thinly veiled politics, however. Defensive statements made by Cray and

others at the monument's dedication ceremony in 1912 told that public accusations had already been swirling about the monument being boastful as newspaper reports chronicling the committee's work had clearly shown it to be. "The marker was not so placed to flaunt before the public that we hanged the Indians," said Cray. "It was erected in an entirely different spirit. It was in the spirit of perpetuating the immediate history of this region, and permitting the handing down of history to the generations to come in a correct manner" ("Incidents recalling the Indian," 1912).

But coverage even of the dedication ceremony where Cray uttered these words reveals the committee's "spirit" to have been far from objective or solemn. As with all early commemorative events associated with the monument and hanging, speakers seized the opportunity to voice a situated brand of white-settler supremacy; *Mankato Daily Review* editor, C. E. Wise, who spoke at the event, framed his report the next day with a well-known fable — "The lives of over 1,000 people were sacrificed to satisfy the bloodthirsty appetites of the redskins, and the atrocities which they perpetrated have no parallel" ("Incidents recalling the Indian," 1912). In a story juxtaposed with a report on the proceedings, the *Mankato Free Press* heralded the time of the hanging as one when "the hardy frontiersman" transformed "unproductive wastes into reservoirs of the world's food supply but also changing it from a hatchery of savages into a citizen factory furnishing the nation the finest class of citizens the world has ever produced" ("Outbreak of the Indian War," 1912). Such statements dramatically illustrate the roots of local "neutral" and "objective" representation of the war and how the zero-point discourses of

public display are indeed not objective or neutral but socially situated and aligned with white institutional power.

In the decades that followed, even people who most likely knew nothing about the identity work conducted by Cray and Baker's committee spoke out against the monument's distasteful content, apparently for its bold inscription of the historically true and fact-based word HANGED. Historian Dr. William Folwell of the University of Minnesota, said, for example, "The execution of the Indians is not the sort of thing to which Americans erect monuments" ("Someone would remove," 1922). Renowned criminal lawyer Clarence Darrow commented as well on a visit to town — "I can't make myself believe that the people of a civilized community would want to commemorate such an atrocious crime" ("Marker at hanging site," 1937). Although such objections told that progressive views toward justice (capital punishment) had invited the questioning of old-settler conceits like what it meant to be civilized, the monument also provided occasion for speakers to reconstruct closely related old-settler values like white innocence and victimhood. Fred Johnson, brother of former Minnesota Governor John Johnson, called the raising of the marker a "deed of savagery," but went on to add, "History had proved that the settlers are the innocent victims of the treachery of the officers of the government in dealing with the Indians" ("Marker at hanging site," 1937). So even where elements of settler ideology seemed to unravel with changing sensibilities toward justice, others found discursive support in authoritative language that neutralized old settlers and newcomers alike, deflecting agency away from the privatizing, Indian-killing early citizen.

Across decades of critique, the monument provided occasion for speakers to construct defenses rooted in notions of objectivity, the hubris of the zero point. As Judge Cray had initially argued at the dedication ceremony, the marker stood “simply to record accurately an event in history” (“Indian monument,” December 27, 1912). In responding to public criticism raised somewhat ironically by a fellow veteran in the 1920s, Cray reiterated the epistemological defense — “it was not erected to boast of the execution, but to mark a historical spot” (“Someone would remove,” 1922). Writers responding to public suggestions for changing or removing the monument later in the century continually supported the monument through inherited zero-point ways of knowing — “Let’s hand history down to posterity, and hand it down truly” (Haack, 1962); “I agree that the monument is a factual reminder of the history of Minnesota” (Schmidt, 1962); “I do not think the monument casts any stigma upon the community. It is, first of all, just a statement of an historical fact” (Grams, 1962).

In the 1970s, believers in zero-point epistemology propagated a marker-versus-monument debate, the idea being that a “marker” simply marked a spot — fact — whereas a “monument” would provide commentary — opinion (Simonson, 1971; Berg, February 19, 1971); this despite headlines and reports from 1911-12 freely calling it a monument and even Cray sometimes referring to it as a monument in his defenses (“Letters pertaining to marker,” 1922). One zero-point defense made in the early 1970s attempted to keep separate what cannot be separated in the given case — “Some people can’t seem to distinguish between race prejudice or discrimination and simply acknowledge an event from the past” (Meyer, February 19, 1971). Although the

monument has been gone from public view since 1971 and missing altogether since the mid 1990s, appeals to its sacred epistemology recently underwent renewal on December 26, 2012, with Bryce Stenzel's op-ed piece, reconstructing Judge Cray's claim to correctness and framing it with an epigraphic quote from Abraham Lincoln — "History is not history unless it is the truth." Taking issue with "Native American activists and their white apologist allies" who would attempt to destroy any knowledge of Dakota "wrongdoing," this column authoritatively laid down the purpose of memorials as "providing a thought-provoking, objective explanation of the event being commemorated, based on truth" (Stenzel, December 26, 2012). *Whose truth? Objective for whom?* one wishes ask when confronting the zero point.

The Zero-Point Narrative and the Justice-as-Fairness View to History

While the old hanging monument's "objective explanation" provided much controversy for whites — some clearly seeing that "the wording is so stark, so raw, it doesn't tell the true story" (Bartkoske, 1971) — natives seemed to be in agreement about its offensive nature, although native reaction can be hard to come by in an overwhelmingly white-centric press. In 1971, Eddie Benton, Associate Director of the American Indian Movement at the time, made the most memorable critique of the monument ever uttered, saying it should read, "Here were hanged 38 innocent freedom fighters who died in the name of freedom" (Woutat, 1971, p. 13). From a seldom-heard indigenous perspective, Benton used the language of the marker to identify the racism that had long shaped local commemoration by way of highly naturalized ancestry-based

double standards (Fields and Fields, 2012), i.e. that since whites controlled “objective explanations” as the conquerors, those explanations would always present partial views of Dakota people, in the monument’s case making them look like natural criminals rather than the region’s first inhabitants whose lands whites had confiscated. Benton’s statement reverberated in the press (Berg, February 19, 1971). Yet as former Mankato City Councilman David Cummiskey once observed, “every Indian I’ve ever talked to is offended” by the monument (Close, 1971), suggesting that less prominent native people than Benton had been voicing opposition as well.

What was it about those “nine cryptic words” (Berg, February 19, 1971), that “too simple” of a narrative (Berg, 1975) that seemed to result in uniform disapproval rather than controversy among Indians? While straightforward answers lie close at hand for this question — the race-based double standard just mentioned; the fact that Dakotas find whites’ fascination with the hanging “morbid,” as Sandee Geshick told the J-term students (Fieldnotes, 01-19-2012) — I wish to argue something a bit more complex, that the “objective” monument narrative itself, the composition of those nine cryptic words themselves, amounted to an explicit expression of racial superiority easily identifiable for the historically dispossessed, but difficult to see for historically empowered whites whose interests had long been served by zero-point ways of knowing. By reading the monument narrative closely and historicizing elements of white colonial identity embedded in it, I hope to build context not only for my eventual reading of key narratives comprising the J-term museum exhibit, but also for understanding the *justice-as-fairness* (Rawls, 1993; Steele, 2005) view to history behind the exhibit and the broader white public pedagogy in

2012. As I have already suggested, this sense of justice is quite different than the one driving calls for social and restorative justice today, justice that would require whites to grapple with embarrassing questions about their democratic identities and those of their ancestors (Waziyatawin, 2008). Again, to do this would require straight talk about racism and other social contingencies like gender and Yankee social-class prestige that shaped events in 1862 and continue to shape white understandings of those events.⁵ The *justice-as-fairness* view, however, encourages whites to take up another sense of justice altogether, one that seeks to erase all talk of social contingencies. This sense of justice has a history that needs to be gone into to understand the conceit of white neutrality and balanced perspective providing I have been writing about, and to help explain why the kind of objective education Meili Steele describes and that I analyze in this northern context so easily maintains hegemony.

* * *

⁵ An example of how Yankee social-class identity can shape current understandings of 1862 came in the 2011 *Free Press* article where the director of the Blue Earth County Historical Society stated, “We’re not going to get into who was right and who was wrong. We’re trying to stay as neutral as we can” (Ojanpa, December 22, 2011). Published to promote the Society’s work for the coming sesquicentennial, the article explained that by focusing on Dakota culture, “the programs’ intent is not to proselytize but to educate people about a group’s culture and history in Blue Earth County, not unlike the programs the Society presents about Germans, Norwegians and other historical factions.” In this scenario where Dakota identity seems to level and find equal balance among white ethnic identities, Yankees do not come readily to mind as a “historical faction,” revealing by way of erasure the institution’s historically privileged, normative identity. All of the Society’s early twentieth-century founders were American born, some boasting genealogies to “Revolutionary stock” (Baker et al., 1903, pp. 188; “Historical Society,” October 11, 1901; Hughes, 1909, pp. 360-361, 437, 444-445, 547).

The 1911-12 monument inscription included a kind of narrative frame marking time and space. The bold proclamation at the top in the largest letters — HERE — noted the success of Cray and Baker’s committee work, that a spatial absolute had been located and marked through empirical method. The frame ended somewhat meekly at bottom in the smallest characters reserved for time, an understatement betraying perhaps awareness of this contradictory season for Christians to be hanging people. Within this frame came the core narrative:

WERE HANGED

38

SIOUX INDIANS

a passive construction that erased acting agents and thereby any personalized sense of responsibility for what happened. Nor did the narrative have anything to say as to *why* they were hanged or *how* (Andrews, 2010, p. 56). The number of executed at center commanded its own line, also in the largest of characters, telling visitors only that an extraordinary number were hanged, but working for the self-proclaimed Indian fighters of Cray’s committee as the number bagged. Beneath 38 came the name of the victims, SIOUX INDIANS, the term French voyageurs picked up from the Ojibwe who had applied it to the Dakota to mean “snakes” or “enemies,” a label variously adopted and contested by Dakotas and thus considered by some as symptomatic of the “psychological rape of the people” as Dr. Chris Mato Nunpa once noted (Moos, December 27, 1986). Occasioned by an extraordinary exertion of (in)justice in time and space, the core

narrative identified the 38 as ethnic others and natural enemies, perpetrators of unmentioned and presumably unmentionable crimes, those amorphous “outrages” for which the 393 prisoners were tried. The narrative meanwhile failed to identify any whites from 1862, leaving land speculators, traders, government agents, missionaries, old settlers, newcomer settlers, military men, and politicians all somewhere outside events.

It was through this obscuring of the white agents of frontier (in)justice that values central to the old-settler identity of Cray and Baker’s committee took shape. Beyond merely hiding responsibility for the rebellion and hanging, the core narrative’s passive construction sought to create a shared sense of neutrality between all whites past, present, and future; the four words and single number seemed to operate beyond the realm of interpretation, suspending judgment to make only a factual claim about the event. By expressing no identifiable point of view this way, the narrative established a kind of Rawlsian “original position” where intergenerational white identities and sociohistorical power differentials separating them could level to the free, equal, and rational norm long idealized in social-contractarian thought (Rawls, 1993, p. 23; Seth, 2010, pp. 87-95). From this normative un-position, with everything from personal histories to the nineteenth-century colonial apparatus put behind a “veil of ignorance” (Rawls, p. 24), a point of mutual trust and obligation could be established among whites. From there, interpretive bargaining about 1862 was to begin.

As a *public mediative transaction* then between Cray and Baker’s old-settler committee and white descendants and newcomers, the normativity established by the monument’s grammar appealed to common-sense notions of fairness, assuring whites at

least in theory that the hanging had been just, i.e. carried out by fellow rational beings. At the same time, the narrative mediating this transaction rested on a dialectic between whites (the unmarked) and Indians (the marked) established long before in contractarian philosophy, particularly that of John Locke who constructed the free, equal, and rational identity *against* the American Indian — man in “the state of nature” — a figure who allegedly lacked the reason required to transact with anonymity in the marketplace (Seth, p. 84). As Vanita Seth’s work shows, the promise of profitability in the new world where Locke held financial investments compelled the privileging of this socially abstracted, anonymously transacting individual (p. 92).⁶ In keeping with such divides separating those written into and out of “civilization’s” race-based social contract (Mills, p. 76), public reaction to the monument revealed dichotomous understandings over the decades as shown, with the historically advantaged often unable to see how the marker privileged and degraded white and native identities respectively, and the historically disempowered able to see it right away judging from the Mankato city councilman’s assessment.

⁶ While Locke’s vision of profitability in the new world may seem far removed from 1850s and 60s Minnesota, there is the history of southern Minnesota, like the colonies, being started as a capitalist venture designed by land speculators and other market investors. Local towns with ties to the U.S.-Dakota War comprise this history. As a regional independent historian has recently written of a small town not far from Mankato, “Wells, in northeastern Faribault County, began as the brainstorm of an enterprising capitalist who was born in Canada— Clark W. Thompson.” The story tells that Thompson, a resident of Illinois for a time, profited in the California gold rush and returned to the Midwest looking for ways to invest his money. He came to Minnesota in the 1850s where he was appointed superintendent of Indian Affairs by President Lincoln. It was Thompson who ordered the removal of Dakotas from Minnesota in 1863. He christened the small town with his wife’s maiden name, Wells, established industry there, and continues to be championed through the production of local white knowledge (Russ, 2015).

In revisiting defenses of the monument shown earlier, it is important to note how the inscription's neutral, agentless, and "objective" proclamation functioned as a representational device ensuring a sense of justice for people who came after Cray, those cited above from the 1960s who reproduced his epistemological defense. Indeed, the word "just" could even slip from the pen when the marker's factuality was evoked — "The monument stands to merely cite a historical incident of some interest and importance in the development of Minnesota and Mankato history, and just that" (Meyer, February 19, 1971). Here, one sees the lengths the plain and simple epistemic defense could go to, politicizing extermination through the same euphemism of "development" applied in coverage of the monument dedication ceremony back in 1912 ("Outbreak of the Indian war," 1912).⁷ But even for people vehemently opposed to past extermination, the monument's epistemology could mediate the sense of justice — "I personally look at this marker and think, 'My God; in the name of law and justice, we did this.' The marker or 'monument' is a reminder of an historical event; an unfortunate event, but removing it will not change the fact" (Simonsen, 1971). Even for people acknowledging the epistemic violence the monument once performed, evoking its narrative could reproduce the notion that justice had been served in 1862, as former *Free Press* editor Ken Berg demonstrated while opposing display of the 38 names at the hanging site — "It becomes a veneration, no less than the cruel "HERE WERE HUNG ..." slab was construed by surviving settlers. Warriors did not simply rebel against political and economic injustices. Warriors

⁷ "Not only this but the importance of this event and this war on the development of the country and the advancement of civilization has also been overlooked" ("Outbreak of the Indian war," 1912).

shot or massacred or mutilated hundreds of innocents. If not by *the* 38 horsemen, any of 209 others” (Berg, July 15, 1994; emphasis Berg’s). In such defenses, the monument was “permitting the handing down of history to the generations to come in a correct manner,” as Cray had put it in 1912, not in the sense of providing them with “facts” or understanding of “true” events; indeed, Berg botches the number of men acquitted rather badly in this particular defense. Rather, the correct manner of handing down history to future generations strictly entailed assuring them (from the original position) that justice had occurred with the drop of the gallows. Cray’s generation had acted fairly, as all “rational” or right-thinking whites should clearly see. The punctuation mark, the little period etched into granite at the end of those “nine cryptic words” of the monument’s narrative signified that this was all that was worth doing in the public sphere among anonymously transacting white citizens. Anything interpretive about the hanging was to remain “for you,” the descendant or newcomer in your private spheres.

The history of the monument dramatically illustrates how “objective” zero-point discourses (white epistemology) and the sense of justice as fairness (white ontology) can combine to form a single expression of racial superiority. Regarding the U.S.-Dakota War, this expression crystallized in events designed to celebrate “civilization’s” triumph over “savagery” in southern Minnesota, a time when a corresponding ideology of social-contract cooperation prevailed, gaining ground either by excluding, removing, and killing Indians, or killing the Indian to save the man. Operating inside the parameters of such cooperation meant to transact within the “moral wall” sometimes identified by U.S.-Dakota War historians (Namias, p. 39). My argument is that the wall abides with the

current white public pedagogy wherein whites continually assure each other of their heightened sense of accuracy, equality, fairness, and social abstraction, all commonly expressed through discourses like *balance*, *neutrality*, *objectivity*, etc. This is the whitestream perspective alluded to in the Introduction and at the beginning of this chapter, the perspective through which discriminatory practices toward historically racialized others finds continual support. The ontological aspects of this pedagogical perspective — *justice as fairness* (transacting as socially abstracted beings with a superior sense of freedom, equality, and reason) — *is* what justice looks like for historically privileged whites producing knowledge and teaching each other about Dakota people today.

* * *

In 1980, a U.S.-Dakota War memorial plaque was dedicated outside the Blue Earth County Library (Figure 6.3). It sought to contextualize the hanging and in doing so it emphasized the role that ancestry-based double standards or racism had played in inciting the violence in 1862, quoting the Dakota leader *Wambditanka* (Big Eagle) who said in 1894, “If the Indians had tried

Figure 6.3: Dakota (Sioux) Memorial



Erected 1980. Author’s photo.

to make the whites live like them, the whites would have resisted, and it was the same

way with the Indians.”⁸ Importantly, this plaque ended by clearly stating its objective — “to move forward together as one people striving for social change and equality through education and understanding.” As if by direct result, a series of plaques and monuments have gone up over the following decades in an expanding commemorative space that has incorporated Dakota ceremony (Andrews, 2010; Lybeck, 2015). Part of whites’ participation in moving forward together as one people has involved keeping a vigilant civic eye on commemorative space perceived as growing “Indianized” (Andrews, p. 57), Ken Berg’s diatribe against the 38 names being displayed in the 1990s giving a prime example of this kind of ideological surveillance (the 38 names did not go up in the 1990s).

Figure 6.4: Untitled Monument with Names of the 38



Dedicated 2012. Author’s photo.

⁸ *Wambditanka’s* reflections on the war can be read in Anderson and Woolworth’s *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* (1988).

While Reconciliation Park seems to provide evidence of progress toward equality and the inclusion of Indians into the white body politic — the Mankato success story recounted in the Introduction — the resounding rejection of the social-justice poem proposed for inscription onto the new monument in 2012 reminded that the moral wall endures and continues to find expression through common white perceptions of the appropriate and tasteful. Not only did I come across “hideous” as a characterization of the proposed monument in my data collection at St. Lucia College (Interview, 04-27-2012), but language used to support public rejection of the poem ran from its perceived “hostility” (Linehan, March 6, 2012) to the author of the replacement poem saying that she simply “didn’t like it” (Linehan, March 8, 2012). All such responses have their histories in race-based discourses traceable to the violence of 1862. In the social-justice poem’s stead came a resurrection of the historic original position for the hanging site — the socially abstracted speaker who cannot be observed and who exerts the power to shape perceptions of the reasonable and just for future generations:

Remember the innocent dead,
Both Dakota and white,
Victims of events they could not control.

Remember the guilty dead,
Both white and Dakota,
Whom reason abandoned.

The Students Dismantle “Balanced” Commemoration, But That Remains *for Them*

When the J-term class visited the hanging site on January 11, none of us knew that a monument would be going up within a year displaying the names of the 38. After seeing the existing monuments and plaques that seemed to say very little about what happened there in 1862, sentiments taken away included emptiness and disbelief. Steven said, “I think we all felt that immense frustration with that memorial in Mankato. I don’t know if just making an exhibit is enough for the knowledge that we’ve gained, you know” (Focus group, 01-13-2012). It was at that point that he spoke of his desire to write to local newspapers and urge the community to acknowledge the event more directly.

Jennifer spoke cautiously about change, however. On their field trip to the Lower Sioux Community, Dakota community members had addressed student questions e-mailed to them in advance. Sandee Geshick took on two at the same time — a) “Do you think the monuments at the Mankato hanging site are adequate? If not, what else should be there?” and b) “Do the Dakota have artistic representations of hanging like whites do?” (Fieldnotes, 01-19-2012). Geshick told the students she thought anything associated with the hanging was morbid, from the etchings and artwork produced in the 1800s to the monuments of more recent decades — “who in their right mind would want a picture of that, especially if their family members were killed there? I think it’s morbid. Do Jewish people have paintings from the Holocaust?” (Fieldnotes, 01-19-2012). Since no other Dakotas offered differing opinions, and no other views on representation at the hanging site were shared, Jennifer came away thinking the site was not that important for Dakota people:

I mean, I think that revising that monument and the commemoration there is important. Maybe it's not so much important to the Dakota but as a white person. It's important for the whites to see that, you know? And so, I don't want that to sound bad cause it's like, yeah it is for white people. To a certain extent, yeah it is. Like putting up a monument would be for white people to say, "This happened. This is part of your history," you know? And so in that regard it's kind of like we're gonna have to do some things that are really for white people to get them to the point that I think many of us are at. (Focus group, 01-20-2012)

For Jennifer, who strongly thought that "white people need to shut the hell up and sit there and listen" when participating in dialogues with Dakota people (Focus group, 01-20-2012), taking this bit of distance from Geshick sounded potentially "bad" in the sense that saying it might imply she thought she knew better than a Dakota person about something that deeply affected Dakota people. To try to make the case that representation at the hanging site provides an opportunity for whites to learn about the history of white supremacy and hopefully change from that learning risked saying something divergent from the perceived Dakota perspective and perhaps sounding racist.

This dynamic suggests the degree to which some students felt like representative whites in the Dakota-white dialogue forums established during the J-term (as some Dakota people must feel in such forums) — being wary of asking questions or expressing views that could be perceived as reflecting poorly on their race.⁹ Accordingly,

⁹ In explaining her silence when meeting with Dakota people, Jennifer explained, "I might have felt like I wanted to ask a question, but it's like, no. This is my time. I need to be quiet. And that's not like a guilt thing that I'm going through. That's my discourse. The discourse of my people is out there, okay? It's heard. I can be angry and pissed and

the students were very quiet whenever meeting with Dakotas. In the nearly two-hour “dialogue” at the Lower Sioux Community Center, only one student spoke and that was to help a Dakota speaker find a word she couldn’t quite think of at one particular moment (Fieldnotes, 01-19-2012). As mentioned, student questions had been collected and e-mailed by the instructors ahead of time. Harwell was particularly anxious about what the students might have said and reactions from the Dakota speakers had he and Dr. Lenz not managed student contributions in advance (Interview, 01-20-2012).¹⁰ In all of this, I find evidence of instructors, Dakota community members, and students co-constructing white silence and caution toward critical social-justice work.

say whatever I want. That is not the case for Dakota people and I think that until white people can be like, ‘Hey, you know, this would be appropriate for me to just be quiet and listen and- you know, instead of like, ‘No, no, no. I need it explained and I need this,’ you know. I don’t think we’re ever gonna get it until we can just shut up.’” Alan agreed, “Yeah, I think there’s something in (2.0) white consciousness that tells us we have to have a detailed explanation and answer for everything, and that people should give that to us readily, um (3.5) and I don’t think it’s fair” (Focus group, 01-20-2012). It was in this same conversation, however, where students expressed concern about older, local whites coming to the J-term lectures and not talking, perceiving racism behind their silence.

¹⁰ Harwell: “Um, in many instances I’m meeting these Dakota elders for the first time. So I’m worried about those relationships. Um, I’ve been really pleasantly surprised with the students. I think that they’ve been incredibly earnest [...] I was also very pleased, um, yesterday, um, some of the questions- one of the questions in particular I was a little horrified about(hhh). The one about, ‘Did any Dakota people create representations of the hanging?’ Um, had I- had I really- uh, I guess I looked at the questions, but I didn’t really- I didn’t vet them, and I felt like maybe I should have after that. But there was a little moment after that question was read like, ‘Oh, dear god!’ (hhhh). I personally would have never asked that question, but it seemed- I mean they gave a very honest response and it wasn’t, ‘Oh, well this is a really stupid question but we’re going to try to make you feel good,’ it was, ‘No, I- uh of course we don’t have that and here is why.’ But there wasn’t lingering offense to the question. There wasn’t, ‘Get out of here, I am completely upset,’ um sort of thing. And because I don’t have relationships with a lot of these elders, I worry about that more” (Interview, 01-20-2012).

* * *

Sarah conducted the museum-exhibit work on commemoration. A second-year Classics major from east St. Paul, Sarah had graduated from Hill Murray High, a private Catholic prep school in Maplewood. She suspected her parents sent her to Hill Murray to keep her away from the more diverse learning environment at Harding Senior High School in St. Paul. Sarah pulled me aside one day in the St. Lucia Café and started telling me about this, how the only “diversity” at Hill Murray were the children of African royalty (“no kidding!” she exclaimed), foreign exchange students, and Asian adoptees. During the J-term, she was thinking carefully about how things might have turned out differently for her had she been allowed to attend Harding and perhaps even been off that very January at a different kind of college (Fieldnotes, 01-16-2012).

I knew Sarah to be soft-spoken, an incisive and deep thinker. She often made connections to the Bible and other pieces of classical literature while studying the war (Fieldnotes, 01-06-2012). She had read Howard Zinn at Hill Murray. She explained to her classmates in focus group that Zinn’s is “revisionist history, so it tells history from the side of the oppressed instead of the oppressors. Um, and that might be of interest to anyone taking this class because it definitely tells the story from the indigenous perspective” (Focus Group 01-06-2012). She told me her teacher at Hill Murray had juxtaposed Zinn with a traditional textbook on American History to emphasize the point that, ““Hey, this isn’t how everyone tells history,”” as Sarah put it to me (Interview, 01-26-2012).

By the middle of the J-term, Sarah had been researching and writing draft for the final panel in the exhibit — “Commemoration and Reconciliation” — which eventually bore the title “Commemorating the Dakota-U.S. War.” In her rough draft submitted to Harwell on January 12, she defined her purpose as a researcher, saying, “I seek to understand *who* is remembering these events together, *how* it is being done, and *why* it is necessary” (emphases Sarah’s). After giving an extensive overview of regional monuments and memorials in this draft, Sarah noted a tendency for memorials either to have no Dakota representation at all or to only “celebrate those Dakota who helped the colonizers,” as she put it. She went on to write,

Who visits these monuments? Descendants of the colonizers, who have inherited the dominant society set in stone by the events of 1862. The story here is of the white “settlers” and not of those who gave up their land. It is found in the language of the markers. To whom were the Indians of the “Loyal Indians” monument loyal? The white newcomers. As Waziyatawin Angela Wilson states in *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors*, “These men would be considered traitors by Dakota standards.” Indeed, the vast majority of southern Minnesota monuments remember the losses of the colonizers, the newcomers, or the “settlers,” and is remembered by those of euro-American heritage. (01-12-2012)

In this, Sarah had in no way gone beyond representational parameters initially promised by the course. The list of bibliographic resources provided to her on a sheet compiled by Harwell in December — “Resources for ‘Reconciliation’ Panel” — included *In the Footsteps of our Ancestors* as well as other titles by Waziyatawin, Paul Chaat Smith, Vine Deloria, Donald Fixico, and Diane Wilson. Yet commentary written by Harwell in

the margin beside this selected passage from Sarah's first draft reads, "This is true, but pretty inflammatory for a panel." Harwell seemed to take issue with Waziyatawin — "So is she saying Dakota people have only one perspective?"¹¹ His written commentary at the end encouraged Sarah "to focus down to a handful of points or ideas. Remember, we only have a handful of words." He encouraged her to end the panel on an "optimistic note of Dakota and non-Dakota people working together, like in Mankato or Winona" and perhaps "to get a quote from Anthony Morse or another young Dakota person about what they hope will happen at the 200th anniversary."

The contradictions in these pedagogical messages to Sarah suggested that executive decisions about her panel had already been made or were being made on the fly. While the syllabus and bibliographic materials produced before the start of the J-term labeled her panel "Commemoration and Reconciliation" and "Reconciliation" respectively, Harwell disavowed use of *reconciliation* in the exhibit at the beginning of the second week. After Sarah had just presented sources she was using to her classmates that Monday, still holding a copy of *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors* up for everyone to see, Harwell addressed *reconciliation* head on — "Well, we're not using that word. You are the seventh generation. At some point we're going to have to move on. I want to be

¹¹ Harwell's feedback suggests he had not read *What Does Justice Look Like?*, a book on the list provided to Sarah. In a follow-up interview, Dr. Lenz said she suspected that Harwell was "not a reader" and that he had been "winging it" at times during the course (Interview, 02-15-2012). As Waziyatawin unforgettably explains in this volume, "I would suggest that there is only one moral perspective on this aspect of Minnesota history. That is, that the genocide and ethnic cleansing perpetrated against Dakota people was a crime against humanity that cannot be rationalized from any valid perspective. Minnesotans achieved statehood at Dakota expense. If we take that position seriously, this critical 'Dakota perspective' is not just one among many; it becomes the primary narrative around which we tell the rest of Minnesota history" (2008, p. 76).

honest and truthful and maybe end on an up note” (Fieldnotes, 01-09-2012). Dr. Lenz said she agreed. The “truthful” reasons for privileging *commemoration* over *reconciliation*, like *internment camp* over *concentration camp*, were not talked through with the kind of student input I was hearing in the focus groups. Harwell’s curtly stated decision (“Well, we’re not using that word”) recalls something very different than Waziyatawin’s reasons for disavowing *reconciliation*, Harwell’s disavowal sounding more closely aligned with the settler politics of resentment described by state congressman Dean Urdahl in the TPT documentary *The Past Is Alive Within Us* — “I hear from people in the state, from descendants of white settlers who say, ‘Don’t you dare say you’re sorry. Don’t you dare talk about reconciliation, making comments like, ‘It wasn’t me that did this. Issue an apology for my great-great grandfather, but not for me.’” The message for students taking up the charge to “move on” as members of “the seventh generation” seemed to be that past acts of reconciliation had positioned them uniquely to fashion a progressive exhibit devoid of this antiquated word. For different reasons, then, students would assume a stance friendly to the one taken by settler descendants who would not consider historical obligations carried today in light of what Minnesotans once gained at Dakota expense and continue to benefit from (Waziyatawin, 2008, pp. 76-77).

As Sarah conducted her research, Dr. Lenz lent her a copy of Curtis Dahlin’s *The Dakota Uprising: A Pictorial History* (2009), a book that opens with a dedication “to the innocent white settlers and the innocent Dakota Indians who were swept up in the irresistible tide of 1862.” Dahlin’s history often presents the war this way, as a natural

disaster whose initial violence “ignited a conflagration which very rapidly enveloped the Upper Minnesota River Valley and beyond” (p. 3). Elsewhere “the Uprising” “hit with full force,” almost like a hurricane (p. 50). Never does it unfold as a socially generated phenomenon. The book’s value lies in its wealth of photographs of people, places, and memorials associated with the war. Dr. Lenz explained to me that she had heard Dahlin speak about his book — “He gave a talk at John’s- at the Blankenship County Historical Society museum last year and he said that he had gone to all these auctions and family yard sales and everything and collected these amazing photographs. We wouldn’t have those photos if he hadn’t done that. But he’s an amateur historian and he has to be read that way (Interview, 04-27-2012). Indeed, Sarah took issue with Dahlin “still using the term uprising,” as she explained to me, and placing too much emphasis on the Acton incident, not contextualizing why the young Dakota “were hungry and wanted to steal some eggs, you know, and just that super over simplification, right?” (Interview, 01-26-2012). For Sarah’s purposes of locating and thinking of ways to represent forms of commemoration since 1862, Dahlin’s work listing information on people killed and providing photographs of their memorials concerns whites only. Yet the back cover of the particular volume Sarah borrowed promotes Dahlin’s history as one written “without an agenda.”

Sarah’s independent research led her to more sources like Dahlin’s. In the third focus-group discussion, she mentioned the *Family and Friends of Dakota Uprising Victims* website (Focus group, 01-20-2012), a source that promotes work by the *Minnesota’s Heritage* editorial board members mentioned in Chapter One — Corrine

Marz, John LaBatte, and Curtis Dahlin — all of whom served as key sources for the J-term or BLCHS around the sesquicentennial. The *Family and Friends* website is run by a “settler advocate group for our ancestors who settled not only in Renville County but across the State of Minnesota.”¹² Works by Dahlin promoted there include titles similar to the group’s name — *Victims of the Dakota Uprising: Killed, Wounded, and Captured* (2012) and *Dakota Uprising Victims: Gravestones and Stories* (2007).

In the third focus group, Sarah explained her reasons for resisting the white-victims knowledge she was encountering:

01 **Sarah:** I definitely focus on the Dakota side of things because I think that
 their wounds are, you know, gaping whereas you know honestly I
 don’t know what happened to my great-great grandfather and it
 doesn’t really affect me because I’m, you know, a member of the
 05 dominant society here, and if he was killed by an Indian, you
 know, it happened and I’m not in a lesser place for it.

Alan: I think that’s a really important point.

Stephanie: That’s a good point.

Alan: Because it’s like (3.5) we’re fine, like(hhhh)

10 **Sarah:** Right. [Right.

Stephanie: [Yeah.

Jennifer: [Yeah.

¹² The website explains, “Our grass roots group now has nearly 150 descendants from across Minnesota and beyond, and our followers include not only descendants, but also historians and friends who have interest in the U.S.-Dakota War” Retrieved from <http://www.dakotavictims1862.com/>

- Alan:** We're going to school here. We're gonna be just fine.
- Sarah:** Right.
- 15 **Alan:** And so I think like (.) I guess I've viewed it personally through like a social-justice lens in terms of who deserves to have their voice shared and it's the people who have been silenced.
- Jennifer:** Right.
- Steven:** I hope- I hope some people get pissed, you know, that we have-
- 20 **Rick:** Does anyone disagree with that, sitting here?
- Sarah:** Well, I don't know. I was concerned that, you know, when people read my panel they might be like, "Wait, this is primarily one side of the story. What about the other side?" But it's like the other side has been told for the past one hundred and fifty years, right?
- 25 **Holly :** And for Mitch and I doing treaties, it's hard to make it sound like the white people did anything that was good(hhhh) cause it's like, first they screwed em over in this way and then they screwed em over in this way and then they pulled this trick up their- like I- like there's no way to make the white settlers sound good.

(Focus group, 01-20-2012)

Majority J-termers often spoke candidly about their privilege like this (lines 09-14). For Sarah and others, the prospect of pursuing white-victim identity struck them as unnecessary if not slightly absurd not simply because of their elevated sense of privilege at St. Lucia but because of the historical privilege derived from belonging to the "dominant society" (line 05), i.e. from simply being white.

Even when adjusting for the historical burden Alan expressed on the first day of class, the students speaking in this passage fit very well the unmarked white-citizen identity posited by journalists in 2012. Sharing no genealogical ties to Dakotas or past settler descendants also carrying “deep scars,” the students seemed to inhabit the imaginary neutral zone between sides, a privileged, unmarked position where one can get along “just fine,” according to Alan, not even knowing about the U.S.-Dakota War. But after studying the war’s facts — reading Carley, learning of the white terror, hearing the experts speak, visiting sites like Fort Ridgely, and in Sarah’s case conducting an extensive survey of regional forms of commemoration highlighting white victimhood — the white scholars speaking here did not express alignment with the proverbial fair-minded citizen. On the contrary, Sarah and her classmates had engaged moral judgment while learning as human beings are wont to do. They dared to set historical trauma on the scales and the verdict by the end of the third week was that only one descendant group could possibly suffer from wounds today because of the workings of race and social power since 1862. As Holly observes (lines 25-29), the dilemmas students confronted when mining the sources for examples of whites doing good work in the 1860s only supported that verdict. The newspaper’s claim to “plenty of stories of heroic and compassionate actions on both sides” did not hold for them in their efforts to achieve the balanced representation demanded. At the same time, this emerging portrait of students resisting the *justice-as-fairness* view to history is not so straightforward. As Alan notes, social justice provided “a lens” (line 16) rather than a goal to be worked toward out of lived experience. Perhaps it was merely one lens competing among many. In this, the

racial privilege the students so candidly owned still presented a barrier to advocating for critical reconciliation or restorative justice, especially as the students worked amid so many institutional pressures not to.

* * *

Figure 6.5 shows a snapshot of the narrative from Sarah’s final panel (Appendix A):

Figure 6.5: Commemoration Panel Narrative

The story of this war does not end at the hanging of the 38 or with the ensuing Dakota exile. It is, as author Thomas Maltman describes, a “living wound” that has been passed down in the collective memory of the communities involved.

Until recently, commemoration efforts have been told from one perspective—that of the victors. Monuments and markers at Fort Ridgely, Acton, Wood Lake, Milford, Birch Coulee, Camp Release, and others honor the settlers/newcomers killed by Dakota akicita across Southwestern Minnesota.

(Credit withheld to preserve anonymity).¹³

Importantly, by beginning with Thomas Maltman’s aphorism, the gaping wound discussed by Sarah and her classmates as specific to one group gets diffused through equal application to “the communities involved.” The narrative proceeds with “colonizers” changed to “victors,” erasing intentions that could be built into the white

¹³ Because of the public nature of the *Conflict and Remembrance* museum exhibit, proper citation of institutions involved in producing the pdf images shown here and throughout the remainder of this study would compromise participant anonymity.

identities represented and thereby help contextualize why Dakota fighters (akicita) killed them. This use of “settlers/newcomers” is the only instance in the series of ten student-authored panels where uncertainty arises over how to refer to whites; as Harwell told the students directly and explained on a special panel he devised to clarify the exhibit’s use of contested terms applied like *internment camp*, *newcomers* was decided on for its inclusion of all non-indigenous people together in 1862. Like so many double-edged words and phrases associated with this historiography, *newcomers* seems to respect Dakota indigeneity as it simultaneously levels all other identities, conveniently erasing the decisive racial power exerted by “old settlers” like Cray and Baker and their committee.¹⁴

As Sarah’s narrative unfolds, her initial critique of a one-sided white history of regional commemoration seems to come back, resisting pressure to balance commemoration equally for all. The topic sentences of her three remaining paragraphs capture the spirit of multicultural counterbalancing identified as a need in the focus group — a) “Only recently have other views, those of Dakota people, begun to be acknowledged”; b) “Seeking to heal this yet-living wound, many members of the Dakota community take part in living memorials each year”; and c) “The process of healing for

¹⁴ Harwell’s decision to go with *newcomers* over *settlers* followed similar glossing done by the Minnesota Historical Society on its U.S.-Dakota War website in 2012. As MHS explained, “Non-indigenous people are relatively new to the land now known as the United States. They came for many different reasons —to escape religious or political oppression, to find a passage to the East, to discover new sources of wealth and property, to spread Christianity. Millions of Africans were forcibly brought to the Americas as enslaved people. Thus, the term “settler” does not accurately describe every early immigrant.” Here, the leveling away of identities and their accompanying racial status becomes extreme, lumping even black slaves together with the Sibleys and Ramseys of the war (“Newcomers,” The U.S.-Dakota War, 2012).

the Dakota community has just begun.” Making no mention of white commemoration, these three paragraphs reassert by way of an untraditional kind of silence Sarah’s point that only one side could possibly suffer from wounds today. Indeed, her narrative’s one-sidedness feeds into a critical quote from Sandee Geshick (Figure 6.6) that refers to the hanging as an atrocity, calls for a public apology for the execution, and suggests that a pardon for the 38 victims might finally bring some modicum of justice to the Dakota people 150 years after the fact.

Yet by having to simply state the facts of Dakota living memorial herself and resign critical commentary to a Dakota speaker, Sarah cannot not relate the *hows* and *whys* of regional commemoration she so incisively identified in her first draft. By having to take up the original position as a narrator, Sarah must erase the critical, first-person voice (“opinion”) of her earlier draft, thereby casting social contingencies like racism behind the veil of ignorance. In speaking then, as “the observer who cannot be observed” (Tlostanova and Mignolo, 2012, p. 20), Sarah’s position as a privileged white narrator ends up holding true to the political obligations of race. From this socially abstracted position, she can no longer acknowledge the whiteness of the settler/newcomers as she did in her first draft; she can no longer address the silencing of Dakota commemoration head on; she can no longer speak of the

Figure 6.6: Panel Sidebar

“How does one right the atrocity of a ‘hanging?’ Acknowledge the terrible wrong that was committed through a public apology. Words alone will never bring our akicita back. However, if to pardon them is the only form of justice we can expect, then let us begin the healing process that we Dakota have been seeking for the last 150 years.”

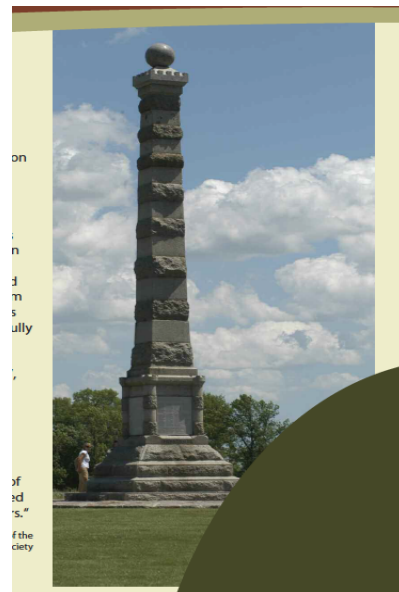
~ Dakota Elder
Sandee Geshick

ancestry-based double standards that rendered some Dakotas “loyal” and therefore worthy of being commemorated in the past.

Knowing Sarah, the most troubling aspect of her final panel was how much space it devoted to the Fort Ridgely State Monument (Figure 6.7), an obelisk she lampooned elsewhere in the focus-group discussion above, calling it “The big phallic symbol out there(hhhh).” In the end, the “big phallic symbol” garnered 118 words of precious space, centralizing the monument’s objective “to perpetuate the names and commemorate the heroism of the soldiers and citizens of the State, who successfully defended the Fort during nine days of siege and investment, August 18–27, 1862, and who gallantly resisted two formidable and protracted assaults upon it, made August 20 and 22, 1862, by a vastly superior force of Sioux Indians.”

In April, Sarah seemed pleased with her panel, even with its inclusion of the Fort Ridgely State Monument added sometime after the J-term ended. After selecting images showing Dakota forms of commemoration, she left Harwell with the idea that she wasn’t opposed to adding some element of white commemoration in. “It wasn’t a surprise to me,” she told me. “I thought it would happen. And like at first I was like, ‘Well, I don’t really want any of those images on here,’ but then I was like, ‘Well-’ I mean, there are two sides to this” (Interview, 04-26-2012).

Figure 6.7: Ft. Ridgely Monument



Chapter Seven

Managing Perspectives, Keeping History “Good” and Safe

I think this topic in particular is one where you- not only are there lots of thorny issues but you cannot make everyone happy. Someone is going to hate you.

— John Harwell (Interview, 01-20-2012).

I mean it’s like he who holds the money and holds the cultural dominance is going to continue to write the history books and is going to continue to control the narrative.

— Jennifer (Interview, 04-26-2012).

The people who were victims of genocide as the Dakota were here in Minnesota are gonna look at history differently than the people who perpetrated the genocide. And that’s standard. A perpetrator, he wishes to keep it silent. And the Minnesota Hysterical Society, that’s my name for them, ((audience laughter)) and the uh- and colleges and universities, including this place, have kept silence, suppressed the history of what really happened.

— Dr. Chris Mato Nunpa (*Conflict and Remembrance* workshop, 03-10-2012).

* * *

As mentioned in Chapter Three, retired Southwest Minnesota State University professor Chris Mato Nunpa had no involvement in the *Conflict and Remembrance* J-term; yet he appeared in dramatic fashion at the St. Lucia social-justice conference workshop where the traveling museum exhibit was unveiled to the public in March.

Knowing no one involved in J-term classroom activities, he proceeded to speak with a kind of clairvoyance about the course, putting his finger directly on unresolved dilemmas that had arisen for students back in January.

When he spoke, I was still over a month away from my final interview with Lori who was to tell me about her participation in suppressing Dakota history while designing the “Exile of the Dakota People” panel, also explained in Chapter Three. I still had not learned from her about how the J-term’s inability to adequately address the aftermath of removal resulted not just in a silencing of the genocidal violence of 1863-64 but a reproduction of the region’s racial divide (Interview, 04-27-2012). Perhaps Dr. Mato Nunpa’s words provided an important learning experience for Lori. She did not say so in April; but her incorporation of the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) into her description of the problem suggested his analysis had not gone unheeded.

Dr. Mato Nunpa’s contribution to the workshop came after Dr. Lenz and Mr. Harwell had addressed an audience of approximately 80 who had come to hear about the project and see the fruits of the students’ labor.¹ Dr. Lenz began by providing another

¹ Like all J-term events, the conference workshop was highly successful. When I asked Dr. Lenz to share her thoughts about interacting with Dr. Mato Nunpa and other learned Dakota people on hand that day, her answer began with a narrative of success — “Well first of all, just recently, I think like during my spring break, I got two emails from people, one an alum of the college who was there and another, just a visitor, who both said the conference was unbelievable for them, incredibly helpful and, you know, they were really- they each had a question they wanted to ask me also but they were just congratulating me, and I can’t really take responsibility which I wrote back to them. It was really the two students who organized it, but um they had particularly liked the workshop. I think our workshop had three times as many people at least- I mean, there were 80 people there and all the other workshops I went to that day, save the keynote, had like 20 people in the audience. So we had an amazing turnout” (Interview, 04-27-2012).

overview of the syllabus and readings; Harwell then explained that the exhibit does not pretend to tell the history from any other than a white, non-descendant perspective, a point on which a number of students disagreed in interviews. He expressed “empathy for what happened in 1862,” adding, “There are lots and lots of different viewpoints with any history, especially 1862.” When Harwell wrapped up his comments, he handed the microphone over to Sandee Geshick who then passed it on to Dr. Mato Nunpa in an unplanned moment after speaking, creating a fluid situation for the instructors, perhaps the only one where proceedings grew unpredictable for them. It was a time when important things some of the J-term participants had been thinking about finally found expression with the instructors present.²

Like Dr. Gwen Westerman’s direct commentary on white objectivity in her late-coming January lecture, Dr. Mato Nunpa seized this late opportunity to take on the ideology of “perspectives,” using it to make basic points about settler colonialism that still seemed unclear a month and a half after the J-term ended:

² Dr. Lenz: “I have a lot of complica(hhh)ted reactions to what happened. Um, I did- I knew that Chris Nunpa was there, Chris Mato Nunpa. Um, and I had had lunch with Sandee but she had not told me that she was going to cede part of her time to him. I have no co- um objection to her having done that. That’s absolutely her call. And fr- I was absolutely delighted to meet him because I knew of his existence for a long time. Really interesting. And the fact that he’s gone to all those Genocide Studies conferences and all those international places and- and kind of put before that group who- and I’ve been to that conference myself. It was um- that association originated in the US and its first or second conference was in Florida which I could afford to go to, and uh it’s a group of very high-power scholars, a lot of whom began in Holocaust Studies and then kind of broadened their focus to genocide. Um, and I think it’s so cool that he’s bringing this issue to the fore in that kind of context. I was a little taken aback at the barbs that he sent my way but I think I did a pretty good job recovering” (Interview, 04-27-2012).

Another thing I want to say too is uh- perspective. Certainly there is the Dakota perspective and it's really different than the white perspective, the *wasicu* perspective. By that I would say, you know, like the people who had their land stolen are gonna look at history differently than the people who stole the land [...]. Now I heard Dr. Lenz- is that your name? I heard her say that in *What Does Justice Look Like?* that the author proposes some radical proposals. From the Dakota point of view, whose lands were stolen, those are very common-sense proposals. But again, it's all different. And when the word controversy is used, for whom is it controversial? Usually it's for the white people, the Western Europeans, the U.S.-Euro Americans, the Euro-Minnesotans. That's for whom it's controversial, these things that I'm saying.

This was all about an ongoing struggle for the ultimate social good — land³ — and drawing attention to the key strategy whereby settler society justifies having taken it and held it for themselves — racial stereotyping. With his shifting categories for the oppressors, Dr. Mato Nunpa tried to give empowered whites a sense of what it might feel like to be among those defined and displayed from the zero point, of being among those Gary Clayton Anderson referred to as “hyphenated people” for an alleged lack of better terms (Lecture, 01-10-2012).⁴

³ Fanon: “For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity. But this dignity has nothing to do with ‘human’ dignity. The colonized subject has never heard of such an ideal. All he has ever seen on his land is that he can be arrested, beaten, and starved with impunity; and no sermonizer on morals, no priest has ever stepped in to bear the blows in his place or share his bread” (1963/2004, p. 9).

⁴ Anderson: “Well there were all kinds rumors that there were Southern spies who were encouraging the Indians to go to war. Um, we never captured any Southern spies. Uh, we never tried any. There were others though that concerned Sibley, and he said so. Um, we call them today mixed bloods. People who were- uh in the parlance of those of us who are ethno-historians trying to deal with words back in the 1980s, uh, this gets clumsy, but

Behind Dr. Mato Nunpa's contribution lay an implicit understanding of the J-term's politics of race. Not really knowing how it had manifested itself daily yet knowing all too well,⁵ he touched on a deep-seated colonial underpinning to the course, i.e. how teacher talk about perspectives had directed students away from *the* critical Dakota perspective — “that the genocide and ethnic cleansing perpetrated against Dakota people was a crime against humanity that cannot be rationalized from any valid perspective” (Waziyatawin, 2008, p. 76). As Harwell's commentary on Sarah's early draft for the Commemoration panel told, the notion that one “Dakota” perspective could carry a moral imperative setting it before all others, and before all uncritical “white” perspectives for that matter, had no place in the kind of public-history project underway. From Dr. Mato Nunpa's critical perspective which includes a long and frustrating history trying to negotiate with the Minnesota Historical Society (Wilson, 2006, p. 130), it would stand to reason that the J-term students had been indoctrinated into the ideology of balanced perspective providing. Indeed, on the first day of class, one of the representatives on hand from MHS explained that the Society was “in a quandary” about dilemmas such as whether to display the noose used to hang Chaske in 1862. There was “no one viewpoint” coming from Dakota representatives to guide them as they designed their sesquicentennial exhibit on the war (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012). On the last fieldtrip, this

Franco-Dakota people, Anglo-Dakota people. I guess the only way you can put it is hyphenated people. How many were there of them? Probably seven- eight hundred in Minnesota at this time, and their loyalty was questionable” (Lecture, 01-10-2012).

⁵ Dr. Mato Nunpa has worked for decades to draw attention to empowered white scholars' lack of objectivity and balance. His publication *An Unbalanced Perspective: Two Minnesota Textbooks Examined by an American Indian* (Cavender, 1970) investigated how race and social-class identity shaped content in history books by Theodore Blegen, Antoinette Ford and Neoma Johnson.

same representative was on hand to greet the students at Fort Snelling, asking them with a tinge of smug humor — “So have you found the one Dakota viewpoint?” (Fieldnotes, 01-25-2012). While factionalism born of nineteenth-century divide-and-conquer tactics created uncertainty for those working in the historically privileged institution, it seemed to provide a sense of comfort as well.

In various ways, these last two chapters have a lot to do with consensus and lack thereof — Harwell’s efforts to win consensus among the students in taking up the neutralized justice-as-fairness view, and a lack of consensus among Dakotas revealing both the museum exhibit’s successes and its failures. While these chapters focus mainly on tensions between Jennifer, Tom, Stephanie, and Harwell as Harwell worked to win consent for narrating from the zero point, they also include tensions between J-termers and two Dakota audience members who took issue with ways the exhibit represented their people.

Before telling this story, however, I must acknowledge that negative reaction from Dakota people was uncommon during and after the J-term, including Dr. Mato Nunpa’s contribution to the conference workshop in March. Indeed, the other Dakota people who spoke that day expressed mainly gratitude and praise. Overwhelmingly positive reaction to the museum exhibit from Dakota workshop attendees contributed to its rapid proliferation. By the summer of 2012, what had begun with \$3,510 of grant money was poised to garner \$20,000 from the Flandreau, Sisseton-Wahpeton, and Santee (Neb.) tribes for copies of the exhibit to come to their communities, much of these developments owing to Dakota/white relationships either strengthened or forged at the

workshop (Harwell interview, 05-16-2012). Not only did the exhibit complete its pre-scheduled tour of regional libraries, schools, and historical societies, but it won national awards and found audiences at the President Lincoln's Cottage Historical Site in Washington, D.C. and the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian George Gustav Heye Center in New York City. As I complete this study, a copy of the exhibit is on display at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. So as I analyze tensions that unfolded behind the scenes, I hope to keep the success of the exhibit in mind, for the story I have been telling is indeed about J-term struggles for social goods such as praise, good grades, awards, career advancement, positive media coverage and public relations for the individuals and institutions involved. All along, my project has entailed coming to a better understanding of what justice looks like to *successful* white educators and students when they come together to commemorate the U.S.-Dakota War.

Specifically, this chapter focuses on the production of the "War — Settler perspectives" panel, part of the two-panel fulcrum that would give equal representation to white and Dakota perspectives. By delving into Harwell's educative philosophy and then analyzing how he guided Jennifer in drafting this particular panel, I track the distribution of a standardizing white, male, "good-history" identity to Jennifer and her classmates, a white male identity Harwell explicitly aligned with Gary Clayton Anderson's epistemology. As both chapters demonstrate, however, this is no simple story of a teacher exerting authority among students eager to please and get good grades, but rather one where students variously resisted, translated, and adopted the privileged identity as its

distribution was managed and negotiated through teacher talk, student narratives, and student talk. Drawing on principles from Norman Fairclough's *Critical Language Study* (2001), this analysis considers both the *power in* and the *power behind* the "good history" discourses promoted by Harwell as the museum exhibit came together, drawing out surprising ways this public-history project reproduced historic conflicts.

An Indoctrination

The first three Fridays of the J-term were reserved for working on the exhibit. Two of these class sessions ended up including guest speakers, cutting into drafting time. Because of the considerable constraints placed on group work and the syllabus description reading, "The exhibit you will produce is already booked for display at St. Lucia during the [social justice] conference (March 10, 2012) and around the state of Minnesota for all of 2012," students would rely heavily on the expertise of the professionals around them to get their panels "right."

As stated, Harwell devised 10 panel themes in 2011 ("Exhibit" course notes, 12-21-2011) and listed them on the syllabus to get the project running as soon as possible:

- Dakota Culture (Pre-Contact)
- Fur Trade Relationships
- Treaties
- Annuity System (post Treaties)
- Assimilation and Reservation Life
- War — Dakota perspectives
- War — Settler perspectives
- Trials and Hanging

- Aftermath — Exile/Diaspora
- Commemoration and Reconciliation

Harwell read these themes aloud on the first day. In a five-minute introductory presentation, he erected an example panel for the students to see, a 3' X 6' canvas screen that unrolled from a casing on the floor and hooked to a retractable metal stand at top. The particular one he brought in for this demonstration displayed an advertisement for the Blankenship County Historical Society (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012). In the process of assembling it, Harwell explained that students would be responsible for writing titles and texts as well as selecting quotes and images, all in the “hope” stated on the syllabus to “raise awareness of the treatment of indigenous people in the 19th century as white settlers poured into Minnesota.” On this first day, attention to the exhibit consisted only in this brief introduction. Students were to begin thinking about partners and selecting themes they wanted to work on, something that would get sorted out within the week.

Earlier this class session, Harwell began setting the tone for how to conduct public-history work. He told the students they would be working that month as College ambassadors and that the J-term needed to have good interactions with the lecture audiences and guest speakers. Students should treat everybody with respect — “Everybody has their opinions. Who am I to say someone’s opinion is less valid? We can’t always agree, especially on something that happened 150 years ago” (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012).

Later, Harwell’s introduction to the exhibit-writing requirement came in between Dr. Lenz’s overview of the readings, setting the frame for the balanced perspective, and a

PowerPoint presentation by the two guest speakers from MHS. While explaining that MHS's founding by Henry Sibley and Alexander Ramsey put the institution in a complicated position regarding the U.S.-Dakota War, the first presenter went on to include other uncomfortable facts about the era related to sites the students would be visiting, for instance, that slaves were once held at Fort Snelling and that the Lower Sioux Agency was established for appropriating land. "How do you balance all this?" he asked rhetorically. He gave no clear answer other than that public historians like the J-term students needed to listen respectfully, pay attention to cultural cues especially when talking to Dakota people, maintain an eagerness for learning, and remember "not to step on anyone's toes" (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012). His colleague agreed. She told the students they needed to understand "that people feel that they're the victims of genocide and historical trauma. People in New Ulm also feel this. It didn't happen very long ago." Narratives from the larger public pedagogy riddled this formative session, including that "this isn't a black-and-white story" but rather a brutal and painful history in which "there were no winners" (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012).⁶ Since whites had not won anything and held an equally respectable claim to historical trauma, perhaps even as genocide victims, justice as fairness should prevail.

⁶ Messages conveyed to the students on this first day repeated publicly throughout 2012 — "Describing the conflict a daunting task for historians" (Krohn, February 5, 2012); "Dakota, settlers were all victims" (Craig, April 27, 2012); "Good guys, bad guys? History isn't always so simple" (Krohn, August 12, 2012); Corrine Marz — "There was so much death and so much loss and grief (.) that even though there was a side that came out victorious, it's really difficult to see where the winners were with so much pain and loss" (Lecture, 01-24-2012).

As mentioned in the Introduction, a current of fear ran through this presentation. The lead presenter from MHS started out by assessing the students' precarious positions as knowledge workers — "Creating 10 panels without much background knowledge gives me the hives." He quickly followed up by trying to give courage, however, telling the students this was a good course and a great opportunity for them. He asked the students what they thought so far. They remained mostly quiet, one saying it seemed overwhelming and another that it sounded exciting. Only Jennifer attempted to shed critical light on the students' position, raising a point about ignorance that she would return to throughout the month and eventually pose to guest speakers during lecture Q and A (minus the confession of whiteness) — "I'm white and I'm embarrassed I don't know more." The second visiting historian responded by saying she was "uncomfortable" even being at St. Lucia College that day to talk about the war — "This topic scares the crap out of me. People point fingers. It can be scary sometimes because people accuse you of being racist" (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012). In such exchanges one senses a silenced history reproducing its own silences through actors inhabiting positions of institutional power, whites coming together to enforce the deader-than-disco code (Smith, 2009, p. 73).

Writing White-Guy History: Harwell Defines the Standard

I conducted my first interview with Mr. Harwell at the end of the third week. Originally from North Carolina, he had earned a Master's degree in History twelve years

earlier. His first job as a professional historian was with MHS. He had been working as executive director of the Blankenship County Historical Society for seven years.

Besides wanting to learn more about his background, I approached this first conversation with similar questions I had taken to Dr. Lenz, being curious about anxieties or fears Harwell may have had in taking the controversial U.S.-Dakota War public. Like with Dr. Lenz and the contradictions concerning her aversion to assuming a “radical” approach to a history of genocide, I had prepared to question Harwell specifically about balance and neutrality based on cautious stances he took in the classroom. By the time of our interview, I had observed him in the role of lead classroom teacher four times.⁷ I had seen him share a great deal of critical insight into the U.S.-Dakota War by way of analogies to geographically distant situations of injustice he knew about from film and television — inner-city L.A., Baltimore, the Vietnam War.⁸ But as I had come to realize,

⁷ January 5, 9, 12, and 13. The other days were either shared or led by Dr. Lenz or field-trip days.

⁸ Harwell brought two of these analogies up to me prior to the class session on January 12 when he was set to lead the session on Kenneth Carley’s *The Dakota War of 1862: Minnesota’s Other Civil War*. Harwell showed me a clip from the 2008 movie *Crips and Bloods: Made in America* to compare the situation of the Dakotas in 1862 to “people stripped of their rights, limited in their mobility, with a population of young men expected to sit around with nothing to do, no jobs, and condone what’s happening to their people,” as he put it. He then referred me to the TV show *The Wire* where young men are depicted being disruptive in school from positions of idleness, with no other alternatives given the way the institution is set up. Harwell told me he would do the same thing in their circumstances. During the class session that day, he did integrate a critical piece into his teaching, showing a clip from the 2003 film *Fog of War: Eleven Lessons Learned from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*, highlighting a sequence of hard-hitting questions posed to the former Secretary of Defense, for example, “Why didn’t you speak out against the Vietnam War once you left the Johnson administration?” When Harwell asked the class, “Does anyone see any similarities?” Tom, the military veteran, had the most to say in the brief discussion that followed: “The people there were fighting for freedom.” Tom went on to tell about racial exclusion historically by referring to Thomas Jefferson

this sharing often occurred immediately before or after official class time. Rarely had I seen it integrated into lessons in ways designed to foster critical inquiry and discovery about the U.S.-Dakota War. For Harwell, official class time seemed to be a time of teacher caution against making statements that could be perceived as politically threatening to institutionally empowered whites. The most curious example of this came in the second week when he began the January 9 class session by playing a live version of Bob Dylan's "With God On Our Side," a song that targets a core tenet of manifest destiny (Loewen, 1995/2005, p. 87) to call out the hypocrisy of a society that continually wages war while promoting its own Christianity. As soon as it ended, Harwell distanced himself from the song's unavoidable politics — "I'm not advocating Dylan's perspective. I just thought you might like to hear it" (Fieldnotes, 01-09-2012). The lyrics were not shared and student discussion about the lyrics' bearing on 1862 was not solicited.⁹ Like with Stephen Miller's pedagogy in Mankato, there would be no teaching, only listening, and students could form their own opinions about the settlers having God on their side.

Harwell often spoke of himself as a "white guy," humorously acknowledging the privilege that made it so that he only knew of oppression in distanced ways — "I come to it from a white male's perspective where the worst thing that's ever happened to me is

and John Locke and their ideal of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," and how there was "only religious freedom for those who had it, not for people like the Dakota." To this, Harwell made no comment and soon summed up his purpose for showing the clip — to draw attention to "different perspectives on the war" (Fieldnotes, 01-12-2012).

⁹ Dr. Lenz was on hand for this playing. She told the class that she attended the Newport Folk Festival in 1965 when Dylan went electric and recalled the negative crowd reaction. "Does anybody know about Dylan's background?" she asked. No one responded. She explained briefly how Dylan was Jewish and, much like the Coen Brothers who grew up in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, possessed a deep understanding of what it means to be the Other. No discussion ensued (Fieldnotes, 01-09-2012).

New Coke” (Interview, 01-20-2012). When I asked him directly about fears he may have had teaching the U.S.-Dakota War, his answer began with the epigraphic quote about “lots of thorny issues” and not being able to make everybody happy — “Someone is going to hate you. It might be Angela Cavender Wilson [Waziyatawin], it might be John LaBatte, but someone or both of them are going to be very unhappy.” Surprising to me at the time was that Dakota people came to Harwell’s mind first rather than the kinds of whites always prominent in my mind after following the *Free Press*. Most prominent for Harwell was a Dakota political spectrum with the “radical” Waziyatawin on the left and independent historian John LaBatte on the right, a figure Harwell freely referred to in the classroom as “the Rush Limbaugh of the Dakota people” (Fieldnotes, 01-18-2012).

The fact that I had to ask specifically afterwards about the prospect of making whites angry suggested that Harwell knew the kind of exhibit he had in mind probably would not prompt backlash from them, unlike Steven for instance who had hoped to make whites “pissed” by creating a Dakota-centric exhibit panel. When I followed up to ask about potential backlash from whites, Harwell offered up a metaphor of balance:

And I think we want to make sure in this exhibit that, uh, that it does acknowledge that side and it’s not just, um, the (.) a Dakota perspective uh to it. And frankly we have spent lots and lots of time, the majority of the class time from that [Dakota] perspective. Um, but I think history is a pendulum, and for a long time we heard lots and lots and lots about the whites. And now I think we need to- we need to give more time for Dakota people to tell stories that they want to tell.

Like Dr. Lenz, Harwell failed to acknowledge the extent to which the course implicitly favored a white-settler perspective,¹⁰ making it seem all the more contradictory to me that he did not imagine being “hated” by, say, descendants of slain settlers for producing an exhibit sympathetic to the Dakota. In line with Dr. Lenz’s idea of compensating for a Dakota-heavy curriculum by having Tom present on his settler ancestry in class, Harwell distributed supplemental readings to counterbalance works by Dakota authors — a chapter from Sally Mitchell’s *Daily Life in Victorian England* (2009) for students to read alongside Ella Deloria’s *Waterlily*, an article by F. Paul Prucha, “The Settler and the Army in Frontier Minnesota” (1948), for the weekend when students would turn to *What Does Justice Look Like?* No such balancing work took place offering critical perspectives to compare alongside authors like Carley or Anderson and Woolworth. Only Sheldon Wolfchild provided such readings, bringing in articles on the Doctrine of Christian Discovery.¹¹ Like the addition of the Fort Ridgely State Memorial to Sarah’s Commemoration panel in Chapter Six, the instructors performed compensatory white

¹⁰ I asked Harwell to clarify the point made in this block quote: **Harwell:** “I think that we have laid- in this course, we have given more deference to the Dakota perspective than the uh (.)” **Rick:** “Okay, okay. I just wanted to make sure I was understanding it right, that statement. That’s-” **Harwell:** “But I’m okay with that because I think at this point, in 2012, within the historiography, that’s the way the pendulum is swinging and needs to swing.”

¹¹ Wolfchild’s contributions were not listed on the syllabus or followed up on as part of the curriculum. His visit to class on January 16 included a screening of a rough edit of his documentary film *Star Dreamers — Part One: The Indian System*. I have conflicting data about how his contribution to the J-term came about, Dr. Lenz telling the class that Wolfchild requested to come midway through the course and that she accepted (Fieldnotes, 01-12-2012) and Wolfchild recalling that the instructors asked him to come (Interview, 03-20-2013).

balancing work on the fly and sometimes behind the scenes to adjust for the threat of white backlash. Dakota resistance would apparently remain inevitable.

* * *

In our discussion of the thorny issues, Harwell brought up the fact that Gary Clayton Anderson had said some controversial things during his visit the previous week, something Harwell wished to avoid. He pointed out one aspect of Anderson's view with which he was in agreement however:

But one thing he said, and I think he said this at dinner and, and you weren't there, was "I hope we get to the point where we can write histories of the Dakota War and the- and base it on- on good history and not who was writing them." Um, and as a- as a white guy who writes about the Dakota War I can see where he's coming from with that. Um, I think that some of the- it's not a danger, but I think it's just one of the byproducts main- maybe, uh, and frankly it's a byproduct of everything because there's a lot of white people saying crazy stuff that isn't historically accurate(hhh) about 1862, but I think that we need to hear Dakota perspectives. Uh, we also need to realize that not all of those Dakota perspectives are historically accurate. (Interview, 01-20-2012)

In these statements, the politics behind "apolitical" representation come straight to the surface. As in his public and classroom comments, Harwell emphasizes the importance of granting equal respect to "perspectives," foremost "Dakota perspectives" that need to be heard and given more time from the privileged site of knowledge production because of the long history of white imbalance. But as Harwell seeks to hear Dakota voices, he also

reserves the ability to “see” good history by virtue of his whiteness and masculinity, or as he puts it, from his perspective as a fellow “white guy.” With this Harwell exerts a form of *defensive pluralism* where “we pay lip service to others ‘doing their own thing,’ but are already convinced that there is nothing important to be learned from them”

(Bernstein, 1991, p. 336). Rather than practicing real dialogic engagement, showing openness and sensitivity toward voices like Waziyatawin’s with willingness “to grasp the other’s position in the *strongest* possible light” (Bernstein, 1991, p. 337; emphasis Bernstein’s), Harwell elects to adhere to the notion of a superior white-guy epistemology, reconstructing it against “crazy stuff” he hears from some Dakotas and even some whites.

By including whites among those who can fail to practice “good” epistemology, and by holding to Anderson’s “hope” that essentialist thinking be removed from the evaluation of historiography, Harwell seems to argue well for holding histories to an implied standard of fact verification rather than to any pre-determined criteria such as an author’s ethnicity or race. Indeed, this aspect of Harwell’s (and Anderson’s) outlook persuades by conjuring the admirable notion of color-blind justice that has a long tradition with roots in both the abolitionist movement (Elliott, 2006, pp. 4-8, 315) and the Civil Rights movement when Dr. King’s dream to judge not by the color of one’s skin but by the content of one’s character was held as the evaluative ideal for American democratic society. But when recounting in this same part of the interview a disagreement he recently had with a Dakota man over a specific question about 1862, and granting that “neither one of us knows the historical truth in that” (Interview, 01-20-

2012),¹² Harwell nevertheless reserves “accuracy” for the “white-guy” perspective. By definition, the “crazy stuff” must emanate from nonwhite and feminine perspectives even though whites sometimes also say “crazy” things.

Importantly for the particular history being studied, the identification of some whites’ perspectives as “crazy” or outside the norm with othered feminine and nonwhite perspectives reveals traces, or to use Harwell’s term, “byproducts,” of some old strategies for exerting white colonial power. Aligning “crazy” with non-white-guy status conjures ideology expressed by the old settlers of Chapter Six, founders who when setting to the task of shaping public knowledge about the war hearkened back to an enlightenment identity that constructed its own stability (rationality) in contrast to American Indians’ alleged instability (irrationality) (Seth, 2010, pp. 88-89). By the same token, this identity work implies a kind of “probationary” white status for whites resistant or unassimilated to the privileged norm (Jacobson, 1998, p. 119), historically the Anglo-Saxonist identity

¹² Visiting class on January 16, Sheldon Wolfchild shared skepticism about the lack of a photographic image of the Mankato hanging, saying that etchings make it easier for officials to promote the sense that the images depict lore rather than the truth — “It would have been terrible for Sibley and Ramsey had photographs of the hanging been made public” (Fieldnotes, 01-16-2012). Wolfchild went on to say he also suspected that some etchings depicting war scenes from 1862 could have been based on photographs, but again, etchings make the truth they are based on easier to doubt. Harwell took issue with these ideas in interview: “Um, when Sheldon came to class and said, ‘There’s only one [Adrian John] Ebell photograph and they’re- they’re out there but they’re hiding these photographs of the hanging,’ and stuff, I don’t agree with that. I mean, neither one of us knows the historical truth in that, but, um, I think that there were reasons that, you know, a guy carrying a huge camera with glass plate negatives didn’t take pictures of active battles because if you look at the Civil War that didn’t happen either.” Here, Harwell apparently hadn’t thought through the hanging as a spectacle rather than a battle. Mankato historian Thomas Hughes, a witness to the hanging but also one working hard to erase the town’s stigma, attempts to account for the lack of photographs by saying “the cameras of that day were not well adapted for outside exposures” (1909, p. 134).

heralded by Gen. James Baker in Chapter Six — “that lofty Anglo-Saxon spirit, which dares all things,” etc.

In this I can’t help but read historical significance from Sarah’s defense of Harwell’s neutrality in Chapter Three — “I think he has a very enlightened perspective.” For probationary public historians like Sarah and her fellow J-termers, finding success entailed buying into what Harwell described on the first day as the “higher purpose” of the service-learning project (Fieldnotes, 01-03-2012). There was a spiritual, utopian flavor to this public-history work expressed in defensive, preservationist tones against Waziyatawin’s proposals for justice as when Harwell told students at Fort Snelling, “We’re never going to reach a point of higher enlightenment without historic sites” (Fieldnotes, 01-25-2012). On the one hand, J-term service learning meant creating dialogue that would help mend the racial divide, a discourse most often espoused by Dr. Lenz; on the other hand, and just as importantly from the J-term perspective, service learning meant “enlightening” (imparting information to) an ignorant general public, a discourse represented mainly by Harwell.¹³ According to Lori, J-term intentions in designing an informative exhibit were “pure,” and the purity of those intentions derived from Harwell’s professional guidance.¹⁴ Success stories about the panel writing in

¹³ Behind these two potentially dialogic aspects to *Conflict and Remembrance* service learning lay preservationist identities bearing non-dialogic and therefore contradictory or negating force — Dr. Lenz’s conservative conception of “good” scholarship and institutional practices (Chapter Three) and Harwell’s defensive conception of “good” public history discussed in this chapter.

¹⁴ Lori: “I feel like the intentions are pure, and to me intentions are huge. I think the intentions are very pure and um (4.0) the resources that we’ve- that we’ve been given in terms of information to look into and the ability to look outside of what we’ve been provided, um (3.0) and the fact that we ourselves don’t have to design what they will look

particular included Alan saying he came away feeling “empowered” and that the exhibit work “released me from the weight of just pure- pure guilt” (Interview, 01-26-2012).

Looking back on her panel and the ways it had been edited, Jennifer said “my voice was uplifted” (Interview, 04-26-2012). These were stories told by probationary knowledge workers who “served” while acquiring discrete public-history skills.

Important to my following analysis of student panels on settler and Dakota perspectives is Harwell’s use of *we* in the block quotes above, especially the *we* that Gary Clayton Anderson presumably used at the president’s dinner. Recall from Chapter Four Anderson’s use of different *wes* in his lecture, sometimes *inclusive* — “This is part of Minnesota’s history we’re talking about. And believe it or not it’s all of our history” — and sometimes *exclusive* for his implied audience — “Well, it’s what we call in the business today- my friend, uh, Ben Kiernan at Yale...” Whether inclusive or exclusive, *we* functions in relational ways that position listeners differently in terms of power (Fairclough, 2001, p. 106). As one closely aligned with the privileged identity Anderson constructed through various uses of *we* — the white, male, property-owning, and, for Harwell’s purposes, history-writing identity — Harwell hoped to include himself among those others for whom Anderson spoke and he invited me to identify as well. Reminding me that I had not been at the president’s dinner felt like a way of marking uncertainty about my inclusion; as a fellow “white guy” and scholar, perhaps I was one who valued white truth and objectivity, perhaps I was not. It was up to me whether to sign on to rendering critical, feminine, nonwhite histories crazy. In this way the privileged identity,

like or make them I think is also a really big deal, um so it won’t look like a second-grade poster or something on the wall” (Interview, 01-23-2012).

like any identity, can be said to be co-constructed between speakers and active, responsive listeners who are also other speakers (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 280-282). Just as Anderson's message resonated with Harwell "as a white guy who writes about the Dakota War," the *authority* expressed by Anderson echoes and moves in his speech through his application of an ideologically aligned *we* when discussing Dakota perspectives — "I think that we need to hear Dakota perspectives, uh, we also need to realize that not all of those Dakota perspectives are historically accurate" (Interview, 01-20-2012). In switching from first-person singular to plural precisely when touching on the question of Dakota perspectives and their (in)accuracy, Harwell asserts white-guy epistemology as *the* authoritative J-term perspective from which to evaluate all other competing perspectives.¹⁵

Finally, as a researcher I had an easier option than students regarding whether to resist, accept uncritically, or adopt this *we* and use it for recruiting others to the privileged

¹⁵ In Chapter One, **Alan**'s shift from *I* to *we* on the question of designing a linear exhibit provides an important example of the distribution of authority through student talk — "I mean my first reaction was no, of course we're not obligated to. I don't think we should- (4.0) °Well, I'm not sure.° I do think we have an obligation to our audience...." Rather than the negative constraint on independent critical thought I analyze, students took up *we* as a collective comfort. Alan said he had "pretty solid trust" in Harwell and, in the end, "was very glad we had the terms and chronology" provided by a second introductory panel Harwell devised (Interviews, 01-09, 2012; 04-27-2012). As to whether it was difficult to get the language right on her panel, **Tracy** said, "Um, it has and it hasn't because we've had so much help from John with all the wording" (Interview, 01-27-2012). As to the difficulty of co-constructing a coherent narrative voice across panels, **Lori** said, "I think as far as what we have right now, it feels pretty good [...] I'm sure that whoever goes back over and edits will be able to do that" (Interview, 01-23-2012). On navigating contentious political terrain, **Rachel** said, "one thing that worries me is how people are going to react to it, and that's why I really want, you know, John's feedback, and we just got that today" (Interview, 01-24-2012).

identity. For me, Harwell's *we* excluded by speaking mainly for himself and J-term knowledge workers, an important piece to this effect being that I actively maintained distance. For students positioned less equally in relation to their instructor not to mention fearfully in relation to public controversy, Harwell's authority provided a comforting amount of professionalism that was best not to try to destabilize on the path to success. Even for Dr. Lenz, to call Harwell's pre-determined structures into question meant assuming the "neophyte" position that would ultimately not challenge authority, as when she asked one day when Harwell was leading discussion on whether the class should feel obligated to design a linear exhibit — "Can I interject a naughty angle?" (Fieldnotes, 01-06-2012). In this case, being "naughty" meant simply to raise the question; Dr. Lenz's interjection quickly supported creation of a linear exhibit because of her experience visiting the National Museum of the American Indian where she had found non-linear representation "incoherent" (Fieldnotes, 01-06-2012). The institutional professionalism and pre-determined structures Harwell brought to such learning experiences represented the *power behind* the white-guy discourse; his daily use of *we* in face-to-face encounters represented the *power in* that discourse, a kind of tool for managing and constraining both student and colleague contributions to the museum exhibit (Fairclough, pp. 38-39). *We* symbolized the authority to direct contributions away from "crazy stuff," i.e. critical, interpretive, and moral judgments about 1862.

Balancing the Settler Perspective with “Good” Work

Student vulnerability to balanced white-guy history found perhaps its strongest enactment in Jennifer’s panel-writing experience. Again, Jennifer was a highly accomplished sophomore at the time of this study. A Communication Studies major, she worked as editor in chief of the College newspaper. She also helped coordinate campus-wide activities through the St. Lucia Diversity Center and often served as student spokesperson to local media. I held my first interview with her as she was preparing her second draft for the “War — Settler perspectives” panel, eventually renamed “Press and Panic on the Frontier.” It was during this interview that she expressed views shared in previous chapters — her anxiety in thinking that settler society had perpetrated genocide; her paradoxical endorsement of the neutral J-term pedagogy on genocide; and her conviction that she was likely to be “far more radical” than other students I would interview.

Jennifer told me she hoped to use the settler perspectives panel to highlight injustices suffered by the Dakota, but she shared uncertainty about this at the same time. I asked her more about her stated sympathies toward the Dakota:

Rick: Do you feel like that’s changing a little bit? Or do you feel like you’re more (.) sort of more certain about that initial-

Jennifer: I feel like that is gonna change. I am- and so I am- I am optimistic. I’m probably far more radical and I’m probably far more optimistic than a lot of people are. That could be because of my age(hhhh).
Um, but-

Rick: So are you saying that you feel like you're changing a little bit more to the understanding to the white side of the history of it?

Jennifer: Oh yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. Um, because I had no idea the amount of casualties that were- but then again there was 170,000 white settlers that were in the area, and what, you know, what are they saying, that anywhere from, you know, 400 to 8-, you know, 900 were killed? Which is obviously an atrocity(hhh). You know, death is death and I would never say that it's not. So I think that- (.) uh (4.5) definitely, definitely is gonna need far more balance in how- in how I see it. (Interview, 01-18-2012)

As in Jennifer's sudden erasure of agency (Harwell) when speaking of the demand for balance in Chapter Five, these last lines remain passive and fail to name the locus of the standardizing view shaping her learning experience. Jennifer places no stress on the word "that" before entering the 4.5-second pause, stress that could have marked "that" as a demonstrative pronoun referring back to her radicalism; in listening several times to this passage, I interpret "that" as the head of a complement clause devoid even of the non-referential subject *it* — "is gonna need far more balance in how- in how I see it." In building toward this complete erasure of agency, Jennifer reveals uncommon vulnerability to the standardizing perspective by suggesting that her radicalism comes from her young age (lack of maturity and professionalism) and that becoming educated about the U.S.-Dakota War (learning about white victimhood) necessarily means taking up the balanced view. No other students expressed this kind of "optimism" for political maturation and reform.

While Jennifer's eagerness to espouse balance has been documented in previous chapters, her reform was not so easily won. Early in the J-term, she argued with Harwell over the notion of settler innocence and showed reluctance to display what Harwell eventually presented as "the facts" of white victimhood that he felt her panel needed to display (Fieldnotes, 01-20-2012).¹⁶ Jennifer had organized her first draft dated January 12 according to three categories of whites who played pivotal roles in the run-up to the 1862 war — government officials, traders, and settlers. In the first category, she cited Lincoln's words to Gov. Ramsey in 1862 to "attend to the Indians," commenting that Lincoln's response "sums up the perspective of the U.S. government, seeming to say, 'do what you have to do' with seemingly little regard for handling the situation with justice and care." Regarding traders and settlers, Jennifer identified greed for money and land respectively as constitutive of these groups' mistreatment of Dakota people. Regarding settlers, she wrote, "Many had inter-married with the Dakota and so had good relations with them while others were blatantly hostile and racist." Jennifer's narrative then coalesced to a kind of thesis — "Whatever perspective, all white settlers benefitted from the oppression of the Dakota people."

This thesis did not make it onto Jennifer's final panel. With the eventual editing away of this draft work, I wish to note that Jennifer was attempting to achieve a form of critical representation that would identify the interests of differentiated white identities from 1862, highlighting their complicity in inciting violence. This narrative strategy runs

¹⁶ Commenting after Jennifer had just presented a draft of her panel to her classmates, Harwell said, "I like the idea of adding a sidebar of a victim. The facts are that this family did die" (Fieldnotes, 01-20-2012).

exactly counter to justice-as-fairness strategies discussed in the previous chapter that seek to level all such interests and identities, erasing their power from collective memory.

In the margins, Harwell marked most everything off with large parentheses, giving Jennifer a lot of praise for her work but also noting “need to condense,” “the responsibility of others,” and “outside your scope.” These last two comments carried the promise that representation of the government and traders would occur on other panels. Writing “we just have to narrow focus,” Harwell went on to provide extensive feedback, advising Jennifer away from making her own commentary and instead displaying newspaper headlines from 1862 — “You could get the ‘facts’ while keeping the flavor of fear, terror, + let’s face it — racism.”¹⁷ The one thing Harwell marked as important to keep was a sentence about settler demographics — “By 1860, Minnesota’s non-Indian population exploded from 6,077 in 1850 to more than 170,000, ‘a boom unequaled by that of any other state in American history, including California during the Gold Rush,’” a line Jennifer had copied from a display she had seen at BLCHS. In advising toward showing headlines, Harwell wrote, “You could frame it with a few opening sentences about population change, general nativity of settlers.”

The strategy of representing settler racism through headlines alone appealed to Jennifer’s position as a journalist. She expressed deep interest in researching the frontier papers and described their portrayals of Dakota people as “heinous” (Interview, 04-27-

¹⁷ Headlines Harwell proposed were ones of Dakota attacks and white military victories — “You could do ‘Lower Sioux Attacked,’ ‘Soldiers Ambushed at Ferry,’ ‘Dakota repelled at New Ulm,’ ‘Terrible Atrocity to Some Poor Yankee,’ ‘Defeated at Wood Lake,’ and finally ‘Camp Release.’” (“Euro-American perspectives,” panel draft, January 12, 2012).

2012). Just showing this content would be enough to shock unknowing whites about their racist forebears. Yet even showing rather than telling came to be understood as politically perilous work. As Harwell told students to “avoid editorial language” and words like “terrible” and “massacre” because they could “turn people off” (Fieldnotes, 01-13-2012), he also advised caution toward display of inappropriate words expressed by people of the past — “You can pick quotes that show the racism of the day, but if I’m working with a younger audience, I have to remember that it’s hard for them to distinguish between what’s being said and a quote used to show the racism of the day” (Fieldnotes, 01-18-2012). He went on to tell a story about a museum project he had once been involved in on World War II where a woman displayed an instance of the slur “jap” from the 1940s to show racism in an exhibit designed for third graders, a kind of miscalculation as Harwell presented it resulting in “an e-mail shouting match” between exhibit writers and an angry parent (Fieldnotes, 01-18-2012). Like the MHS representative who told the students “It can be scary sometimes because people accuse you of being racist,” fear seemed to have more to do with potential backlash from race-sensitive whites than from descendants of slain settlers. Jennifer took Harwell’s story to heart. As she told me in interview, “I mean, like he was saying, you can’t be that radical when you’re dealing with small children anyway. You know, like he was saying, you can’t go using the word ‘jap’ when you’re talking to third-graders. Obviously totally inappropriate” (Interview, 01-18-2012). Such repeating of classroom discourses reflects the persuasive management of politically threatening critical interpretations on student panels that could cast white racism in an overly negative light and thereby risk the exhibit’s success with its implied audience.

Jennifer's second draft dated January 23 contained no mention of settlers' roles in the violence beyond the white population boom. Her narrative quoted newspaper discourses warning of the "red menace" and incorporated new information about the number of settlers killed and the "military's superior technology" which quickly ended the war. The critique of white greed and whites' oppression of the Dakota people was reduced to a single agentless phrase, "the rising pressure of starvation on the Dakota," a line removed between Jennifer's second draft and the panel text finalized in February.¹⁸ Following her interest in the 1862 newspapers, Jennifer added a call for genocide made by St. Cloud editor Jane Swisshelm in November 1862 — "Exterminate the wild beasts, and make peace with the devil and all his hosts sooner than these red-jawed tigers, whose fangs are dripping with the blood of innocents!" Sensing this content as potentially inappropriate, Jennifer made a preemptive move immediately after reading it in class two days after our interview — "I want to stand by this and keep it in my panel" (Fieldnotes, 01-20-2012). Harwell did not suggest removing it in his editorial comments the following week. Swisshelm made the final cut in February.

Besides the addition of headlines — TERRIBLE INDIAN RAID, THE FRONTIER DESOLATED, THE INHABITANTS MURDERED, SHOCKING BARBARITIES, THE INDIAN OUTRAGES — Jennifer's final panel included Adrian John Ebell's frequently reproduced photograph of white refugees resting on the prairie on August 21, 1862, and a

¹⁸ Interestingly, Jennifer's phrase "rising pressure" remained, but became dissociated from its original alignment with white agents as the cause of Dakota starvation, getting shifted instead to Dakota intertribal factionalism — "This [superior white military technology], combined with rising pressure from within the Dakota nation, provided the impetus for their surrender at Camp Release on September 26, 1862."

picture of a white widow, Sophia Huggins, and her three children (Appendix B). The panel tells that Sophia's slain husband, Amos Huggins, a son of missionaries, was a man who "had lived peacefully among the Dakota for many years," having been "born and raised among the Dakota community" and having "later conducted a school for Dakota children. He was killed at La qui Parle on August 19, 1862, and his wife and children were captured." A sidebar nearby gives Indian agent Thomas Galbraith's assessment of Huggins's death:

Mr. Huggins exercised nothing but kindness toward the Indians. He fed them when hungry, clothed them when naked, attended them when sick, and advised and cheered them in all their difficulties. He was intelligent, industrious, and good, and yet he was one of the first victims of the outbreak, shot down like a dog by the very Indians whom he had so long and so well served.

I must note that Galbraith was the government Indian agent who refused to open food storehouses to starving Dakotas prior to the violence, a man singled out by Taoyateduta as the very reason he ended up having to lead Dakota men into war in the first place. After characterizing Galbraith as "arrogant, stubborn, emotionally unstable, and a hard drinker" based on "the testimony of men who had no reason, decades later, to hold a grudge against him," historian Roy Meyer concludes, "The causes of the Sioux Uprising are manifold and complex, but it is no exaggeration to say that Thomas J. Galbraith had

more to do with bringing on the war than any other single individual” (Meyer, 1967, p. 110).¹⁹

Although this exhibit panel’s decontextualized addition of the Huggins and Galbraith material may appear to show a wider array of white perspectives than only those that called for the extermination of Dakota people in the newspapers, for those who know the history it is immediately dubious.²⁰ But even as it stands, taking away all knowledge of Galbraith as perhaps the most unreliable commentator available from 1862, this addition still strongly invites a traditional white-settler’s interpretation of Indians by way of uneditorialized juxtaposition. With the murder of Huggins, the “red-jawed tigers” seem to kill all that is “good,” biting the paternalistic hand that had allegedly been feeding them. Placed beside the journalistic discourses that Jennifer hoped to make representative of settler racism, the Huggins material threatens to lend a degree of

¹⁹ The J-term exhibit seems to provide “balanced” representation of Galbraith by quoting him again in the sidebar to Lori and Anna’s “Exile” panel — “The power of the government must be brought to bear upon them; they must be whipped, coerced into obedience. After this is accomplished, few will be left to put upon a reservation; many will be killed; more must perish from famine and exposure, and the more desperate will flee and seek refuge on the plains or in the mountains. ...A very small reservation should suffice for them.” As Lori and Anna had selected this quote before the end of the J-term (Interview, 01-23-2012), the later addition of Galbraith’s words about Huggins on Jennifer’s panel suggests a balanced editorial decision in line with Harwell’s philosophy about Minnesota’s colonizers — that there is good and bad in everyone (Fieldnotes, 01-11-2012).

²⁰ Galbraith’s method of narrating a white casualty is but another way of trying to justify extermination, constructing white innocence and benevolence in contrast to red “savagery.” This was very common among politicians, editors, historians, and others at the time. Harriet Bishop McConkey, for example, uses very similar terms to describe the killing of Upper Agency warehouse clerk George Gleason — “...these Red Wood murderers, who now were ravaging the country in every direction, and maddened by every fresh taste of blood, were still dealing death and captivity to all in their way. Gleason was a favorite with all, and they had never received aught but kindness from his hands. But that did not save him” (1863, pp. 48-49).

understanding to Swisshelm's "heinous" tirade by reconstructing an equally "heinous" Dakota "savagery" (Appendix B, p. 401 below).

When I interviewed Jennifer in April, she spoke with pride about the success of the exhibit and the outcome of her panel in particular. In a way reminiscent of her earlier remarks about being "optimistic" that her view radical view would change, Jennifer spoke of herself as having been "a freak" for wanting to expose white supremacy so boldly:

Man, I thought it turned out way better than expected(hhh). Yeah. Um, I was really pleased that they didn't try to censor me with the Jane Swisshelm. Cause I was a freak. I mean, cause [...] I know that it's extre- it looks, and I know that it is, and- and I- when I went into it, I know that it looks one sided. And I know that it is not very sympathetic to whites. Um, but, you know, I- I- I still stand by it and I'm really proud of my panel. (Interview, 04-26-2012)

I asked her about the origins of the Huggins story because none of it had been included among her draft materials — "Um, they asked me, cause I mean- John knew that it looked a little one sided and he was like 'Let's tell one story from a settler's perspective,' so I did more research and came up with, um, Huggins." When I asked her whether she had initially thought of anything on her own to place in the sidebar, she said, "I don't think I did. And that's why- and that's why when I needed something- and so when I talked with John he was like, 'You know, let's give a story of um- let's give a story of someone who, you know, was sympathetic and was trying to do- do good work.'"

Apparently, Jennifer had not delivered on Harwell's desire to add a sidebar about white victims by the end of the J-term.²¹ In telling how it came about that she located one soon afterward, Jennifer reveals both how the panel remained her own, accounting for her pride, and how it did not. Important to what Jennifer described as this "last-ditch" compensatory work carried out to offset critical "one sidedness" is the language through which it was performed²² — in first-person plural ("let's give a story") and according to notions of what constitutes "good" white-guy work. On the one hand, there was good Huggins trying to assimilate the Indians; on the other, there was good Harwell, enlightening the general public with "the facts" about white victimhood. Important in the shifting of pronouns in Jennifer's account is how quickly Harwell's need becomes an internalized requirement ("when I needed something"). Thus, Jennifer went back to the sources. Like the history of tracking down the hard-to-find "facts" on the U.S.-Dakota War recounted in Chapter Five, the reliability of those sources seems to have gone unquestioned.

Eventually, I presented Jennifer with my reading of the problematic juxtaposition of the Huggins story with Swisshelm. At this, she paused and momentarily altered her assessment of the panel-making process:

²¹ Harwell expressed this in class (Fieldnotes, 01-20-2012). Course materials containing the Huggins sidebar are dated February 8. Jennifer's original "side panel" submitted January 23 sought to provide more information about Jane Swisshelm.

²² **Jennifer:** "And I think there were some last-ditch efforts there to try and- cause I feel like- think both Dr. Lenz and John realized that we had pushed the envelope, and so I think there was some last-ditch efforts to kind of be like- (.) but- I mean (.)" **Rick:** "To make it more palatable to who they thought the audience was gonna be?" **Jennifer:** "Yeah, to make it more palat- right, to make it more palatable" (Interview, 04-26-2012).

Yeah, you know, if I'm gonna be honest, I didn't- what I- I wanted to go all the way with the panel, and I felt a lot of pressure from John to give the other side because the rest of it is very one sided. And so- I mean, in- in wanting to have it be balanced, I think that was what was, you know, wanting to happen, but I feel like if I was gonna go all the way, we should have just gone all the way and just- and just gone all the way and just done it.

Despite this, Jennifer stuck to her reading of the panel as a radical take on white supremacy:

Um, but I've had this panel read in completely different views. I've had students who've told me it's completely one sided and it makes whites look like the savages because of the rhetoric in- in this part, and then, I hadn't heard your perspective. I hadn't heard that at all. What I- what- what I have heard in the majority of the responses that I've heard is "Well it makes it look like white people are awful."

Although she had not heard anyone else share an interpretation like mine, Jennifer did not disagree with it either; in fact, drawing it to her attention caused her to recognize possibilities in the panel other than the critique of whiteness that seemed to strike others at first glance according to her account. Jennifer acknowledged that

The juxtaposition of the two stories is kind of- is kind of difficult for me too because I feel like they all flow together in such a way that could present it in that light, which is- which is rough. Cause, I mean, I'm a newspaper woman so I know that the power of placement is huge.

In the end, Jennifer sounded ambivalent about being advised against going all the way and creating a panel true to the sense of justice she had expressed in her very first draft; this was not any deep sense of ambivalence, however, keeping her from partaking in the successes that followed the J-term. As mentioned, she took a job with BLCHS, providing tours at regional historical sites associated with the war. She traveled with the instructors to a national venue acting as a student spokesperson for the exhibit, all such developments marking her ascendance from probationary status as a public historian. They fit the pragmatic view she left me with at the end of our final conversation. After I speculated that designing the exhibit for the particular imagined audience²³ might have inhibited its orientation toward social justice, Jennifer said,

I mean and I- and I get it. And I understand that(hhhh) and it's also the all-mighty dollar and who is- you know, like who's- who's- who's funding this, you know? And it's like- and so I think that we got away with far more than we- than I thought we were going to, to be honest. [...] I mean it's like, he who holds the money and holds the cultural dominance is going to continue to write the history books and is going to continue to control the narrative.

Conclusion: Acknowledging the Original Position as a Raced Way of Being

Perhaps a surprising thing about Harwell's approach to managing and presenting the museum exhibit to the public is the degree to which he acknowledged the raced (and

²³ Part of Harwell's instructions for the first panel writing assignment were, "Write it as if you're presenting it to your roommate, parent, or somebody who doesn't have any prior knowledge about the topic" (Fieldnotes, 01-09-2012). Eventually, other white identities like the youthful third-grade one in the classroom scene above blended in and helped shape the implied audience.

gendered) identity that shaped it. This includes the ten zero-point narratives he co-authored with students, narratives like Jennifer's (shown in its entirety, Figure 7.1) told from the perspective of the observer who cannot be observed:

Figure 7.1: “War — Settler Perspectives” Panel Narrative

Treaties between the Dakota and the U.S. government opened up thousands of acres to newcomers. Immigrants poured into the region, growing from 6,077 in 1850 to 170,000 by 1860. This boom is unequaled by all others in American history, including the California Gold Rush. When the war broke out in 1862, thousands of newcomers fled in panic spurred on by reports in local and national newspapers warning of the “red menace” and “Sioux massacres.” By the end of the war, at least 450—and perhaps as many as 800—newcomers and U.S. soldiers were killed. Many of those who left never returned.

The U.S. military response to the public outcry was slow at first. Due to the government's preoccupation with the Civil War in the south and a great underestimation of Dakota warriors, the military was largely understaffed and underprepared, leading to several defeats early in the fighting. In the end, the military's superior technology, in the form of cannons and howitzers, gave them a significant advantage. This, combined with rising pressure and debate from within the Dakota nation, provided the impetus for their surrender at Camp Release on September 26, 1862.

If Harwell betrayed anything about the historically privileged identity in our one-on-one interview that he did not readily share in public, it was the white guy's superior sense of “accuracy,” his special ability to write the truth amidst all the “crazy stuff.” Harwell left this belief out, for example, when addressing the social-justice workshop crowd on March 10:

Our exhibit starts over here. And we try to be very, uh, forthright with sort of our perspective, where we were coming from. I'm a white guy from North Carolina. I am not Dakota. I have great empathy for- uh, for what happened in 1862, but I did not experience it. I don't have family history. Uh, and so, I just wanted us to be clear that this is where we were coming from. This uh- these people are who we talked to. These are the sources that we looked at. There are lots and lots of different viewpoints with any history, especially 1862, so I just wanted to put that out there.

The mixing of pronouns in this passage gives another example of how the authoritative white-guy identity could move into and out of the j-term collective identity, making that collective identity its own and vice versa through inclusive *we*. In the second line, “where we were coming from” quickly becomes “I,” “a white guy from North Carolina” who symbolically performs J-term forthrightness for the audience. Aligned with the original position, that identity presents itself as abstracted from social contingencies at hand — “I don't have family history.” It continues on in first-person singular through lines three and four, but suddenly switches back to plural in line five where what “I” wants for “us” suddenly becomes “where we were coming from.” The statement ends with an implicit assertion of the socially abstracted identity circulating among “lots and lots of different viewpoints,” ostensibly on equal footing.

Thinking back on how the original position took shape on the 1912 hanging monument, these forthright acknowledgements of racial privilege should maybe come as no surprise. At public gatherings and even in the newspapers, the old-settler commemorators of the semicentennial had no trouble defining themselves in terms of

racial identity. It was in writing the inscription — shaping the public meditative transaction — where they sought to cast their own identity markers behind the veil. Here is where Harwell can be said to have carried out progressive work, designing an introductory panel that attempted to reveal the identity behind the public narrative²⁴ — “This exhibit was produced by students in the course *Conflict and Remembrance: The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862*, taught at St. Lucia College,”²⁵ “These panels reflect that student work and exploration,” and “It cannot speak for all people and perspectives.” Important here is that the whiteness and masculinity so readily acknowledged in face-to-face forums still could not find explicit expression on the official public artifact.

What I find noteworthy about these acknowledgments of identity is the repetition of the idea that so many things *cannot be said* from the J-term perspective — all of the people and perspectives for whom the exhibit cannot speak. This too seems progressive for stopping short of asserting privileged white-male norms as universals, a move informed by pluralist multiculturalism and not traditionally made by white historians when producing public knowledge (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997, pp. 15-19, 37; Mignolo, 2009). Despite freely distributing white-guy identity among his knowledge workers, Harwell monitored student talk and perhaps enhanced his enlightened identity by seeing that students did not actively promote that identity as a normative standard beyond. After telling the class on the day of our interview, for example, that “we have to acknowledge who we are and the fact that we can’t speak for everybody” (Fieldnotes, 01-20-2012), Harwell later told me,

²⁴ Image withheld in keeping with the promise of anonymity.

²⁵ Titles and names changed to protect participant anonymity.

I don't know if you heard that discussion but we were talking about word choice and it was Sarah and, uh, um, Jennifer was standing there and was saying, "I think that we need to articulate that- that we spent a lot of time thinking about this. And we're not saying we're right and we're not saying that ten years from now this is gonna be the same word that we're using, but we did think about it a lot and so if you're offended by it, at least know that we spent a lot of time thinking about it and here's how we came to that conclusion." I think that that's really, really cool. And I think frankly that's all we can do. You know, here's who we were. Here's who we talked to and what we looked at. Here are other places you can go, and, you know, that's it. (Interview, 01-20-2012)

Interpreting the right kind of *we* repetition from Jennifer's speech provided Harwell a sense of relief about the kind of exhibit taking shape — "I'm comfortable with what I heard today" (Interview, 01-20-2012). While this particular act of monitoring implied some concessions according to the white-guy belief system — "we're not saying we're right" — Jennifer's caution and her repeated phrase "we're not saying" seemed to suggest that the limitations placed on critical thought by the justice-as-fairness view were taking hold. In this passage, Harwell recognizes this far-more-radical student's understanding that whatever meaning the exhibit happened to mediate could be defended from the equally valid J-term perspective — "we did think about it a lot and so if you're offended by it, at least know that we spent a lot of time thinking about it," a statement not far removed from Tom's "you can't- you can't blame that person for building something incorrectly if somebody else's truth is different from your own" (Interview, 05-11-2015). From there, Harwell could safely rehearse "who we were" and its affinity with the form-

your-own-opinions position — “Here are other places you can go, and, you know, that’s it,” a statement evocative of the *Free Press*’s proposal for historically minded motorists — “SEE for YOURSELF” (Ojanpa, September 9, 2012). Like the newspaper articles, the exhibit narratives would speak from the original position and thereby advocate no position, including positions aligned with that other(ed) sense of justice — social justice.

However enlightened, perpetual reminders that “we cannot speak for everybody” functioned in a directive way, leading students to a very different destination than the one Dr. Mato Nunpa invited them to arrive at in the social-justice conference workshop — “the Dakota perspective.” J-term students expressed distaste for the notion of anyone speaking for their people as in Chapter Four when Holly sensed that Gary Clayton Anderson was trying to speak for all whites — “it makes me really uncomfortable when people see themselves as like a representation for their entire group...” (Focus group, 01-13-2012).²⁶ At the same time, many of the students thought the exhibit was attempting to speak on behalf of Dakota people, an even more troubling notion. Lost in all this representational discomfort and anxiety was the idea that privileged white students could actually co-construct a critical moral perspective on the U.S.-Dakota War and try to

²⁶ Tom took a defensive stance toward John Trudell when I mentioned attending his lecture where he positioned himself as a fellow human being speaking out against settler colonialism at the St. Lucia social-justice conference: “Yeah. He kind of represents a minority in the grou- he speaks for everybody, but he represents a minority aggression. [...] It seems like there’s a group of people that are absolute separatists, like, ‘there can be no- there can be no getting along,’ and then there’s others that are just like, ‘we’re all people,’ you know. Yeah we were- we come from different pasts.” This comment provides another example of how the white sense of justice as fairness and its language of “all” can work directly against social justice.

speak not only *in the interest of* (rather than *on behalf of*) Dakota people, but *in the interest of* oppressed people everywhere.

Alongside repeated notions of what the museum exhibit could not say was the conception of a white-guy identity severely limited if not trapped in a perspective that was unlikely to change. As Harwell put it in one of his early formulations, "I'm a white guy from North Carolina. I've only been here seven years. I can't get away from who I am" (Fieldnotes, 01-05-2012). This seemed to follow the ...*We Cannot Escape History*... thinking promoted in Mankato. On this point, Jennifer did her own switching from I to we, speaking on behalf of all her classmates in the midst of the panel writing:

I'm nervous about it getting it right. I'm nervous about- because I'm always going to be informed by my white perspective. No matter what. There's no way that I'm ever gonna shake that off. Um, and I think that that's true for everyone in the class. We're all gonna come from the white perspective. I think that the teachers-the-, you know, those that are teaching the course, Professor Lenz and John, are doing an awesome job. Um, but obvious- I'm still really anxious about how it's gonna be received. (Interview, 01-18- 2012)

Chapter Eight

From Below in Theory, From Above in Practice:***Whites Provide Dakota Perspectives***

I feel like we had a very objective point of view on it. We looked at both sides.

— Tom (Interview, 05-11-2012)

I was really nervous about it because if I were a Dakota person it would offend me. But we're not making the panels for Dakota people, we're making them for like ignorant white people and so I was going into it knowing that there could be some what-not....

— Stephanie (Interview, 04-27-2012)

So I talked to the students and then I found out that the director(hhh)- the director of the historical society had the final say in the content of those panels. Well, what is that saying? In other words, he used the students but he made the final decision as to the content of each panel.

— Sheldon Wolfchild (Interview, 03-20-2013)

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Chapter Eight completes my analysis of the two-panel fulcrum designed to provide settler and Dakota perspectives in the *Conflict and Remembrance* museum exhibit. Looking closely into Harwell's pedagogy as he supervised student work on the "War — Dakota perspectives" panel, I continue to develop themes from the previous chapter, including use of inclusive *we* to win consent for taking up the justice-as-fairness

view. This chapter also continues to explore dilemmas the justice-as-fairness approach presented to students, especially Stephanie who thought her panel should give some sense for what the history might look like *from below*, incorporating perspectives of Dakota women and children who suffered during the violence of 1862. As in Chapter Seven, I frame this discussion in tensions that arose at the social-justice conference in March, the purpose being to better contextualize Stephanie's experience and demonstrate how directing students away from critical narratives worked to reproduce the historical conflict they were studying.

Historical Reenactments

As he mentions in the epigraphic quote, Sheldon Wolfchild talked to the students at the social-justice conference workshop on March 10 as they stood by their *Conflict and Remembrance* exhibit panels and fielded questions from the browsing public. Wolfchild came looking for display of information he had provided them with in January¹ — the adoption of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery into U.S. policy; Article 6 of the 1858 treaty introducing the policy of using Dakota treaty money to compensate whites should they incur injury or loss of property in the increasingly likely event of war;² and special

¹ Wolfchild sought to inform J-term participants on four separate occasions: a Sunday afternoon presentation at BLCHS on January 8 that Harwell promoted in the classroom; extended contribution to Q and A at Gary Clayton Anderson's lecture on January 10; a class visit on January 16 with Pam Halverson; and a contribution to the dialogue held during the field trip to the Lower Sioux Community Center on January 19.

² An important precursor to the U.S. Dakota War took place in northern Iowa in 1857 when white military authorities failed to prosecute a trader for stealing horses from and eventually murdering Wahpekute Dakota chief Sintomniduta. Sintomniduta's kinsman Inkpaduta took matters into his own hands, leading raids against area settlers, killing

government investigator George E. H. Day's warnings to Commissioner Dole and President Lincoln in 1861-62 that violence would soon break out if they failed to reform Minnesota's corrupt Indian system.³ Back in January, Wolfchild brought copies of critical histories to J-term functions, namely Roy Meyer's *History of the Santee Sioux* (1967) and David Nichols's *Lincoln and the Indians* (1978), using them to model a different way for white students to go "back to the sources," in this case to locate knowledge about how colonial power and racism shaped regional events in the 1860s. All along, Wolfchild's purpose had been to help students contextualize the war as an outcome of settler colonialism and to provide empirical evidence for how its causes had been preventable (Interview, 03-20-2013). Yet as Harwell had taken issue with

about 40 (Wingerd, 2010, pp. 261-263). **Article 6** of the 1858 treaty reads, "The Mendawakanton and Wahpakoota [sic] bands of Dakota or Sioux Indians acknowledge their dependence on the Government of the United States, and do hereby pledge and bind themselves to preserve friendly relations with the citizens thereof, and to commit no injuries or depredations on their persons or property, nor on those of the members of any other tribe; but in case of any such injury or depredation, full compensation shall, as far as practicable be made therefor [sic] out of their moneys in the hands of the United States; the amount in all cases to be determined by the Secretary of the Interior" (Kappler, 1904).

³ Part of Wolfchild's attempted contribution to the exhibit, as he recounted it, involved providing the instructors with examples of letters warning of impending war, not just from George E. H. Day but from missionaries and the citizens of New Ulm. Wolfchild: "Well (1.5) after I told- I requested that several times to have that in there- and when I come to the meeting that summer and I look at the panels, there's only one little- few sentences on the George E. H. Day thing and that was it in preventing the war" (Interview, 03-20-2013). Here, Wolfchild refers to a later printing of the panels after they had undergone further editing. The panels unveiled in March had no reference to George E. H. Day; they did include something similar — an October 7 letter to Lincoln from George Crooker chalking the violence up to the corruption Day called out before the war. Crucially, the Crooker letter was written after the battles had ended. In explaining adding in information about Day after Wolfchild's criticisms at the social-justice conference, Harwell conceded it was significant but qualified this by saying, "I didn't feel that we were beholden to that" (Interview, 05-16-2012).

Wolfchild's ideas about why only etchings remain from the Mankato hanging, he also seemed to harbor convictions against the significance of George E. H. Day's investigation, joking in class one afternoon that Day was "the Kenneth Starr of his times" (Fieldnotes, 01-13-2012).⁴ Only a few days earlier, Wolfchild had underscored the importance of the investigation in a talk hosted by Harwell at the Blankenship County Historical Society.

Not only did Wolfchild not find information from his J-term contributions displayed on the final panels presented on March 10, but he encountered narratives riddled with passive language that seemed to erase white actors from their complicity in instigating the violence of 1862. Monica's narrative on "Assimilation" (Figure 8.1), for instance, the panel immediately preceding the "War — Dakota perspectives," reads the following way:

⁴ Harwell often made humorous analogies like this in the classroom. This was one of the few times I raised my hand asking for clarification. Harwell explained Day "was the guy who came to observe the Indians prior to the war and reported back to Commissioner Dole about them. Eventually he was told to shut up or he would be blacklisted. He wrote to Lincoln on New Year's day, 1862, supposedly predicting a war. He was not listened to" (Fieldnotes, 01-13-2012). I got the impression Harwell might have thought Wolfchild was something of a conspiracy theorist for repeatedly emphasizing the importance of Day's investigation. Wolfchild carefully based his contributions on David Nichols's, *Lincoln and the Indians* (1978), pp. 70-75.

Figure 8.1: Assimilation Panel Narrative

After the treaties were signed in 1851 the Dakota Indians were expected to move to reservations. Not only were the Dakota mandated to move, but they were also told to conform to Christianity and become farmers. Some Dakota indeed decided to farm on land allotments. As for these few hundred Dakota who did adhere to white society, they were given better goods and more money by the government.

The many Dakota who did not submit to the attempted extermination of their culture were left to survive by their own means. After being asked to completely give up their way of life and live like the newcomers, the Dakota society was perpetually shattered. By 1862, the annuity system, assimilation, and reservation life left the Dakota starving, economically desperate, fractured, and angry.

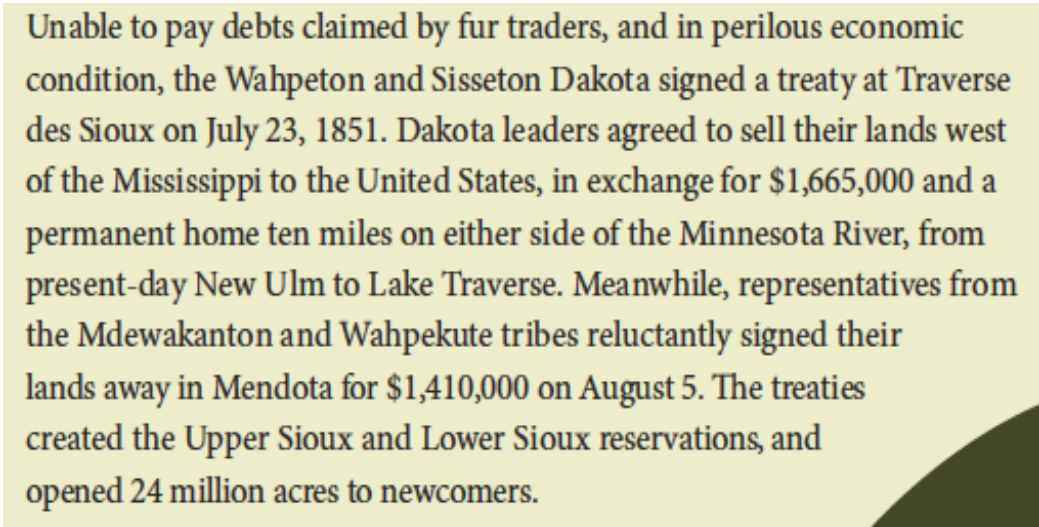
This is the entirety of Monica's narrative contribution to the exhibit by which I mean her writing beyond the selection and composition of images and quotes.⁵ Heavy in passive-

⁵ It is difficult to summarize the degree to which students actually determined the composition of the final panels. There were compromises everywhere, sometimes even for Harwell as seen in the previous chapter, but compromise did not occur equally. Sarah, for example, selected only one of the three images printed on her final panel, the other two coming as different kinds of "surprises" when she saw the final product (Interview, 04-26-2012). As will be seen in this chapter, Harwell reserved the right to insert sidebars and quotes late in the game and after the J-term ended. In some cases where students seemed to have a hand in selecting material, they really had no clear preference and left decisions up to the professional. For example, when Nikki wasn't sure about selecting a prominent anchor image for her panel on the last day of in-class editing, Harwell pushed the image used in the end, telling the class: "I don't want to crush anyone's artistic spirit, but I would like to use some images from the Blankenship County collection and not

voice constructions, the narrative employs active verbs only to show Dakota people making choices offered to them seemingly by no one. White agency is only implied through abstractions like “the annuity system, assimilation, and reservation life.”

Mitch and Holly’s narrative about the treaties (Figures 8.2-3) — a topic whose importance Wolfchild repeatedly stressed in January — works in a similar way, using active verbs to depict the Dakota people signing away their homeland:

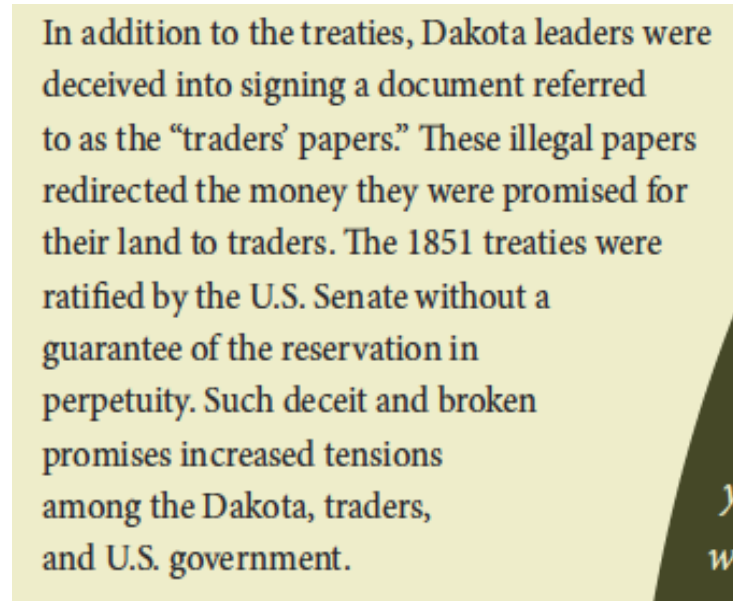
Figure 8.2: Treaties Panel Narrative I



Unable to pay debts claimed by fur traders, and in perilous economic condition, the Wahpeton and Sisseton Dakota signed a treaty at Traverse des Sioux on July 23, 1851. Dakota leaders agreed to sell their lands west of the Mississippi to the United States, in exchange for \$1,665,000 and a permanent home ten miles on either side of the Minnesota River, from present-day New Ulm to Lake Traverse. Meanwhile, representatives from the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute tribes reluctantly signed their lands away in Mendota for \$1,410,000 on August 5. The treaties created the Upper Sioux and Lower Sioux reservations, and opened 24 million acres to newcomers.

When it comes to white agency on the Treaties panel, passive voice suddenly engages:

have it all be MHS images because we are a partner in this project” (Fieldnotes, 01-26-2012).

Figure 8.3: Treaties Panel Narrative II

In addition to the treaties, Dakota leaders were deceived into signing a document referred to as the “traders’ papers.” These illegal papers redirected the money they were promised for their land to traders. The 1851 treaties were ratified by the U.S. Senate without a guarantee of the reservation in perpetuity. Such deceit and broken promises increased tensions among the Dakota, traders, and U.S. government.

In cases where active verbs come into use implying white agency, acting subjects are inanimate objects like “illegal papers” or abstractions like “deceit.”

In the process of sharing his displeasure over the panels, Mr. Wolfchild reportedly told J-termers “you’re setting back the discussion 150 years” (Harwell Interview, 05-16-2012). Students grew anxious. Some defended the exhibit as I will explain later in this chapter. Stephanie, the co-author of the “War — Dakota perspectives” panel, broke out in tears as Wolfchild did not easily relent; she had been trying to account for her panel’s content to another critical Dakota audience member at the same time. Harwell stepped in to try to take the heat off of students but admitted later that he didn’t handle it very well

— “I tend not to stand my ground very much. If I’m going to mess up I should mess up in that direction” (Interview, 05-16-2012).

In making sense of this conflict months later, Harwell and Wolfchild both made analogies to the nineteenth century. After telling me, for example, what the students told him about Harwell overseeing final edits after the class had ended, Wolfchild said:

You know, they could say, ‘Oh, well the students wrote it.’ Well, no. When the director has the final say of the content, then that says the- that’s saying then the director had the authority and did those- those panels himself. And so I was very upset about that because I gave them that information. So therein lies the problem with them. And then after that- after that, that became a very- a distrust situation for me again. We’re back to the whole same old mentality of 150 years that we’ve gone through before as Dakota people. (Interview, 03-20-2013)

For many critical scholars, including Wolfchild, the history of the U.S.-Dakota War is a history of white authority figures pulling strings behind the scenes for their own gain, the tragic outcomes being an unleashing of Dakota aggression toward less empowered and often probationary whites, the banishment of nearly all Dakota people from the state, and a historical distrust that continues to this day. In various ways, the *Conflict and Remembrance* workshop became a kind of reenactment of all of this with probationary public historians facing Wolfchild’s initial anger and Wolfchild himself feeling caught in what he emphasized again as “the same mentality of 150 years ago” by which he meant not just his own anger or whites’ mismanagement of affairs or even his renewed distrust, but his future banishment from St. Lucia College by people with the authority to pull such strings:

And so of course, what did that mean then? My documentary as I finished several months later was never allowed to be shown down there by the historical society director or St. Lucia [...] Well, when I made the issue on the day of the panels, that said- that gave them their out. Their out was right there. "Okay, now we- now we have our excuse against Sheldon. We have our excuse. We stayed clear of Sheldon and his truthful documentary and that gives us the out so we don't have to take the blame-" And the authority- "if people aren't gonna- if they come and see Sheldon's documentary and we show it, then we're gonna get in trouble here." (Interview, 03-20-2013)

It is important to note in this passage Wolfchild's sensitivity to the J-term mindset as he experienced it, expressed through his own switch from *I* to *we*. Lines like "we have our excuse against Sheldon" and "we don't have to take the blame" told that the J-term service-learning project was as much if not more about whites building community together as it was about engendering dialogue or informing an ignorant white public. Inclusive J-term *we* served as a powerful tool to exclude critical voices, both Dakota and white, in ways reminiscent of 1862.

Like Wolfchild, Harwell also looked to the nineteenth century to contextualize what had taken place. When I brought the conflict up in our last interview, he quickly evoked a quote from the "loyal" Dakota Paul Mazakutemani:

Sheldon I mean (2.0) you know (1.0) Sheldon's a person and so(hhh) I mean, he's a Dakota. He has his history. He has his perspective. But, you know, there are people who- I mean, what did Paul Mazakutemani say? "I don't know of one nation where all are good or bad." There are things that I like about Sheldon and

respect about Sheldon and there are other things that I don't. (Interview, 05-16-2012)

This account starts from a position that seems to want to render Wolfchild *nullus*, making his personhood into something I needed reassured of; yet according to Harwell's justice-as-fairness view, Wolfchild's personhood actually does need to be marked as socially situated, i.e. as having its history and perspective as opposed to the producer of public knowledge who, as seen in the previous chapter, claims "I don't have family history" and proceeds to balance descendant perspectives in depersonalized ways. Of course, this racial view has its own socially situated history examined in Chapter Six with the empowered colonial citizen constructing his superior ability to transact with anonymity against the Indian who is imagined as irretrievably embedded in the social world, bound by things like kinship ties, indigenous trade relations, etc. (Seth, 2010). In keeping with the contractarian tenets underlying the justice-as-fairness view, the Indian remains both a *subject* (the topic of representation and historically *nullus*, an unperson to be dominated) and *subjective* (one having an irrational perspective), understood in opposition to and as an enhancement of the white producer of public knowledge who remains rational and objective, positioned somewhere outside the bounds of representation.

Before moving on to the "War — Dakota perspectives" panel, I wish to make two points regarding how Harwell rationalizes his assessment of this conflict. First comes his reading of the Paul Mazakutemani quote, easily retrieved for its being stenciled on a wall at BLCHS — "There are good and bad men everywhere. I could not point to any nation where all were good," Harwell's perhaps unintended message being that Wolfchild is a

bad Indian.⁶ Mazakutemani made this statement to white officials in 1857 when trying to prove his “loyalty” or status as a “good” Indian to whites in the wake of the Henry Lott debacle near Spirit Lake, Iowa. There in the precursor to the U.S.-Dakota War mentioned above (note 2), Inkpaduta and his followers meted out justice on their own terms, killing settlers after white officials failed to prosecute Lott, the trader who murdered Inkapudta’s kinsman, Sintomniduta (Wingerd, 2010, pp. 260-264). Mazakutemani, a Dakota once famous regionally for having taken up Christianity and farming, worked to rescue whites in 1857. According to the logic of his quote, events in Iowa demonstrated that Inkpaduta’s men were no different than any other “bad” people found among any people; there were good and bad Indians just as there were good and bad whites. As with so many relativistic statements used to support of the justice-as-fairness view, its logic appeals precisely for the way it erases knowledge of unequal social practices that established white domination, promoting a sense of sameness and notions of good and bad “to comfort descendants of the ‘settlers’” (Loewen, 1995/2005, p. 91).

Second, Harwell told me he found support for his negative assessment of Wolfchild from what another Dakota told him this at the workshop:

⁶ When presenting the Paul Mazakutemani quote to students on their field trip to BLCHS, Harwell offered his translation of its claim about the omnipresence of both good and bad people: “It’s not all Star Wars. There are good and bad people everywhere. This may not seem to be the case with people like Ramsey and Sibley who seem like pretty evil guys. Still, not everything they did was evil” (Fieldnotes, 01-11-2012). According to this reading which seems to contradict itself, the quote means there are no good or bad people, just people who do both good and bad things. As seen, this thinking was promoted locally in 2012 in various journalistic pieces already mentioned that sought to make the war too complex for interpretation. See for instance the Mankato *Free Press* article, “Good guys, bad guys? History isn’t always so simple” (Krohn, August 12, 2012).

And so, you know, it didn't bother me. I had a- a- a Dakota- another Dakota person, and this was related to me so it's hearsay from my mouth, but you know they said, because one of Sheldon's quotes was uh, "you're setting back the discussion 150 years, and I'm gonna tell every Dakota person in the world about this," and their quote was, "Okay, even if Sheldon does tell uh every Dakota person in the world that, seven will listen." (Interview, 05-16-2012)

The important point for my remaining analysis of J-term work is all of this being symptomatic of ideological orientations mediated by empowered whites as they tried to cultivate cross-racial dialogue through a service-learning project, orientations that also shaped representation of Dakota history in a highly successful museum exhibit. Harwell's statements call to mind (again) Richard Bernstein's point about *defensive pluralism* as a form of tokenism where lip service is paid to others (all Dakota voices), but where real listening breaks down for the conviction "that there is nothing important to be learned from them" (Bernstein, 1991, p. 336).⁷ Indeed, just as Dr. Lenz's convictions about "good" institutional practices and "appropriate" Holocaust Studies scholarship hindered listening to Waziyatawin and representing Dakota history as a history of genocide, Harwell's convictions about "good" white-guy epistemology hindered listening to Wolfchild and fully representing the U.S.-Dakota War as a preventable (socially produced) series of events. Glenn Wasicuna memorably diagnosed this problem early in

⁷ Harwell was well aware of this dynamic in regional commemoration. In class one day, he critiqued a spokesperson from New Ulm whom he had recently heard speak in a Minnesota Public Radio story. As Harwell told it, the person being interviewed claimed to want to hear multiple Dakota perspectives but then turned around and said he couldn't understand why Dakota people weren't coming for ceremonies at the town's defenders' monument (Fieldnotes, 01-12-2012).

his J-term lecture when speaking of a mainstream refusal to hear and respect how Dakota people explain themselves — “Who are we? We know who we are but nobody’s listening to what we have to say, how we explain ourselves” (Lecture, 01-05-2012).

Significant as well to my reading of the public pedagogy of 2012 is how many favored principles seemed to come undone on the white side of this conflict with Wolfchild — mutual respect, equal validity for all informed perspectives, the idea that this is no simple history about good guys and bad guys, the public historian’s claim to superior epistemology, etc. As I experienced it and recorded it, and have thought about it and investigated it in my research since 2012, Wolfchild practiced text-based “objectivity” better than anyone associated with the J-term, staying true to white sources, Roy Meyer and David Nichols in particular.⁸ Still he came away perceived as the subjective and unreasonable one. I can think of no better explanation for this than racism, the application of a social double standard based on ancestry (Fields and Fields, 2012, p. 17).⁹

⁸ Mr. Wolfchild did the state a favor in working for the re-issue of David Nichols’s 1978 classic *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012). In paying credit to Wolfchild, Nichols writes in a new preface, “One day, reflecting on this story [of the 1862 trials and hanging], I remarked to Sheldon that I have now concluded that there was, in a sense, an American ‘holocaust’” (p. xiv).

⁹ The J-term rejection of Sheldon Wolfchild’s input is an ugly thing to write about. It nevertheless happened and is essential to understanding the J-term experience. Two main Dakota consultants volunteered to assist the class in January, Sandee Geshick and Sheldon Wolfchild, both from the Lower Sioux Community. After the field trip there on January 19, tensions between the two were evident to the students (Focus group, 01-20-2012), but reasons for them were never divulged. It remained unclear whether the instructors fully understood the tensions either; in a follow-up interview, Dr. Lenz told me she invited both to lunch during the social-justice conference in March, but one declined after hearing the other would be there (Interview, 04-27-2012). Late in the course, Stephanie shared with me her perception that “everyone seems to hate Sheldon,”

Imagining Perspectives “from Below”

As told in Chapter One, Stephanie and Tom designed the “War — Dakota perspectives” panel. To briefly recount their profiles, Stephanie was a fourth-year Psychology major who had recently moved from North Carolina. She had completed coursework on racism and native-American history and already read one of the books on the syllabus, *Waterlily* (1988), plus *Black Elk Speaks* (1932). One of her goals in taking the course was to learn about modern Dakota life from Dakota people. Tom was a second-year Nursing major and a veteran of the Iraq War who had suffered an injury serving in the Navy. He came from Hutchinson, Minnesota, a town besieged by Dakota fighters in 1862. He possessed deep familiarity with the war and regional historical sites.

but when asked to elaborate, she qualified this to mean other Dakotas, citing Wazyatawin (2008, pp. 121-127). As for the J-term students, Stephanie said, “I think that we all in the class think he’s really awesome and radical and amazing” (Interview, 01-24-2012). I heard no such assessments of Geshick positive or negative; students didn’t seem to know her as well because she never visited the class. Yet the unveiling of the museum exhibit revealed how consulting work performed by Wolfchild and Geshick went in one direction. As Wolfchild’s contributions were disregarded, Geshick was quoted on the sidebar to Sarah’s commemoration panel, in a sense receiving the last word for the entire exhibit. I argue that Stephanie’s reference to Wolfchild’s “radical” orientation offers insight into how this tokenism unfolded. Wolfchild consistently raised uncomfortable questions for whites at J-term functions whereas Geshick offered more “appropriate” interpretations of the history. At the social-justice conference, for example, Geshick advocated calling the war the Dakota-U.S. War “because it wasn’t the United States government who declared war, it was Little Crow who declared war” (03-10-2012). A barometer for the safety of such a view can be seen in Mankato *Free Press* sesquicentennial coverage, with the editor titling one of his early columns “Dakota-U.S. War History Should Be Learned” (January 10, 2012). Other *Free Press* writers willingly took up this modern title for the conflict (Linehan, March 4, 2012) which sounds progressive by putting the Dakota first, yet threatens to place historical blame and burden exactly where settler society has always wanted it. Like “the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862,” this title keeps understanding of the violence and current forms of commemoration locked in an interpretive-free, honor-the-fallen zone of patriotism policed both by whites and some descendants of Dakotas who served the U.S. military in the 1860s, in some cases by force (Gunderson, January 19, 2011).

Taking on the panel most overtly designated for Dakota perspectives, Tom and Stephanie seemed to face the most complexity in trying to shape a condensed and coherent narrative. Both mentioned Dakota factionalism as a challenge in individual interviews. Tom said:

I think that the panels would from the Dakota perspective, for our specific topic, you would have 6 or 7 panels trying to- trying to wrap your head around each perspective, you know, mixed-blood pro war, mixed-blood against the war, and why, and you talk and just get all the perspectives to show the complexity of the one side of the war which the one side was multi-faceted. (Interview, 01-26-2012)

In a separate interview, Stephanie concurred:

Yeah and also it's impossible to say "this is how the Dakota felt about this" because there were so many different factions there too, whereas, you know, like from the settler perspective generally people were pretty angry and scared. Angry and scared is how they felt whereas- there's just so much to tell and no space to tell it. (Interview, 01-24-2012)

Indeed, the imbalanced history unifying one side and dividing the other seemed to place panel writers in unequal positions regarding the difficulty of separating the historical wheat from the alleged chaff. Usually a helpful exercise in learning how to identify what's important and focus one's writing, the requirement to produce condensed narratives threatened to contradict the message that this is a complex history by forcing students to oversimplify. As the 250-word requirement carried varying degrees of difficulty across selected panels, it exacerbated Tom and Stephanie's differing critical

orientations as well. Tom spoke in positive terms about having to hone things down and remained favorable toward the exhibit from beginning to end:

And I do like that we have the ability to do sidebars, which with these sidebars you can communicate a whole lot more in depth with the information, um, if a person chooses to, but that the main gist of the story is told right here. And I think the process is a learning process for us as much as anything- is how to- knowing you can be short with your words but be able to expand on it if- if called upon. So the- the number of lectures, the mass of the reading, you can put it down in this tiny little context but people are able to ask you those questions and you can give them the knowledge that you have beyond just the 250 word limit. (Interview, 01-26-2012)

Stephanie on the other hand expressed anxiety about meeting the requirement and still being able to produce a socially responsible panel:

I wanted the Dakota war- or the war from the Dakota perspective because I thought it would be easier, like I figured there'd be way more resources on it but the problem is there's so much and I don't really feel like I- like I'm representing anything accurately because I can't do any first-hand interviews with anyone and I'm a white(hhhh) and- so there's that and then, you know, we have 200 words to convey this huge thing and I know that there's certain stigmas here like culturally with the white people and this incident and so it's just really difficult for Tom and I to summarize in 200 words while still maintaining like I think a positive like focus but not too positive because then that'll look bad. Oh my gosh! (Interview, 01-24-2012)

Here, Stephanie was trying to remain positive about the exhibit like her co-author. When I asked her more about it later in the interview, however, she satirized the narrative taking shape:

Stephanie: “The Dakota were starving and so they attacked some settlers and then they didn’t win.”

Rick: Yeah. So it became simplistic.

Stephanie: It’s just so bad. It’s not even-

Rick: Because it’s simplistic?

Stephanie: Mm-hm. It sounds stupid.

Rick: Okay. Yeah.

Stephanie: It’s bad.

(4.0)

Rick: Do you think anybody could possibly be offended by what you’re gonna put out there in the end? Who would it be?

Stephanie: Dakota people.

Rick: Yeah? Because it downplays the injustice?

Stephanie: ↑Yeah!

Rick: Yeah. Okay(hhhhhh).

Stephanie: ↑Oh my god! They’re gonna look at my panel and they’re gonna say, “Here’s two hundred words representing how my people felt about, you know, fifty years of injustice, and, you know, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of dead sick children and women that aren’t even mentioned?” So we were talking about putting our names on them, I was like, “Yeah, that’d be fine,” and then I was like, “Wait (2.0) (hhh)everyone ever is gonna hate me.”

(Interview, 01-24-2012)

Still nearly two months away from the social-justice conference, Stephanie sensed the trouble lying ahead. By this late point in the J-term, after the students failed to come to a consensus about having their names, signatures, or photographs printed on their panels identifying them as authors (Fieldnotes, 01-23-2012),¹⁰ Stephanie was trying to envision a different kind of narrative than the one Tom was mainly crafting on Harwell's advice. In sharing her anxiety, Stephanie noted an unmet need to acknowledge subaltern perspectives, to write into her panel some sense for what the history would look like when told *from below* (Young, 2003), taking into account the usually nameless Dakota refugees of the 1860s, the “hundreds and hundreds of dead sick children and women that aren't even mentioned” and whom the white sources provide little to no information on.

* * *

¹⁰ Various ways the students might claim authorship were discussed in class on two separate occasions late in the J-term (January 20 and 23) with two influential J-termers, Jennifer and Steven, advocating for anonymity. Dr. Lenz seemed to hold out hope for agreement from students to have their signatures printed on the panels but they failed to give a clear answer, leaving the question up in the air at course's end (Fieldnotes, 01-23-2012). The panels unveiled on March 10 did not display student names. Collective authorship was identified by Harwell who drafted the introductory panel explaining “This exhibit was produced by students in the course *Conflict and Remembrance: The U.S.-Dakota war of 1862* taught at St. Lucia College....” He included a candid photo of some of the students reading a plaque at the Mankato hanging site. This picture was printed on Sarah's Commemoration panel. Sarah said she was surprised by the addition when she first saw it in March, but happy with it (Interview, 04-26-2012). Other students discovered similar “surprises” when their final panels were released, reinforcing uncertainty about their authorship. Alan: “I guess it would have been cool to be able see them one more time before- and like after that review process just so it could come back to us, um, because it was- then it wouldn't have been a surprise seeing them the first time. Um, and it wasn't a bad surprise, but it was still a surprise” (Interview, 04-27-2012).

At the beginning of the second week of class, students got together in their writing groups to discuss and present sources they had just begun to consult for their research. When it came to Stephanie and Tom's turn to share with rest of the class, Tom mentioned he had been considering Gary Clayton Anderson's *Little Crow: Spokesman for the Sioux* (1986). Harwell encouraged him and Stephanie to continue with that and to look at Kenneth Carley's history as well, saying, "With this panel we want to present how the Dakota carried out attacks strategically." He said they should think about talking to John LaBette too because he is "a good source." Harwell went on to emphasize the panel's orientation toward military history — "We can do this on a panel in a respectful way. The Dakota were smart and powerful militarily. There were many instances where they defeated the U.S. government militarily. They were a powerful nation. This war isn't simple and one-sided" (Fieldnotes, 01-09-2012).

Like with Dr. Lenz's comment about the "fairly balanced perspective, which is what we're looking for," Harwell established a powerful frame in this interaction, relying heavily on inclusive *we* to direct Tom and Stephanie's work away from the syllabus's stated goal to "raise awareness of the treatment of indigenous people in the 19th century." Indeed, there was nothing about the listed panel theme "War — Dakota perspectives" that necessarily meant military strategy; rather, the expectation revealed itself in this face-to-face encounter as a pre-determined and personal preference of the instructor, one that encouraged telling the history *from above*, i.e. from the point of view of the historically empowered. As with other instances of inclusive *we* analyzed, the authoritative good-history perspective sought to make itself into a collective desire in this formative moment

— “With this panel we want to present...,” a desire Tom was happy to act on given his military background. Tom went on to assume authorship of aspects of the narrative pertaining to military strategy (Stephanie interview, 01-24-2012).

Attending this setting of the military-strategy frame came the inherent settler-friendly bias favoring Anderson, Carley, and LaBatte, with an implicit understanding that there was no real need to seek out differently oriented sources. Throughout the J-term, it remained a kind of mystery how LaBatte, for example, could simultaneously be “a good source” and “the Rush Limbaugh of the Dakota people” (Fieldnotes, 01-09, 18-2012), a formulation similar to Kenneth Carley being dated but also offering the sought-after balanced perspective. One explanation could be the instructors thought these sources’ facts remained reliable despite their biased delivery. Regardless, persistent deference to LaBatte’s expertise¹¹ silently evoked all the Dakota community members who did not

¹¹ Harwell first evoked LaBatte’s expertise on the third day of the J-term, telling a lecture audience somewhat nervously that LaBatte would soon be coming to speak at BLCHS’s annual meeting — “John will be our speaker and he will be uh focusing on- on- he has done loads and loads of research on the Dakota War and so his uh lecture, I’m paraphrasing, but Causes of the US-Dakota War” (Lecture, 01-05-2012). No other independent historian received the kind of attention Harwell accorded him over the course of the month, especially in the classroom (Fieldnotes, 01-9, 18, 20, 23-2012). Despite all this deference, LaBatte carried through on Harwell’s suspicion that he would be very unhappy about the work produced by the J-term. After March 10, LaBatte pointed out on his website nearly 90 instances where he believed the *Conflict and Remembrance* exhibit had been either “incorrect,” unbalanced,” or “disrespectful.” LaBatte’s “corrections” provided insights into the kind of settler-friendly political pressure exerted on historical-society representatives like Harwell in 2012. Some examples of LaBatte’s critique: “By not discussing the atrocities committed by the Dakota, Swisshelm is made to sound inhuman;” “The Dakota society was not perpetually shattered;” “The Indians at Fort Snelling were not prisoners,” etc.

come so quickly to mind for Harwell when advising students on the fly¹² — Waziyatawin, Vernell Wabasha, David Larsen, Gwen Westerman, Chris Mato Nunpa, etc. — people Stephanie potentially could have consulted in conducting the kind of research she was thinking of when she said, “I can’t do any first-hand interviews with anyone and I’m a white(hhhh)....” In ways similar to those explored in Chapter Three when Christina suggested that the white experts couldn’t really know about the Dakota genocide on their own, Harwell’s convictions about good public-history practices (who was worth talking to and building relationships with and who wasn’t) shaped student conceptions of what was possible regarding white knowledge, research, and representation of Dakota history. Thinking back on the Dakota political spectrum raised by Harwell in our first interview, pre-conceived ideological orientations made it so that LaBatte was readily available as a source for students to talk to in January while Waziyatawin was not. Accordingly, as Stephanie mentioned the limitations placed on her research, she simultaneously identified her whiteness, a racial identity implicitly associated with the constraining J-term whiteness Harwell and Jennifer defined as inescapable in the previous chapter. My data suggest something different, however, that

¹² Similar instances of this occurred, a potentially powerful one coming on the last day of in-class group editing as students negotiated their panel layouts with Harwell and the visiting graphic designer. In thinking about the way she was wording her narrative for the “Dakota Culture (Pre-Contact)” panel, Nikki asked aloud whether she should write that the Dakota had lived in the region for hundreds or thousands of years. She said she had written thousands, but was still unsure. Out of the blue, Harwell said, “John Labatt wouldn’t agree with you but I don’t have a problem with saying thousands” (Fieldnotes, 01-26-2012). No other public figure of Dakota descendant came to Harwell’s mind so readily in such spontaneous classroom moments, and Harwell expressed no need to offer counterbalancing sources when it happened. The narrative on Nikki’s final panel reads, “Minnesota has been home to the Dakota people for thousands of years.” The response on LaBatte’s blog: “Incorrect — This cannot be proven.”

this seemingly limited, inevitable, and ideologically defensive whiteness took shape through pedagogical choices made both before the class got underway and during it as white compensatory work was performed on the fly, with daily decisions being made out of conscious desires to ignore.

Unlike critical first drafts seen earlier, Tom and Stephanie's first installment, titled "The Dakota Perspective of the War of 1862" (January 11), seemed to lack any kind of thesis like Sarah's concerning the race-based double standards of regional commemoration or Jennifer's about all settlers benefitting directly from the oppression of the Dakota people. Consisting of over 600 words providing context for the violence, their language favored passive forms seen throughout the final exhibit, keeping "commentary" to a minimum. Some examples:

The Dakota people were in possession of millions of acres of fertile farmland, which the United States government was eager to acquire in order to facilitate settlements farther west in the Americas [...]

However, the first allotments of this money were made to the U.S. Government, "for investing purposes," and to the traders in the area, to pay off the debts which the Dakota had supposedly accumulated [...]

With Minnesota becoming a state in 1858, settlers flooded the region. Settlements near the reservations pushed the boundaries and encroached on territory allotted the Dakota people. In having been confined to a small tract of land and now forced to give up traditional ways, the Dakota became ever reliant on the Agencies and the annuities which were promised in treaty. Food promised through negotiation was not distributed to the Dakota, with the trader Andrew Myrick stating, "If they are hungry, let them eat grass...."

As in Jennifer's case, Harwell drew a giant parenthesis in the margin marking all of this "great, but not your responsibility for panel." Contextualizing statements about white encroachment, the embezzlement of money legally owed to the Dakota people, the systematic production of dependency, and insults would be edited out with the promise that other panels would handle these respective themes — treaties, the annuity system, assimilation, reservation life, settler perspectives. For an anxious student like Stephanie who sensed trouble ahead but still planned to represent her panel at the social-justice conference workshop, a lot of trust went into accepting any advice to eliminate context.

Harwell advised on how to proceed:

- Start with Acton. Small group of young men. Fairly small event acts as catalyst for the war.
- Little Crow – great speech, interesting guy. Probably deserves a sidebar/paragraph.
- Small # of Dakota participate.
- Dakota fractured and conflicted. That translates to battlefield. Because they are not unified and strategy isn't unilateral, they lose advantage at Fort Ridgely.
- Still, Dakota force is powerful. If for a few circumstances they could have won several battles.
- End with Wood Lake/Camp Release.

The identification of Little Crow as an interesting guy who probably deserves a paragraph emphasizes the degree to which Harwell promoted writing history *from above*.

While there's much to comment on here, the advice to focus on Acton as a catalyst for the war best illustrates the kinds of unresolvable dilemmas Tom and

Stephanie faced trying to shape a condensed narrative palatable for the implied white audience yet socially responsible to Dakota audiences as well. They included the story in the first draft:

Four Dakota men on a hunting trip near Acton came upon chicken eggs belonging to a white farmer. A dare was made to one of the men to prove his lack of cowardice for not wanting to steal the eggs, resulting in the deaths of 5 white settlers. Upon returning to their tribes the men told of what they had done. Discussions were had about what to do about these men. The Dakota knew that the killing of the 5 settlers would bring severe consequences to the Dakota [...]

Harwell's advice to begin the narrative from this point and portray Acton as the catalyst for the war was a risky proposition considering students were explicitly told during one of Harwell's own PowerPoint presentations that the war "isn't about stolen eggs" and that Dakota people "hate the egg story" (Fieldnotes, 01-18-2012), presumably for the way it trivializes and threatens to obscure the real causes of the war. Yet Stephanie remembered Sheldon Wolfchild using the egg story in his own documentary, making her wonder whether she shouldn't keep it after all (Interview, 01-24-2012). As with so many dilemmas encountered in the historiography, the narrative choices available to Stephanie and Tom seem alternately trivializing and inconsequential precisely because the two key factors in the U.S.-Dakota War — land appropriation by whites and the racism rationalizing it — are not being incorporated together into the developing narrative; while this perhaps apocryphal tale of violence sparked on a quest for food could rightly symbolize the struggle for the ultimate social good (land) that is the U.S.-Dakota War, so

too could the tale of racial insults at Acton rightly symbolize whites' justification for appropriating and controlling that social good. Yet only eggs seem to rise to the level of dilemma in telling the Acton story publicly while the epithets settlers hurled at the four presumably hungry Dakota men — “Redskins” and “black devils” — go ignored (Heard, 1864, p. 55).

During group editing at the end of the third week, the class spent an unusual amount of time critiquing Tom and Stephanie's revised draft. Alan advised taking the egg story out. Harwell agreed but suggested retaining Acton in a timeline instead. Dr. Lenz linked the story to “uprising” mentality, a word used elsewhere in Tom and Stephanie's narrative that she also recommended removing. “‘Uprising’ gives the sense of normalcy, a sudden uprising, and then normalcy again,” she said, drawing a steep bell curve with her hand in the air. Alan agreed, saying this has “a certain contextualizing effect too. It shows it from the white soldiers' perspective like it was all about putting down an uprising” (Fieldnotes, 01-20-2012). Afterward, only Tom seemed to express frustration with all of this disproportionate critical attention — “when we were getting critiqued, it was like, ‘I had to make those decisions of what- to leave that out, and then those are the ones that you picked apart, but if I would have left them in and taken something else out, those would have been taken apart too’” (Interview, 01-26-2012). Tom's switch to *I* suggested how Stephanie's co-authorship had grown unclear.

The Acton story did not appear in the second draft. Between the draft's submission on January 23 and the release of the final panel in March, Harwell found a way to retain it (without the eggs) by adding a quote from Rdainyanka (Rattling Runner),

one of the men hanged in Mankato — “...It was not the intention of the nation to kill any of the whites until after the four men returned from Acton....” Harwell had been using the quote in his own public presentations for some time (Harwell PowerPoint presentation, 01-14-2012).

By the second draft, students had read Sarah Wakefield’s captivity narrative, *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees* (1863). Stephanie identified a quote from this volume calling out a key ancestry-based double standard from 1862 concerning the voices she feared wouldn’t be mentioned, the hundreds of starving Dakota women and children — “I often wonder how these poor deceived creatures bore so much and so long without retaliation [...] 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” (Wakefield, 1863/1997, p. 64). Stephanie sent the passage to Tom and asked him to add it in (Interview, 01-24-2012). As they were in whittling-down mode after submitting the initial 600-word draft, Wakefield would hopefully suffice for providing subaltern perspectives. There was little time or stated need to seek out Dakota sources beyond John LaBatte.¹³ Harwell did not mark the Wakefield quote as needing removed in his January 24 edits. It did not make the final panel presented at the social-justice conference in March however.

In the interview I have been citing conducted the same day as Harwell’s second-draft edits, Stephanie expressed anger at the way he was orchestrating the exhibit writing:

¹³ Besides Wakefield (1863/1997), Anderson (1986), and Anderson and Woolworth (1988), Stephanie and Tom’s final draft cited two additional sources: an article by Linda M. Clemmons (2005) on the 1837 treaty and a web page on Little Crow provided by the Akta Lakota Museum and Cultural Center’s website in Chamberlain, South Dakota.

- Stephanie:** I really like John because he's super funny and nice but I kind of want to strangle him a little bit.
- Rick:** Because?
- Stephanie:** Because I get that he's a museum curator and this is what he does. So this is how he sees things. But I mean, he's just like, "Well, we have to appeal to everyone. We have to make it as short as possible because Americans' attention spans are this." And I'm like, "Oh man! How on earth are you gonna get-?" He's like, "This is the best we can do." I'm like, "How are you gonna get actual awareness about this?" with, you know, the sites we've been to and the crappy offensive videos.
- Rick:** Awareness- awareness about what really happened, right? The injustices that really happened?
- Stephanie:** What really happened, yeah! And what's still happening. And like we visited the museums and they're all super dated and awful with crappy movies and (Interview, 01-24-2012).

Like in the interview with Sheldon Wolfchild, Stephanie suddenly switches to *we* when talking about how Harwell won consent for writing an exhibit largely innocuous for the intended whitestream audience. As with Wolfchild, she maintains a strong sense of her own critical voice, her own *I*, clearly demarcating its distance from the inclusive J-term *we* she invokes in frustration. To be sure, the J-term *we* had performed exclusionary work on critical whites as well. Paralleling Wolfchild's critique, Stephanie moves into and out of the J-term *we* in building toward the conclusion that the injustices of 1862 are not only

ongoing but close at hand, some having become visible during recent fieldtrips to sites operated by the historical societies.¹⁴

* * *

The narrative on Stephanie and Tom's final panel (Figure 8.4) comprises the third shortest of the exhibit at 157 words. From the perspective of the observer who cannot be observed, it tells of attacks by Dakota *akicitas* (fighters), their initial victories and eventual defeat because of divisions among them and foiled battle plans:

¹⁴ The datedness of videos seen at the Lower Sioux Agency and Fort Ridgeley on January 19 inspired some laughter and ridicule among students (Fieldnotes, 01-19-2012). The Fort Ridgeley video had a conspicuous splice between the end of the 1862 battles and the Mankato hanging suggesting the removal of inappropriate and perhaps even overtly racist material. Stephanie, Sarah, Holly, and Mitch all laughed about this part in focus group, Stephanie wondering whether subliminal messaging hadn't taken place (01-20-2012). After visiting BLCHS, Jennifer gave a more sober assessment of the historical sites and museums, saying that the binders she saw there containing newspaper stories and white family histories symbolized the imbalance of local knowledge production — "[Dakota anger] doesn't sit there in a history book for ever and ever. It doesn't sit there in those binders for ever and ever and ever. I mean, the lasting influence of that hatred. Whites have the upper hand" (Interview, 01-18-2012).

Figure 8.4: “War — Dakota Perspectives” Panel Narrative

Starving, desperate, and quickly losing their traditional way of life, the Mdewakanton Dakota soldiers' lodges led by reluctant Chief Taoyateduta declared war on the United States when they attacked the Lower Sioux Agency on August 18, 1862. Dakota akicitas continued throughout the valley and attacked Fort Ridgely on August 20 and 22, New Ulm on August 19 and again on August 23, and scattered newcomer settlements throughout western Minnesota. Though originally superior in number, Dakota akicitas were divided in their opinions about military tactics, and that lessened their strategic advantage. The war's final battle occurred at Wood Lake on September 23, 1862. Taoyateduta's battle plan was accidentally foiled by a group of U.S. soldiers foraging for potatoes, which prematurely started the fighting. At Camp Release, captives held by the Dakota were freed, and a mixture of Dakota akicitas and non-combatants surrendered to Colonel Sibley. Taoyateduta and a few hundred of his followers fled west and escaped capture.

This final version condenses all of Tom and Stephanie's context to a single opening phrase; all of Stephanie's concern for the hundreds of sick and dying women and children shrinks to a single euphemism, “non-combatants.” Sidebars and quotes that could represent such perspective relate Taoyateduta and Rdyainyanka's views on the dire consequences of fighting. Selected images feature pencil sketches by Albert Colgrave of 1862 battle sites and Anton Gag's 1904 oil painting *Attack on New Ulm during the Sioux Outbreak, August 19-23, 1862* (Appendix C).

Following my analysis of justice-as-fairness discourses and whites' persistent need to erase their own sense of agency when it comes to representing their historic roles in racial oppression, this panel narrative that seems to focus on something else — Dakota

resistance —contains relatively few occurrences of passive *to be* constructions.¹⁵ Active verbs like “declared,” “attacked,” “fled,” and “escaped” show clear agency for Dakotas. Still, passive language obscures whites’ roles in shaping events, for example, how the Dakota “soldiers’ lodges” came to be starving and desperate. Only the U.S. soldiers at Wood Lake come close to having agency, their passively rendered foiling of Taoyateduta’s battle plan starting the fighting there.

In this imbalanced assigning of agency across all panels, I suggest an inherited, highly naturalized zero-point epistemology at work, the language of Mankato’s hanging monument — HERE WERE HANGED — providing a symbolic ideological forbear. Eerily, the phrase echoes throughout Rachel and Tracy’s panel narrative (Appendix D) on the trials and hanging where “to be hanged” repeats itself in a three-sentence sequence. In a subsequent paragraph, “to be hanged” and “were hung” repeat in back-to-back sentences.

Not only did age-old zero-point ways of knowing shape these panel narratives, but they provided instructors and students evidence for defending their work as Tom does in the epigraphic quote to this chapter — “I feel like we had a very objective point of view on it.” The panels refrained from editorializing. They looked at both sides and merely provided information. Instructors and students considered multiple perspectives. They worked from sources that provided balanced views. In this process of fashioning a

¹⁵ Examples of panels that have a relatively high number of *to be* constructions include Lori and Anna’s narrative on “Exile of the Dakota People,” which would have been the panel to address genocide most directly. It contains 13 *to be* constructions in 19 sentences. Rachel and Tracy’s panel “A Bitter End,” addressing the trials and hanging, contains 13 occurrences in 15 sentences.

representational device that would mediate a sense of justice for themselves, exhibit co-authors did not stop to consider how such “good” public-history practices were just as likely to reopen old wounds as they were to raise awareness of the treatment of Dakota people in the nineteenth century.

Historical Reenactments Revisited: The White Defense of (Intellectual) Property

My analysis of Harwell’s teaching and advising on the exhibit writing runs the risk of attributing the production of a politically safe exhibit all to him. The case I hope to make is that the neutral and balanced (yet biased) discursive frames he and Dr. Lenz set and managed in response to and in support of the larger public pedagogy encouraged students to reproduce those frames as they worked for success in the course. Examples already seen of students repeating classroom discourses in interviews gives some idea of how they were trying out and perhaps even taking to heart the appropriate and professional aspects of neutrality and balance, some examples being Lori’s endorsement of “the balanced perspective” in Chapter Three; Nikki’s “back-and-forth” enactment of Carleyan balance in Chapter Five; Sarah’s acquiescence to there being “two sides to this” in Chapter Six; Jennifer’s endorsement of instructor neutrality on genocide in Chapter Three and her wariness of showing racism to children in Chapter Seven.

But along with students’ daily reproduction of classroom discourses promoting the justice-as-fairness view came the sense of extra-institutional and intergenerational political obligations owed to their families and communities. As seen in Chapter One, Stephanie came from a diverse town in North Carolina yet grew up under highly

segregated circumstances, being sent to a majority-white high school even though another high school, a black high school, lay closer to home. While telling this story, Stephanie noted tension with an elder regarding racism (Interview, 01-24-2012). Similarly in Chapter Six, Sarah was thinking deeply about her parents sending her to Hill Murray High School, a private, majority-white school, rather than St. Paul's Harding High, the racially diverse public school she otherwise might have attended. As she told me this, she noted having to be careful at home politically, particularly with her father with whom she had only recently learned to debate in constructive ways for, among other things, "keeping me away from particularly black people" (Interview, 01-26-2012). While Stephanie and Sarah were the only ones who spoke at length about being directed away from racially diverse learning environments,¹⁶ their stories of having to be careful navigating the politics of race with elders and other family members were common, with Alan, Monica, Steven, Anna, Lori, and Holly all mentioning this in interviews.

In a classroom session on white privilege early in the course, a faculty guest speaker and Dr. Lenz both recounted stories about growing up and having to be careful about the politics of race with elders (Fieldnotes, 01-06-2012). When asked by Steven about bringing her knowledge of white privilege back home to her parents, the guest speaker offered the reasonable response that "trying to fight every battle can entrench people against you and make them resentful if you give the impression that you think you know better than them" (Fieldnotes, 01-06-2012). Jennifer responded by saying she found this true after having returned from the white-privilege conference and

¹⁶ This was not a question I asked across interviews.

“confronted” family members about race, adding it was difficult to know “how to choose which hills to die on” (Fieldnotes, 01-06-2012). As seen in the second round of wreath passing in Chapter Three, Jennifer repeated these sentiments and they bore a great deal of common-sense currency. No one questioned them in the white-privilege session nor did anyone offer alternatives when Jennifer recast talk of white privilege in terms of war and combat like those above — “shock-and-awe campaigns don’t work” (Fieldnotes, 01-24-2012). These confessionals from influential speakers repeated the well-founded notion that to disrupt family unity by trying to talk about racism means to initiate war and maybe even die on a hill, a dynamic that has long entailed the very legitimate fear of rejection and abandonment among white children in the United States as a consequence for engaging in cross-racial friendships (Thandeka, 1999). In this context, Harwell’s charge to students to write their first drafts “as if you’re presenting it to your roommate, parent, or somebody who doesn’t have any prior knowledge about the topic” takes on special significance (Fieldnotes, 01-09-2012). By the time students received these instructions, this frame of coping with elders’ and other loved ones’ racism so as to avoid conflict (combat) had been established three days earlier.

I go into this simply to recognize common extra-institutional and intergenerational pressures predisposing J-term students to take up the neutral stance toward a situation of injustice. Not only did students mention family pressures, but they sometimes spoke of political obligations owed to white community elders compelling them to police themselves against critical approaches to the U.S.-Dakota War. Examples of the threat of a genealogy-based white political savagery have already been shown in

Chapter Five; yet in one interview, Holly provided uncommon insight into the extent to which reasonable caution on racism worked to thwart critical interpretation and social justice. When I asked her and Mitch what kind of panel they would have designed on the treaties had no constraints been placed on their work by instructors, Holly said they would have produced a similar panel “because I’d be worried that people wouldn’t want to read it, and if we took it that step further they’d like dismiss us as extremists.” She continued:

I don’t want like the people in town, I don’t know, to like view us in the wrong light. And like, I realize that’s probably not the greatest reason because like (2.0) eh, I don’t know. It’s- It’s really easy for I think older people to dismiss our generation as being like a bunch of liberal like extremists who, I don’t know, believe in communism and stuff. Like don’t you think so? Like I get that like from older generations who are like, “You just think that way because everybody in your generation does.” It’s like, “No,” like, “not really. Racism’s kind of getting old.” So you know, it’s like sometimes that worries me. Like I don’t want people to view like the students at this school and my generation in the wrong light. I don’t know. (Interview, 01-26-2012)

Mitch agreed. Indicative of the white compensatory work performed in the creation of the panels, Holly’s view suggests that to interpret *our* work as pushing for anti-oppressive social change would be to look at it “in the wrong light.” St. Lucia student work, as Holly envisions it, should not be seen as aligned with discourses traditionally understood as threatening the racist status quo. Even though racism’s getting old, maintaining unity across white generational divides and across the corresponding town / gown political

divide should take priority over “extremist” work that would otherwise confront racism, just as the goal of maintaining family unity should overrule talk of racism at home. As Holly provides this answer, she hints that she finds it morally dubious — “I realize that’s probably not the greatest reason because like (2.0) eh, I don’t know.” Still, deference to the perceived ideological demands of white community elders remains the reason, and a wise one for a student working for success in the political climate of the white public pedagogy I analyze. Should such elders come to see the *Conflict and Remembrance* exhibit and accuse the J-term students of leftist extremism, Holly and Mitch would presumably be prepared to correct them and demonstrate how their panel actually reflected the “right” kind of work.

Focusing on the panel narratives themselves as I have done so far in this chapter risks missing how and why at least two viewers understood the exhibit as overly Dakota-centric and therefore anti settler. Throughout, the exhibit devotes an unequal number of images to Dakota people. Of 23 images showing people, 15 seem to highlight Dakotas. Each panel includes a large image at the bottom, providing a very professional-looking compositional anchor. Of 12 such images, 9 highlight either Dakota people or Dakota settings. Only one shows everyday settler people. This combined with panel titles signifying white duplicity and oppression — “Broken Promises,” “Neglected Payments,” “Exile of the Dakota People” — all can give the impression that the exhibit speaks in the interest of oppressed people and to the detriment of settler hegemony.

Besides John LaBatte’s blogpost, this understanding of the exhibit found expression by a St. Lucia College newspaper reporter working alongside and sometimes

taking issue on the job with Jennifer, the editor in chief. Soon after the panels were first shown in March, he used his column to share a familiar critique from the broader public pedagogy — “With all the attention focused upon the plight of the Dakota before the conflict and the subsequent execution of 38 individuals after its end, we lose sight of the hundreds of white settlers who lost their lives in the conflict [...] My ancestor survived the West Lake Massacre by hiding among the corpses of his slain family members.”¹⁷ As in authoritative views on the history discussed earlier from New Ulm and Mankato, this writer conjured white ancestors and their association with past deeds of savagery in an attempt to counterbalance multicultural education. He felt exhibit designers had failed “to see the events of the past through as many lenses and from as many different viewpoints as possible.” Their exhibit showed they had “swung the wheel too far in the other direction.” The columnist used the occasion to pay homage to a St. Lucia founder, “the second president of our fair school immediately following the Dakota-U.S. War of 1862,” words reminiscent of defenses of “our fair and beautiful State” raised in local indignation meetings when citizen groups once agitated to see 303 hanged in Mankato (“Removal of troops,” November 15, 1862). For this writer, the exhibit amounted to a case of reverse discrimination by not teaching equal empathy for whites.

This column gives yet another glimpse into the kinds of pressures J-term students could face beyond Harwell and Lenz’s purview, encouraging them to adopt a settler-friendly justice-as-fairness approach. In accounting for the critique, Jennifer told me:

¹⁷ Author and title withheld to help protect participant anonymity.

Mitch and I were talking about that, and Mitch is like, “You know- you know I don’t feel like it’s biased at all.” He’s like, “I feel like this is a way more accurate portrayal than what I’ve ever gotten.” And I was like- and I was like, “Yeah, but think how long history’s been portrayed through the white perspective.” And so- but then he and I talked about the pendulum swing in terms of how history’s gonna have to be told and how this may seem like an extreme for some people right now but as- you know as- (2.0) as history progresses, and as hopefully we continue to talk about history and how we tell history, how this may seem mild(hhhh) compared- you know, and so how there’s kind of like this pendulum swing in terms of how things are portrayed.” (Interview, 04-26-2012)

In this response, I read two political orientations. For Mitch, the student from the Spirit Lake region of northern Iowa who sometimes invoked his farmer ancestry to take distance from restorative justice, the exhibit’s accuracy (epistemology) ensured an unbiased (objective) presentation. While the Dakota-centric imagery on the surface of the exhibit may make this assessment sound progressive, the writing process Mitch had been guided through by the professionals cannot be underestimated in shaping his defense. As shown early in this chapter, the narrative on the Treaties panel he co-authored assigns agency only to Dakotas as they actively cede their lands. White agency is consistently obscured either by passive voice or depersonalized acting subjects like “illegal papers” and “broken promises.”¹⁸ Such “objective,” zero-point narratives could always be pointed

¹⁸ One of the acting subjects in Holly and Mitch’s narrative is “deceit,” referring to the “trader’s papers” tacked onto the 1851 treaties for the purpose of funneling government money legally owed to the Dakota directly to traders to pay off debts. While this arguably evaluative term — deceit — may make it seem as though Holly and Mitch wrote opinionated commentary into their narrative, deceit in the treaties is actually a long-established fact in the white historiography of the U.S.-Dakota War. Roy Meyer’s

back to in defending the exhibit, especially against conservative attack. Indeed, the student journalist had cast the exhibit “in the wrong light,” to use Holly’s phrase. He simply hadn’t read carefully enough, for Jennifer’s panel clearly states “By the end of the war, at least 450 — and perhaps as many as 800¹⁹ — newcomers and U.S. soldiers were killed. Many of those who left never returned.”

For, Jennifer, who expressed optimism about maturing from her radical ways, a bit of skepticism remains toward Mitch’s epistemological defense. She senses the exhibit might be mild in relation to where she suspects or hopes the historiography is headed. Despite this subtle difference between them, both seem to reach agreement over the metaphor of (im)balance Harwell provided them with early in the course when he invited

History of the Santee Sioux (1967), for instance, contains a chapter on the treaties titled “The Monstrous Conspiracy,” a phrase taken from Newton H. Winchell’s assessment of the treaties in his 1911 study, *The Aborigines of Minnesota* (Meyer, 1967, p. 87). As Jennifer suspects, the *Conflict and Remembrance* exhibit took a mild approach to such topics, the “Broken Promises” (Treaties) panel being but one example. Today’s critical feel to the term “deceit” calls to mind Ann Laura Stoler’s observation on colonial histories in France — “This is not a linear history, nor one formerly obscured, only now emerging from darkness to light. It has repeatedly come in and out of focus and has more than once been represented as ‘forgotten’ and then rediscovered” (2011, p. 128).

¹⁹ Regional independent historians like Corinne Marz, John LaBatte (March 23, 2012), and Curtis Dahlin (2013) who work to elevate the estimated number of white casualties in 1862 have something of an epistemological crisis on their hands. Corrine Marz inadvertently hinted at this in her J-term lecture: “So I’ve compromised and thought that probably about 600 maybe 575 maybe 600. Uh, but it gives you an approximate number. So many people weren’t never buried. Uh, their bodies were not found. Their bones, you know, simply became dust. And uh, so and in fact Curt Dahlin has one book called *Gravestones and Markers* and in that book he said that really only 200 of the casualties were buried” (Lecture, 01-24-2012). Professional scholars have long tended toward an estimate slightly less than the lower number on Jennifer’s panel, with 447 killed, a number that includes military (Folwell, 1924, pp. 392; Chomsky, 1990, pp. 21-22). By contrast, the number printed on Jennifer’s panel — 450-800 — echoes estimates made by angry settler defenders, for instance, David J. Gray in his 2012 letter to the editor, “38 murderers don’t deserve memorial” (Mankato *Free Press*, March 12, 2012).

the class to “think of history as a pendulum. It’s never going to stop at the exact middle. You’re never going to get at the absolute truth. It depends on the time you’re in. Here the pendulum has swung from one direction to another” (Fieldnotes, 01-09-2012).

I suggest this central metaphor of (im)balance — the pendulum — stood as a kind of symbolic point of mutual obligation for students like Jennifer and Mitch who felt included by the authoritative J-term *we*. Not only did probationary knowledge workers like Mitch and Jennifer build a sense of community together in the course, they also acquired literacy in the regional white public pedagogy, a highly binary language loaded with concepts like swung pendulums, tipped scales, and over-corrected wheels. Demonstrating her fluency in this language months later, Jennifer reproduces the shared sense of justice as fairness behind the exhibit; in typical binary fashion, this sense of justice enabled buy-in to the idea of furthering a progressive multiculturalist paradigm²⁰ as it simultaneously recruited students to help carry out a great deal of white compensatory work. After all, with the pendulum swung so far to the Dakota side, it should only be fair to consult dated (racist) sources and produce at least some traditional historiography together. By relying almost exclusively then on things like the Carleyan

²⁰ The victory Jennifer felt she won against Harwell’s editing in being allowed to retain the Jane Swisshelm material provided her powerful evidence that the pendulum had at least swung away from the settlers: “And I think that- I think that having it up and putting it out there and- and- and- cause I don’t think that’s ever gonna get into a history book. I doubt it. I doubt that anything that- that provocative is ever gonna get into a history book and it needs- people need to have the cold hard reality in their face, and that’s why- and that’s why I chose it” (Interview, 04-26-2012). While similar provocative material showing examples of the 1862 extermination campaign has been in history books for some time, including the Minnesota Historical Society’s sixth-grade textbook *Northern Lights: The Stories of Minnesota’s Past* (Kenney, 2003, p. 131), Jennifer’s point that it can be easily buried and should be in white people’s faces is well taken.

ABCs to produce zero-point narratives together on the U.S.-Dakota War, exhibit co-authors fashioned their panels as representational devices that could assure other whites, even community elders if it should come to that, that there was justice in them despite the multicultural veneer.

* * *

The connection Harwell and Tom made setting the military-strategy frame for the “War — Dakota perspectives” panel was a particularly strong one. As seen, it severely limited Stephanie’s role as co-author. It threatened to minimize Jennifer’s critical approach in authoring the “War — Settler perspectives” panel as well. As briefly told in Chapter Two, Tom took issue with Jennifer’s liberal views. One afternoon early in the course, he stopped after class and listened to her debate Harwell over the idea of settler innocence. He waited for an opportunity to come to his instructor’s aid, but didn’t get the chance. I was beckoning for him to come and be interviewed. Minutes later, he was telling me about Jennifer:

She is a social activist and such and you can’t, you can’t- you can’t tell her something if she’s convinced. So if she’s convinced that all the settlers hated Indians, then you’re not going to- you’d have to show her definitive proof that there wasn’t- that they weren’t all. And that’s where I want to interject. And she- she like other people I know, won’t accept information from people they don’t view as scholars. And that’s something that I think is stupid because for a guy like me or anybody else my age or education level, you know, just because I don’t have five degrees doesn’t mean I don’t know anything, you know? (Interview, 01-09-2012)

This view fit well with Harwell who strove to hear all perspectives equally regardless of who happened to have a Ph.D. (Interview, 01-20-2012). As Tom's local insider orientation toward the U.S.-Dakota War coincided with his unproblematic approval of the classroom pedagogy — "I like the way this class is" — he also expressed strong disapproval of students like Jennifer who repeatedly raised the subject of whiteness in the classroom:

I think because when you go to the white privilege conference, you- a lot of these ki- not that whites don't have any responsibility. It's a youthfulness that takes that message and turns it into a naïve battle cry and this self-loathing perception of "I'm white and I'm therefore responsible for all the crap that's happened in this world that's bad to other minorities." (Interview, 01-09-2012)

Although she never mentioned friction with Tom in interviews, and the two seemed to make a point of noting when they agreed with one another in class, Jennifer expressed a corresponding vulnerability about her combined youthfulness and radicalism. She seemed to have already internalized something close to Tom's critique when she alluded to her age and expressed optimism about achieving the balanced view, as seen in Chapter Seven. In this political environment, students previously oriented toward critical interpretation²¹ if not social justice found little to no support for acting on desires such as Jennifer's to use the panels "to press":

²¹ A number of students said they would have produced similar panels if given no constraints as Holly and Mitch did in this chapter. These students included Tom, Tracy, Anna, and Rachel. Other students had specific ideas for alternative panels. **Stephanie**

I would want to press, and what I wish we were pressing more in the panels was what do we do now? Where is this history? What are we gonna do about it? And it's your responsibility. You know, this issue of responsibility I think is huge and I think that's something I've learned in my studies of white privilege is that you do, you have a responsibility to be questioning and to hold people accountable. And, um, I still don't feel like that's being done. (01-18-2012)

Of course, Jennifer told me during this same interview that she liked her instructors' neutral approach on genocide and that she hoped to grow into the balanced view. Such ambivalence suggests that student orientations toward either justice as fairness or restorative social justice depended greatly on pedagogical goals set by instructors and the discursive frames they constructed daily while working to meet them.

Tom of course carried his own ambivalence and vulnerabilities, particularly toward people more knowledgeable about race. As seen in previous chapters, he could offer a great deal of critical insight at times. Yet in a way similar to the student journalist

would have tried to frame something after work done by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum because "I think that what happened with the native Americans is really very similar if not exactly the same and there's no way- no one wants to do that and get into that" (Interview, 01-24-2012). **Jennifer** would have continued to investigate the frontier press and "done a far more scathing review of what went down" (Interview, 01-18-2012). **Sarah** said she would have made a panel on decolonization: "I would use that term and talk about what it would mean" (Interview, 01-26-2012). **Monica** said she would have produced something "hating on white people" for glorifying this ugly history and not educating people. She would have advocated for taking down Fort Snelling (Interview, 01-23-2012). **Lori** would have widened the scope and not confined representation of Dakota history to Minnesota or 1862, taking special care to "show respect for them as people" (Interview, 04-27-2012). **Christina** would have investigated gender and sexuality and its role in the trials and Mankato execution. She attributed her critical orientation to previous coursework with Dr. Lenz (Interview, 01-20-2012) as I will explain further in my Conclusion.

who critiqued the exhibit, he felt that reverse discrimination was going on against conservative whites on campus.²² For this reason, he declined attending the social-justice conference workshop where he could have stood alongside Stephanie and helped represent their finished product. He told me he didn't go because he disapproved of messages promoted by one of the conference's student organizers — "I didn't want to support her in any way shape or form because she chose that conference because it was a soapbox for her to stand on and yell about how evil the white person was" (Interview, 05-11-2012). To be fair, Tom told me he had to work the day of the conference workshop, but he also continued to take issue with the conference organizer:

I didn't feel comfortable going in there and supporting her. I would have gladly supported the class and what we did because I feel like we had a very objective point of view on it. We looked at both sides. It wasn't just, "This was- this was the atrocity, let's just look at that." I think we did a good job as a class to look at the big picture, and look at it from both perspectives because a lot of people don't know that not every settler moved in thinking "get rid of the Indians." They didn't know. They were just- said, "Here's some land that you can prosper on. Okay." Who's gonna say no to that? (Interview, 05-11-2012)

²² Tom told me he felt his conservative views were not valued on campus. When I asked him to elaborate, his explanation drifted toward white defense: "[Being conservative] is not (2.5) encouraged, possibly would be the right word. I would say that you couldn't- you couldn't say that your view would be respected. And maybe that's my perception, but for- like I said before, perception is your reality, you know? I keep my mouth closed a lot of times because I don't know who in the room's gonna- if I'm going to offend them by saying something, by defending the fact that I'm not sorry I'm white(hhh) and I don't think I have anything to be ashamed of. I don't think any other white person has anything to be ashamed of. But then if I say that in the wrong crowd, that's a white-supremist statement" (Interview, 01-09-2012).

For Tom, this memorable outcome of the J-term exhibit — providing understanding of the settler experience — had little to do with the social-justice conference’s specific goal that year to “discuss the impact of colonization on American Indians, past and present.”

Tom went on to selectively participate in post-J-term successes. He did not volunteer to represent the class in Flandreau, South Dakota, when the exhibit was displayed to the tribal community there during the anniversary of the war’s onset. He did however apply and get accepted as one of two student representatives who traveled to Washington, D.C. in October to celebrate the exhibit’s showing at the President Lincoln’s Cottage site. Tom said:

I wanted to sign up for both of them, but I only signed up for the Washington, D.C. one. Um, I hope that- I want them- I want them to pursue- or accept me to go on that trip because I feel like I have a pretty bal- not to sound conceited, but I feel like I have a pretty balanced perspective. (Interview, 05-11-2012)

Standing alone then on March 10 to field questions about the Dakota perspectives panel, Stephanie felt increasingly uncertain, sensing public avoidance of her topic — “no one was asking me any questions about my panel because it’s kind of an icky topic. Everyone else was like ‘Oh the fur trade! Tell me about this!’ And then they’d come to mine and be like, ‘Oh, okay,’ and then just walk to the next one” (Interview, 04-27-2012). She grew excited however when someone finally stopped to ask her about why “what Taoyateduta did was such a big deal”:

All I got out was, “Well, when he declared war” because I was going to focus on the like sovereign nation thing. And then Pam [Halverson] was there and she cut

me off, and she was like, “Don’t pin this on him. He was our- he’s our hero and he’s a great leader and he wasn’t picking a fight.” And I was like, “No! No!” you know. “That’s not what-!” She was really really upset because, you know, he’s her ancestor and she’s very offended. And it was, you know, like just the total disappointment that I have with the panel and having her like express that disappointment to me. So I just like burst into tears. I was like ((crying voice)) ↑‘I’m really sorry!’” (Interview, 04-27-2012)

For me, the most striking thing about Stephanie’s retelling of this experience is exactly *how* her fears from January ended up materializing. Halverson, former Tribal Historic Preservation Officer at Lower Sioux and descendant of Taoyateduta, did not take issue with the panel itself as Stephanie had feared Dakota audience members would do. Rather, Halverson expressed disapproval of what Stephanie felt obliged *to say* in explaining the panel’s content. While Stephanie had strongly critiqued the way the drafting of the panel had been supervised in the course, that supervision still had decisive influence on the way she would position herself later when attempting to account for its content in public, that is, by starting out with the military frame she did not endorse or even seem to care about.

On the surface, it would appear Stephanie served at the workshop out of a sense of responsibility for the panel she co-authored; she was after all willing to “stand by it” in a literal sense and face the community. But the workshop offered an opportunity to do what she had wanted to do from the beginning, get to know Dakota people, an experience her role as a student knowledge worker threatened to turn profoundly negative. To represent the panel meant to reproduce J-term discursive frames and engage in telling the history *from above*, an inherently divisive social practice. In recalling this episode,

Stephanie summed up everything the panel-writing process had taught her — how to speak against her own judgment and not *from the heart* as Dakota public intellectuals had encouraged her to do.

At roughly the same time Halverson confronted Stephanie, Sheldon Wolfchild was asking Christina and others why the Annuity System panel in particular had failed to mention George E. H. Day. As students recalled their reactions to me in follow-up interviews, the extent to which some were willing to defend the exhibit and each other became clear to me. Christina, the student of Mexican descent, recalled telling Wolfchild that she failed to realize the importance of the Day letter, especially its timing before the war rather than after like the George Crooker letter printed on the panel. Despite her difficulties relating to the normative white J-term identity revealed in Chapter Two, Christina stood ready to take the fall for *we* and *us* in the end:

I was like, “We only had a month to put these together,” and you know, I was like, “the teacher-” I was like, “the professors did not influence us in any way. It was our creative license. Like, we chose what went on these.” So I was like, “that was me,” and like, “you don’t need to be taking it out on her [Dr. Lenz] now.” This is like, “I created this panel.” Um, I mean, so I wasn’t really that- like, I understand that he was upset, but there was nothing I could do at that point. (Interview, 04-26-2012)

In a separate interview, Holly related a similar reaction to Wolfchild’s criticisms — “And he like- he kept- he said he wished we could change all of these things and Mitch and I are sitting there, and like, ‘I’m not going to take a sharpie and deface this project that we put all of this work into.’ Like, you can’t please everyone” (Interview, 05-03-2012). As

Holly seemed to reproduce Harwell's notion of inevitable resistance, she also noted a collective breakdown in listening justified by institutional support:

Yeah, and he said that like our focus was completely wrong, and that like we needed to change the year on something, and we were kind of like standing there nodding our heads thinking to ourselves like, "I don't know. Like people at the historical society looked over this, and like historians looked over it. I don't know where you're getting your information," but (Interview, 05-03-2012)

For Holly, the same tokenism she had learned during the J-term helped justify taking the authoritative side to this conflict, a side she ultimately couldn't defend:

Like Sandee loved them. She said they were all great. And, um, other people too who I had seen at some of the- at some of the lectures but I didn't know who they were specifically, said that they all really liked them. So I was like, clearly this guy just has issues with everything because everyone else seemed to love them. (Interview, 05-03-2012)

Sarah expressed similar views, supporting the point that very little of what Wolfchild said had been heeded — "Um, but from like what I got from his criticisms is that he was angry that we did not make the panels he would have made which is not appropriate because we all had to compromise. Every single person had to compromise on this" (Interview, 04-26-2012).

The student perceived as most under attack for having cried, only Stephanie seemed to listen and hear — "And everyone was like, 'You know what? Sheldon wants this whole thing to be about everything he wants and it just can't be.' And I was like,

‘I’m not mad that he’s mad. I’m understanding that I would be mad.’ So and then I just cried more” (Interview, 04-27-2012). What affected Stephanie most was hearing her own critiques come back at her and others, the critiques she had not been able to make clear to her instructors or act upon by engaging in socially responsible exhibit-writing practices that could have rectified the problems. Recalling how she cried at the workshop nearly brought her to tears again in our interview over a month later. “Everyone saw Sheldon running around and being angry, and so they were like ‘Oh, Sheldon must have yelled at Stephanie and now she’s crying.’” She told me her classmates misunderstood:

I was very disappointed and empathetic because, you know, the whole month we were just learning about all this horrible stuff that happened. And it’s still happening. And so I just sort of sobbed on Pam for like the rest of that time.
(Interview, 04-27-2012)

This eruption of controversy made possible one of the few honest public interactions that occurred between a white and a Dakota during the entire J-term, a rare moment when the historically privileged identity wasn’t being defended in some implicit way by a white for other whites to see.

Conclusion

We were told not to be who we are. Don't be Dakota. Be somebody else. We don't care who we are, but don't be Dakota. Don't speak the language. Now in the year two thousand and twelve we're asked, "Who are you?" It's like being put on a pause on a VCR. All of a sudden, somebody pushed the play button.

— Glenn Wasicuna (Lecture, 01-05-2012)

* * *

After the J-term, I talked to four Dakota people both closely and loosely associated with the J-term course — Gwen Westerman, Pam Halverson, Sheldon Wolfchild, and Waziyatawin. Each told me a different story about getting involved in a commemorative project in 2012 that sounded promising at first in terms of truth-telling or social justice, but then either pulling out, attempting to pull out, or being alienated once things drifted toward white balance. Long-established institutions produced the projects they spoke of — the Minnesota Historical Society, Twin Cities Public Television, St. Lucia College, and the Blankenship Historical Society.

Glenn Wasicuna's metaphor of the VCR gives some idea of the cruel prospects Dakota people face whenever a U.S.-Dakota War anniversary rolls around — having been turned off for decades by whitestream Minnesota, suddenly being turned on and expected to speak about ongoing historical traumas, and then seeing those traumas placed on scales already tipped toward white victimhood. In this, I suspect many well-meaning public educators embark on projects underestimating the continuing ripple effects of the ontological shudder from 1862. Perhaps not having studied colonialism or the discourses

that drove the extermination campaign carefully, they remain susceptible to sensational stories propagated from the early histories, not really knowing whether they're true but being inclined to believe them since they seem to come from authoritative sources. I also suspect well-meaning public educators risk underestimating the degree to which they are likely to be lobbied by independent historians working to keep the white terror alive and counteract social justice.¹ Regardless, I heard various messages of distrust, cynicism, and bitterness across these post-J-term conversations when I asked about mainstream sesquicentennial projects. Halverson and Wolfchild emphasized self-promotion and profit as especially divisive factors, Halverson telling me flatly that they use the sacrifices of the Dakota people to make money (Interview, 03-20-2012).

In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963/2004), Frantz Fanon writes of the “Who am I in reality?” question that resounded throughout Glenn Wasicuna’s lecture, taking

¹ As seen in this study, reverberations of the ontological shudder began at the Mankato history conference and continued through memorable moments such as when Dr. Lenz gasped recalling student shock at learning settler women and children had been killed in 1862. Along with such shudders seemingly internal to J-term participants came external pressures exerted as a result of instructor networking with John LaBatte and Curtis Dahlin in particular, both of whom seem to lack the critical skills required to identify propaganda in the early sources and to understand colonial oppression. In a 2013 self-publication, for example, Dahlin outlines his personal project of “Truth Recovery” — “Given that so many of the people who I have encountered in making presentations do not understand the situation, and given that one of my prime objectives in researching and writing on the Dakota Uprising is to reach an understanding of what, when, how and why such events took place, I am led to present to the reader unvarnished accounts of atrocities, so an understanding of ‘Why the hatred’ can be achieved [...] I owe it to the whites of that time, who suffered such horrible, barbaric, and unnecessarily cruel treatment at the hands of the Dakota” (2013a, p. 12). This same year, a Mankato *Free Press* article turned to John LaBatte for balanced commentary on the film *Dakota 38* — “‘One part that concerns me is I cannot determine if they are connecting their misfortunes today to the Dakota War of 1862,’ he said, noting one boy in the film who talks about drug abuse. LaBatte said the film is beautifully shot. ‘I think the scenery is beautiful — good scenery, good filming,’ he said” (Dymlin, August, 18, 2013).

different trajectories toward the Dakota self — “Who am I?” “Who are we?” “Who are you?” Fanon tells that the question arises and repeats among people not simply dominated by a colonial power, but among people racialized (dehumanized) in the process of colonization, people rendered *nullus*, made into “natural backdrops” for the enhancement of the privileged identity (p. 182). Told in the previous chapter, Wasicuna had a clear answer to the “Who am I?” question, but it came with the well-founded sense that nobody was listening.

Today’s Minnesota is no longer the brutal regime of 1862, nor is it the French-Algeria Fanon writes of. If there were something like a million or more Dakota people living in Minnesota today or just across its western border, it probably would be, but it is not. At the same time, I argue that Minnesota still is the white “citizen factory” public commemorators defined it as in Mankato during the 1912 semicentennial (“Outbreak of the Indian War,” 1912). Accordingly, many Dakota people speak of racism against their people in the state today. J-term participants insisted that what they were learning about regarding white supremacy and 1862 was still happening. White audience members browsing the *Conflict and Remembrance* panels on March 10 asked students why the conflict was still happening (Interview, 04-26-2012). Tom, the most likely to speak in defense of settler society, told me “there’s still this perception no matter what that Indians are drunks. Even now, like 150 years after our conflict, we still- like you still see people walking around saying that Indians are nothing but drunks and that they’re stealers and thieves and lazy. Why is that?” (Interview, 01-09-2012). I don’t necessarily doubt this claim, but I never once heard a slur like these when conducting my research. Glenn

Wasicuna's VCR image suggests there is something more subtle going on in today's "systematized negation of the other" (Fanon, p. 182). This study has sought to locate *where* systematized negation operates and *how*. Ultimately, I hope it has helped explain *why* many Dakota people continue to be *turned off* despite recent efforts to include their voices in high-profile commemoration activities² — turned away from before and since like the VCR machine, but also alienated as human beings.

Rather than straightforward slurs, white racism found expression in 2012 through a seemingly endless stream of justice-as-fairness discourses constructing citizen-scholars as superior to the Dakota in traits like balance, objectivity, fairness, and reason.

Empowered white commentators continually assured fellow citizens that they shared an enhanced aptitude for remaining appropriately neutral when considering the perspectives of *others* on the U.S.-Dakota War. They sought to stay clear of political agendas even as

² For me, the most dramatic evidence of Dakota alienation came during a community conversation about reconciliation at the 2012 Mahkato Wacipi (Mankato Powwow). The event had been promoted well in advance by the press. It took place on a glorious Sunday morning in September. David Larsen, James Weston, and Peter Lengkeek served as Dakota spokespeople. Politicians Dean Urdahl and Terry Morrow served as white spokespeople. Bleachers surrounding the powwow circle could have held hundreds yet they seemed completely empty with approximately thirty people on hand (Fieldnotes, 09-23-2012). When I brought this up to Pam Halverson, she said, "There's always so much talking. I want to see some action" (Interview, 03-20-2013). Media coverage of the public conversation demonstrated how whites are invariably positioned as passive listeners at such events, and everyone is positioned toward peace and equality rather than action. The reporter paraphrased Lengkeek who said, "it's important to remember the 38 who died because they stood up for what was right. But he said the way to reconciliation has to include listening. 'Part of reconciliation is bringing the truth out, understanding, shaking hands with everybody,' he said. 'We're all the same'" (Murray, September 24, 2012). While these final chapters of my study suggest that more listening is indeed needed from whites, the listening currently taking place must be understood as thoroughly selective, symptomatic of a tokenism that serves the unequal status quo. In light of the ongoing injustices seen in this study, responsive, active listening to critical Dakota speakers is sorely needed to bridge racial divides, heal living colonial wounds, etc.

their products politicized the war by equalizing all interests past and present, erasing white agency in events, and defending white property across time. Until public educators recognize the racially divisive effects of engaging justice-as-fairness discourses, their teachings will continue to reopen the living wounds they speak so solemnly about and sometimes say they hope to see healed.

Below, I complete this study by looking one more time into what took place when historical societies, schools, and mainstream media outlets hit the collective play button in 2012. This conclusion revisits the J-term to imagine building solidarity for a similar museum exhibit in terms of form, but a *critical* one in terms of content (Gee, 2004, p. 28), one that would promote intervening in a situation of injustice and present how equity-minded whites have justified to themselves a violently unequal distribution of social goods over time. I base this imagining not necessarily on how I would have done it as the instructor, but rather on what students told me *they* would have done had they been able to speak from the heart. This part returns one last time to erasures of interpretive possibilities and agency for students in order to provide fresh evidence for the case I make while imagining support for a museum exhibit that would mediate social justice rather than justice as fairness.

Finally, this conclusion also takes a brief look into what has happened locally since the collective pause button was pushed again in 2013, summarizing the state of the broader white public pedagogy after the sesquicentennial, at least as I have experienced it in Mankato.

Imagining Empowered Student Knowledge Workers and the Unwritten Exhibit

Obviously, I have aimed a lot of criticism at the *Conflict and Remembrance* exhibit and the teaching methods that went into its production. As one who has taken seriously Waziyatawin's question *What Does Justice Look Like?* it would be tempting for me to suggest that such a project should not have been carried out. After all, the institutions involved are thoroughly colonial. It stands to reason that the knowledge they produce will protect their historical interests, especially when representing an event so integral to their founding. Yet the public does need to know about the U.S.-Dakota War. Hundreds of people learned from the lecture series, including me. Thousands have seen the exhibit. My answer then is not that the project shouldn't have happened but simply that students' critical prior knowledge should have been honored, nourished, and brought to bear on the exhibit writing process.

Understanding that to withhold trust, limit inquiry, and erase agency from students is to engage in oppressive educational practices (Freire, 1970/2010), I can only conclude that Stephanie should have been supported in presenting subaltern perspectives. Jennifer should have been encouraged to go deeper into the frontier press and deconstruct settler innocence. Sarah should have been pushed to develop a panel about decolonization. Lori should have been urged to speak about the divisive effects of cutting Dakota history off at 1863.

For this unwritten critical museum exhibit to take shape, dominant justice-as-fairness discourses from the larger public pedagogy would have to be examined rather than uncritically repeated in the classroom along with their relation to commonly made

white defenses of property and ancestors. Since J-term students were required to actively engage in public pedagogy themselves, it would seem only right to have them read and interpret current public discourses together as literature. This would help demystify the feared white political savagery. In reading public discourses closely as literature, including “low” forms like letters to the editor and online chatter like that seen on the white-victims websites Sarah found, strategies could be developed for responding constructively to imagined white fallout. This would be a way of learning who the audience is and what the audience knows rather than assuming a general, childlike white public that knows nothing. Building a sense of *we* around interpretive engagement with public discourses could prepare students to support one another in teaching the community about the ongoing history of white supremacy. A classroom support network inclusive to critical Dakotas could emerge around such an *openly political* museum project rather than a *politicized* one. This was a desire sometimes expressed by more vocal students like Steven and Jennifer. When asked to imagine a panel truly hers, Jennifer said, “I think that I would give voice to people that are pissed off” (Interview, 01-18-2012). Although the problem of who wields the power to “give voice” still resides in such a statement, the sentiment nevertheless reveals an untapped desire to enact a social-justice public pedagogy through cross-racial solidarity.

In the context of the fearful white public pedagogy I write about, these imaginings sound “inappropriate,” “radical” and perhaps overly idealistic. Yet the unwritten panels proposed by students would have been wholly in line with other “controversial”

presentations and activities that took place at the St. Lucia social-justice conference the very day the exhibit was unveiled.³

As it happened, Jennifer summed up the tight position students assumed in a highly politicized learning environment where they needed to inform the (perhaps) ignorant white public about the war while meeting the (perhaps) severe ideological demands of the institution:

I don't know what would be appropriate to say, you know, what do you do? You know, do you say go ahead and do something more radical and then screw St. Lucia? Screw anything else from ever happening in the future? You know, screw any kind of exhibits like this? Screw any kind of education? Huh? What's right? I have no idea. If it was my way, you know what I would do? (Interview, 01-18-2012)

³ Partly explained in Chapter One (note 14), Sarah helped plan the St. Lucia social-justice conference. She explained to me its purpose of making people uncomfortable and moving them to act in effecting social change (Interview, 01-26-2012). She related its overwhelming success in recent years and laughed at the white disapproval it inevitably seemed to bring, noting a certain couple who always attended, one of whom complained to the school's director of diversity the previous year that "This topic is not appropriate for a Caucasian school" (Interview, 04-26-2012). If planned differently, I argue that the *Conflict and Remembrance* course could have gone this same way with white resistance rendered inevitable and broad support summoned to handle that resistance constructively. In 2012, other J-termers participated in the social-justice conference. As mentioned, Alan spoke out powerfully in the campus chapel against native genocide with the national anthem playing. On the same stage where Corrine Marz and Gary Clayton Anderson had recently delivered divisive lectures, John Trudell started out his own lecture by saying "I want to talk to you as one human being to another you know, dealing with this race thing as a human being [...] I am the outcome of genocide [...] but I know I am a human being [...] We've been imprinted to believe and not taught to think. We've been imprinted to believe that believing is thinking but we're not taught to think. The best educated people are imprinted to believe that believing is thinking but not truly taught to think" (Lecture, 03-10-2012). During the J-term, only Gwen Westerman received as enthusiastic an ovation as John Trudell (Fieldnotes, 01-24-2012).

She proceeded to tell me about needing to place more responsibility on white society. Her remarks struck me as an almost apocalyptic response to the white public pedagogy I have been writing about, as if to produce any other kind of exhibit than the politically safe one taking shape would have resulted in white backlash so terrible that nothing like it on the U.S.-Dakota War would ever be allowed to happen again.

Yet Jennifer's extreme response made sense in light of the cautious pedagogy she was witnessing daily. Her fears and perceived lack of alternative approaches to the history fit little moments as when Harwell made sure to note he wasn't advocating Bob Dylan's perspective in "With God on Our Side." It fit big recurring moments as well like when Dr. Lenz marginalized Waziyatawin and her book *What Does Justice Look Like?* As mentioned, Dr. Lenz had a reputation as an esteemed scholar in Women's Studies and the Holocaust. Holly and Christina (and perhaps others) had taken classes from her before. Across interviews and focus-group discussions, they described her as a critical educator who assigned books pertaining to gender, feminism, and colonial histories, holding students to a high standard interpreting them in the classroom. She incorporated critical theory into her teaching and expected her students to write thoughtful pieces on gender, race, and oppression.

As seen, Dr. Lenz took a different approach in the fast-paced J-term, and the difference wasn't easily chalked up to the time crunch. On the second day of class, for instance, she told students to "be wary of applying twentieth-century feminist values" to Ella Deloria's *Waterlily*, failing to explain why. Jennifer expressed confusion about this in focus group later that week — "I just feel like every other culture is under scrutiny for

how they- for how women are treated, you know? And so I just- I mean, I didn't understand. And I mean, I respect that and obviously, you know, she's probably got a reason for why she wants us to stay away from that, but I don't know" (Focus group, 01-06-2012). The reasons for not interpreting remained a mystery and left students to speculate, one telling me St. Lucia had probably told the instructors to take special care not to stir public controversy because it could lead to bad PR (Fieldnotes, 01-18-2012). In interviews, the instructors assured me this was not the case, but the effect of interpretive caution suggested extraordinary institutional (ideological) pressures were in play.⁴

⁴ There is of course the issue of cultural difference that would need to be addressed when bringing forms of white feminism to bear on *Waterlily*. Yet, as I witnessed it, institutional pressures warning Dr. Lenz and everyone else off critical interpretation began with questions at the Mankato history conference like "How can we teach this conflict without students simply passing judgment on people from the past from their modern perspectives?" (Field journal, 09-22-2011). Such pressures continued throughout this collaboration with Harwell and others like Marz, LaBatte, and Dahlin who were networked with the regional historical societies. Locally, the historical societies work very hard to avoid presentism on matters of race, an important example coming after publication of Elizabeth Dorsey Hatle's *The Ku Klux Klan in Minnesota* in 2013. In a *Free Press* article discussing Hatle's new book (Dyslin, November 3, 2013), three historical society representatives were interviewed. "Area historical societies said, for the most part, the Klan gathered to socialize," the story reported. "'They did burn a cross in St. James,' one representative noted, '(But mostly) it was a social club.'" Another representative said, "It was kind of a little bit different organization then. It was more of a patriotic organization that kind of sprang out of World War I. ... A lot of folks are going into this with a present-day attitude (about KKK violence and terrorism), and it really at that time probably wasn't that." The director of the Blue Earth County Historical Society added, "the group truly believed they were promoting what was right and just." It all seemed to be okay because, as Hatle told the reporter, "In Minnesota, we just didn't have many black people." The story failed to mention Hatle's observation in the book that "Closer examination of what occurred in Minnesota is long overdue regarding the Ku Klux Klan and the damage it did to communities here, even destroying some individuals' lives in the process" (p. 14), a statement based on violence and terrorism carried out by the KKK in Minnesota against both blacks and whites as Hatle's book reveals.

In the next week's focus group, Holly expressed regret about not being able to discuss *Waterlily* more, time not being an obvious explanation raised in the conversation:

Holly: I wish we'd gotten to discuss *Waterlily* more. Just because like-like we're both English majors and like ((addressing Christina)) I'm used to like close reading a book and then discussing every little detail in class. A lot. And so it was really weird because-

Christina: To kind of skim over it.

Holly: Yeah. And professor Lenz's like my advisor and I had her for an English class this past fall semester. So like to have her assign us a book and then just kind of like skim over it, it was like "Whoa! What are we doing?" (Focus group, 01-13-2012)

Christina had taken a Women in the Holocaust course from Dr. Lenz the previous spring. She told me she came away from that course "angry with people" after learning so much about the oppression of women (Interview, 01-20-2012). She said the lack of reflection in the J-term surprised her. When I asked her what kind of exhibit she would have made given no constraints like those in the course, she said:

I mean I'd still want to focu- like, I'd still want to- I know what I'm interested in like as (2.5) °as a person° like I told you I'm interested in the Holocaust and sexual violence and learning that kind of stuff, and I've seen a lot of like- we've talked about it in class, and the 38 who were con- you know, who were convicted for hanging were because they were involved in rapes or this and this and this so that element was really interesting and that's something I would have been

interested in (1.5) portraying, but I don't know if it's (.) um. (Interview, 01-20-2012)

The moment where Christina pauses and lowers her volume to note her personhood just before explaining the interpretive orientation Dr. Lenz had helped her develop strikes me as one similar to when Alan stopped himself short of independent thought, lowered his voice, and switched to *we* while commenting on the creation of a linear exhibit. I find it reminiscent as well of the times when Jennifer erased subjects from her speech when coming close to naming the source of the demand for balance. In such moments, students weren't merely marking tensions between their individual voices and the collective voice taking shape in the group project; they were also marking contradictions pertaining to critical orientations they had learned at St. Lucia and ideological demands suddenly placed on them when helping the same institution craft a public transaction for whites regarding the U.S.-Dakota War, an endeavor that always seems to compel citizens to suspend their socially situated selves.

As noted, Christina identified as non-white in this same interview. She brought up her racial difference from the J-term norm for the first time in class the following week (Fieldnotes, 01-24-2012). Again, when doing so, she said she had found it hard to position herself. I read her participation in the course as a form of labor carried out in southern Minnesota's white citizen factory.

When I asked Christina how she thought her panel on the role of sexual violence in 1862 might have gone over, she evoked Dr. Lenz's warning against feminist interpretation:

I feel like- I mean- you know, that's some- not something people want to talk about in general in our society. In the books that we've read, sexuality is not addressed. The feminist perspective isn't, you know, shou- shouldn't always be applied because it's not, you know- (Interview, 01-20-2012)

In this, Christina signals that positioning students as having “essentially started at zero” in the J-term was no easy matter of the instructors telling them they had little to no prior knowledge about the war. It required instructors making numerous discursive moves daily, inducing students to accept for the time being that their critical prior knowledge did not apply. Student faith and trust in authority played decisive roles in this co-construction of zero-point positioning for the management of everyone's moral judgment. As Jennifer put it, “I respect that and obviously, you know, she's probably got a reason for why she wants us to stay away from that.”⁵

⁵ Dr. Lenz made a point to teach students explicitly about the privileged colonial attitude that encourages treatment of disempowered people as blank slates. On the same day she warned students off feminist interpretation of *Waterlily*, she read a passage from the book's Afterword (pp. 237-238), quoting a letter where Deloria once described her mission: “To make the Dakota people understandable, as human beings, to the white people who have to deal with them. I feel that one of the reasons for the lagging advancement of the Dakota has been that those who came out among them to teach and preach, went on the assumption that the Dakota had nothing, no rules of life, no social organization, no ideals. And so they tried to pour white culture into, as it were, a vacuum, and when that did not work out, because it was not a vacuum after all, they concluded that the Indians were impossible to change and train. What they should have done first, before daring to start their program, was to study everything possible of Dakota life....” (Fieldnotes, 01-04-2012). I found this juxtaposition of teaching students about the problem of the banking model of education (Freire, 1970/2010) while simultaneously positioning them as starting out from zero suggestive of a deep separation between theory and practice in instruction (Fieldnotes, 01-04-2012).

Like with Stephanie, Sarah, Jennifer, and Lori's unwritten panels, Christina should have been encouraged to write a panel about rape discourses, exposing the regional racist folklore by addressing a key *ancestry-based double standard* that shaped important events in 1862 (Fields and Fields, 2012). After all, there was a panel theme labeled "Trials and Hanging" on the syllabus with no information about its intended content. Bibliographic information compiled for this panel in 2011 and provided to students listed sources containing information on rape discourses — Mary Wingerd (2010), John Bessler (2003), William Green (2007). As it turned out, Rachel and Tracy's panel, "A Bitter End," states, "In total, 323 Dakota were convicted of crimes ranging from murder of civilians to simply being present at a battle with U.S. troops." Rape discourses are not mentioned anywhere in the exhibit unveiled in March.

In cases like this it seems anxieties about professional and institutional reputations resulted in key information about 1862 going behind the veil of ignorance. Describing the exhibit project in January, Harwell told me "this is something that had to work. We had already committed. We had told people about it. And it's on a topic that's very, very difficult. And so, uh, it has to be good" (Interview, 01-20-2012). I suggest the exhibit could have achieved a different kind of goodness than the white-guy goodness Harwell defined in this same interview. Ways into a good social-justice exhibit actually lay close at hand in a) student prior knowledge, b) critical Dakota scholars who could have contributed, c) sources included in bibliographic materials, and d) objectives written into the course syllabus — "to study the 'linguistic turn' in history;" "to read and discuss key texts about the complicated 1860's in Minnesota;" "to question the role of memory,

memorialization and museums in our society;” and to “raise awareness of the treatment of indigenous people in the 19th century.” Listening carefully to students, trusting them as competent knowledge workers, and incorporating their critical expertise into the project rather than editing it out could have produced a truly *just* exhibit, one inclusive to more Dakota people and advocating for regional social change.

Hitting the Pause Button Again: The Reproduction of Ignorance

Sheldon Wolfchild carried three books with him when he visited the J-term classroom, Vine Deloria’s *God Is Red* (1972), Roy Meyer’s *History of the Santee Sioux* (1967), and David Nichols’s *Lincoln and the Indians* (1978). The latter two volumes were tattered and stuffed with papers he used to mark important passages. Telling the class both were out of print, he added, “As a Dakota, you have to wonder why.” He opened to the first page of chapter four in Meyer, turned the book around and held it out for everyone to see — “The Monstrous Conspiracy” (Fieldnotes, 01-16-2012).

For me, the worn state of Wolfchild’s books and the difficulties he had trying to get messages from them across to the J-term instructors call to mind anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler’s observation about colonial histories not being linear, not moving out of darkness and into light, but repeatedly being forgotten and rediscovered (2011, p. 128). After analyzing the work of Sibley and Pope’s 1862 military commission, for example, Meyers identifies the central racial injustice of the 1862 trials in an ancestry-based double standard — “Thus the revered Anglo-Saxon principle of law that a person is considered innocent until proved guilty was reversed in the case of Indians” (p. 125). Yet in 2012,

publicly questioning, rejecting, or defending the trials' fairness without discussing racism passed as perfectly legitimate endeavors (Anderson lecture, 01-10-2012; Bachman, July 2012). Similarly, David Nichols sums up settler society's entire justification for appropriating indigenous peoples' homelands when he writes:

Removal was fundamentally racial segregation. In the minds of whites, it did not differ essentially from the already well documented separatist attitudes whites expressed toward blacks in American life. Race, rather than behavior, was the foundation for categorization and removal just as in segregation. (p. 189)

Yet in 2012, it sounded perfectly reasonable to chalk violence and removal up to things like the corrupt treaty system, rapid settler migration, or an inevitable clash of cultures, all without discussing racism.

Conclusions like those above from Meyers and Nichols almost have an old-fashioned, simplistic feel to them today. Regionally, public discourses promoting the notion that the war is so complex as to defy interpretation repeatedly imply without saying in so many words that race is only one equally valid lens through which to try to make sense out of events from 1862. Academic discourses can sometimes do something similar. After considering the importance of whiteness and identity construction in *The War in Words: Reading the Dakota Conflict through the Captivity Literature* (2009), Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola moves on to analyze complex multiethnic relationships and perspectives in the 1860s, writing at one point "The war's significances can only be approached through a range of texts whose words endlessly spar with each other but do not ultimately reach any overarching truth" (p. 28).

In all the complexity, it is both easy and convenient to lose sight of white supremacy's one-way ideological trajectory as settlers wrested the fundamental social good away from Dakota people. I would never argue that the U.S.-Dakota War is not complex, yet its complexities wither in comparison to race hysteria seen around the turn of the nineteenth century in Saint Domingue (Haiti), for example, where experts developed 128 racial categories of people ranging from the pure white through various strata of "quarterons" and "maribous," etc., to the pure black, all of them of course being fictive. As C. L. R. James writes in *The Black Jacobins* (1963), "the sang-mêlé with 127 white parts and 1 black part was still a man of colour" (p. 38). Complex orientations in Saint Domingue included free blacks who opposed the abolition of slavery and, the unthinkable in Minnesota, a white leader who fought against whites because he thought the black rebels were upholding France's ideals of freedom and equality better than the planters. Despite all this, James manages to keep the core issues in view while telling the history of the Haitian Revolution — race not as the reason but as the *justification* for whites seizing land, generating wealth and prestige, and defending property at the expense of dehumanized people.

Locally, articles concerning Dakota people and their history continue to appear from time to time. One in 2013 told about John Stoesz, a white farmer descendant who cycled from county seat to county seat raising awareness that year for Waziyatawin's Makoce Ikikcupi reparative justice project (Schmierbach, October 14, 2013). An article in 2014 discussed an effort to seek a presidential pardon for the 38 hanging victims, a double-edged sword for as Gwen Westerman points out, seeking a pardon assumes their

guilt of committing crimes in the first place, something the 1862 military commission failed to properly establish (Krohn, March 23, 2014). Another story printed later that year told about the discovery of a full skeleton reportedly of one of the hanging victims in the basement of a Mankato home being prepared for sale. Before the house changed hands, an unidentified relative of the owner removed the skeleton and took it with him to the Twin Cities (Krohn, November 23, 2014). The history continues to provide signs of hope, dilemmas, and ugliness.

Yet as these journalistic ripples continue from the sesquicentennial, producers of regional public knowledge have also worked to see that the collective pause button gets hit again. In its weekly “Glimpse of the Past” series, a Sunday column featuring research from the county historical societies, the *Mankato Free Press* churned out 50 articles in 2013 demonstrating how little had been retained from the previous year (Appendix E). Of over 200 people mentioned in these pieces, only 3 were indigenous. Sixteen of the 50 articles gave biographical portraits of historical figures, none of whom were indigenous. Eleven of the articles touched on the 1862 war, 8 merely mentioning it to enhance the entrepreneurial spirit, benevolence, or bravery of whites. Of the other 3 articles focusing primarily on an aspect of the war, 2 did so to emphasize white benevolence or bravery. Only 2 of the 50 articles featured people of color, one to promote a book written by a white settler descendant. “Glimpse of the Past” articles often serve as a form of boosterism, providing historical context to upcoming events like county fairs, music festivals, Vikings training camp, etc. Yet on the week of the Mahkato Wacipi (powwow), readers learned about the historic bridges of Blue Earth County. On the last day of the

Mahkato Wacipi, readers learned about men from Faribault County recruited to fight for the Union in 1862 and who ended up dying in a Confederate prison. Two articles occurred around the somber anniversary of the December 26 hanging — one on how Blue Earth County residents celebrated the holidays in 1885, the other on the history of shopping at a renowned department store in Waseca. Six county historical societies contributed to this body of articles. Two had won national awards for their work on the U.S.-Dakota War the previous year.

Knowledge production like this shows an important way that systematized negation takes place. Looking back on the public call for citizens to learn more about the U.S.-Dakota War early in 2012, the “remarkable” lack of public knowledge does not seem so remarkable after all (“Dakota-U.S. War history,” January 10, 2012). Rather than a naturally occurring phenomenon, public ignorance comes from a sustained desire to ignore (Felman, 1987, p. 79; Giroux, 2000, p. 104). Forgetting functions this way as well. As Ann Laura Stoler writes, “Like the noun *ignorance*, which shares its etymology with the verb *to ignore*, *forgetting* is not a passive condition. *To forget*, like *to ignore*, is an active verb, an act from which one turns away. It is an achieved state” (Stoler, 2011, p. 141).

I hope my writing has helped explain both why and how the general public in southern Minnesota perpetually forgets, only partially remembers, and then forgets again the U.S.-Dakota War. Following the thinking that prevailed in 2012 (“Dakota-U.S. War history,” January 10, 2012), citizens *owed it to themselves* to learn how their white-man’s state was made, a declaration narrowing the purpose of learning about conflict with

racialized others to enhancing one's sense of educated citizenship. But during the year, citizen-scholars discovered that they did in fact owe a great deal to others than just themselves. Since they owed themselves first, they seemed to owe next to nothing to the Dakota people, as the binary logic of the white public pedagogy suggests. They did not owe much directly to slain settlers or their descendants either despite the heavy counterbalancing weight this interest group carried. Rather, the citizen-scholar of 2012 inherited collective obligations from white elders who have worked assiduously for the past 150 years to neutralize moral judgment on the U.S.-Dakota War — authoritative producers of public knowledge like Isaac Heard, Lorin Cray, Gen. James Baker, and Kenneth Carley who have in various evolving ways erased white agency from a foundational situation of injustice over time. The artifacts they have fashioned from the earliest histories to historic public monuments to today's balanced sources have sought to pass on the common sense that the injustices of 1862 were indeed just after all.

As seen in this study, bequeathing southern Minnesota's highly situated sense of justice as fairness to descendant citizens entails carefully crafting artifacts that will function as *public meditative transactions* between whites past, present, and future, narrating from the original position and casting social contingencies — especially white supremacy — behind veils of ignorance. This way, the extent of the injustice cannot be fully known. All of this works well for audiences and public knowledge workers already predisposed toward not talking about race and the violently undemocratic social practices of their founding forebears. There seems to be only so much of its own collective

unfairness the free, equal, and rational identity can take before the common sense of justice, peace, and social order start to unravel.

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Images modified from panel # 12; original syllabus title “Commemoration and Reconciliation.” Sarah’s complete narrative can be read beginning in the left-hand column of the upper image and continuing through both columns of the lower image.

The story of this war does not end at the hanging of the 38 or with the ensuing Dakota exile. It is, as author Thomas Maltman describes, a “living wound” that has been passed down in the collective memory of the communities involved.

Until recently, commemoration efforts have been told from one perspective—that of the victors. Monuments and markers at Fort Ridgely, Acton, Wood Lake, Milford, Birch Coulee, Camp Release, and others honor the settlers/newcomers killed by Dakota akicita across Southwestern Minnesota.

Fort Ridgely State Monument
 “In memory of the fallen; in recognition of the living; and for the emulation of future generations. Erected A.D. 1896, by the State of Minnesota, to preserve the site of Ft. Ridgely, a United States military post established in 1853, and especially to perpetuate the names and commemorate the heroism of the soldiers and citizens of the State, who successfully




Only recently have other views, those of Dakota people, begun to be acknowledged. At Mankato, near the site of the mass execution, a memorial marker was erected in 1978 and a statue of the “Winter Warrior” in 1987. These were the first memorials to include a Dakota perspective. A buffalo statue was added to the site in 1997.

Seeking to heal this yet-living wound, many members of the Dakota community take part in living memorials each year. One memorial, the Dakota Commemorative March, traces the footsteps of the Dakota force-marched from the Lower Sioux Agency to the internment camp at Fort Snelling. In the Reconciliation Ride, another annual event, participants travel on horseback from South Dakota to Mankato in honor of the 38 executed Dakota.

The process of healing for the Dakota community has just begun. When asked what could be done to commemorate the 38 on the 150th anniversary Dakota Elder Sandee Geshick responded with the comment to the right.

*through a
 Words also
 our akicita
 to pardon
 form of justice
 then let
 process
 have been
 last 150*

Dakota Reconciliation Ride 2010
 photograph by John Cross, Mankato Free Press



Panel # 9; original syllabus title “War — Settler perspectives.”

Press and Panic on the Frontier

TERRIBLE INDIAN RAID.


THE FRONTIER DESOLATED.
THE INHABITANTS MURDERED.
SHOCKING BARBARITIES.

“We can no longer shut our eyes to the fact that the Sioux Indians have committed a year upon the settlements on our creek frontier, and have massacred hundreds of men, women and children.”
—THE DUNDY AND HERBERT
Saint Paul, Friday, Aug. 25, 1862

THE INDIAN OUTRAGES

Horrible Massacres.


“At no period in the annals of our State has there been a work of more horror, violence and atrocity than during the war just passed. Little did we dream that almost in our very midst were to be perpetrated crimes, such as our civilization has regarded for the centuries as unpardonable and its glorious free institutions, so true to God ever, should plunge into the vortex of a war so terrible with the inherent barbarism that have shamefully been permitted to accept a large portion of the most beautiful territory of our State. Men, women and children, possibly passing their daily avocations, have been cruelly and intentionally slaughtered and mangled by these fiends in human shape.”
—CENTRAL BROTHERS, S.S.
Fairbault, Wednesday, Aug. 27, 1862




Jane Swishelm was already a well-known journalist before she moved to St. Cloud, Minnesota in 1857. She became the editor of the *St. Cloud Visitor* [sic] and later created her own paper, the *St. Cloud Democrat*. Swishelm often used her newspaper to advocate for women's rights and the abolition of slavery in the south. She also passionately advocated for the annihilation of the Dakota.

“Exterminate the wild beasts, and make peace with the devil and all his hosts sooner than these red-jawed tigers, whose fangs are dripping with the blood of the innocents! Get ready, and as soon as these convicted murderers are turned loose, shoot them and be sure they are shot dead, dead, DEAD, DEAD! If they have any souls, the Lord can have mercy on them if He pleases! But that is His business. Ours is to kill the lazy vermin and make sure of killing them.”
— *St. Cloud Democrat*, November 13, 1862

Some of the settlers killed in the fighting, like Amos W. Huggins, had lived peacefully among the Dakota for many years. Huggins was born and raised among the Dakota community and later conducted a school for Dakota children. He was killed at La qui Parle on August 19, 1862, and his wife and children were captured.



“Mr. Huggins exercised nothing but kindness toward the Indians. He fed them when hungry, clothed them when naked, attended them when sick, and advised and cheered them in all their difficulties. He was intelligent, industrious, energetic, and good, and yet he was one of the first victims of the outbreak, shot down like a dog by the very Indians whom he had so long and so well served.”
— Agent Thomas Galbraith



Adrian Ebell photographed these mission refugees on August 21, 1862. Carte-de-visite.
From the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society

Modified from panel # 9.



Jane Swisshelm, St. Cloud, ca. 1860.
from the portrait collection of the
Minnesota Historical Society

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~ Agent Thomas Galbraith

Panel # 8; original syllabus title “War — Dakota perspectives.”

The Dakota Declare War



Fort Ridgely, by Albert Colgrave (1863), graphite on paper
from the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society



Wood Lake Battlefield (above) and Birch Coulee Battlefield (below) by soldier-artist, Albert Colgrave.
From the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society

Starving, desperate, and quickly losing their traditional way of life, the Mdewakanton Dakota soldiers' lodges led by reluctant Chief Taoyateduta declared war on the United States when they attacked the Lower Sioux Agency on August 18, 1862. Dakota akicitas continued throughout the valley and attacked Fort Ridgely on August 20 and 22, New Ulm on August 19 and again on August 23, and scattered newcomer settlements throughout western Minnesota. Though originally superior in number, Dakota akicitas were divided in their opinions about military tactics, and that lessened their strategic advantage. The war's final battle occurred at Wood Lake on September 23, 1862. Taoyateduta's battle plan was accidentally foiled by a group of U.S. soldiers foraging for potatoes, which prematurely started the fighting. At Camp Release, captives held by the Dakota were freed, and a mixture of Dakota akicitas and non-combatants surrendered to Colonel Sibley. Taoyateduta and a few hundred of his followers fled west and escaped capture.

Taoyateduta, also known as Little Crow, was a leader of the Mdewakanton Dakota. He had traveled to Washington, D.C. and was acutely aware of the power of the U.S. government. Taoyateduta signed the Treaty at Mendota as a way to preserve the rights and customs of the Dakota Nation.

“I am for continuing the war, and am opposed to the delivery of the prisoners. I have no confidence that the whites will stand by any agreement they make if we give them up. Ever since we treated with them, their agents and traders have robbed and cheated us. Some of our people have been shot, some hung; others placed upon floating ice and drowned; and many have been starved in their prisons. It was not the intention of the nation to kill any of the whites until after the four men returned from Acton and told what they had done. When they did this, all the young men became excited, and commenced the massacre. The older ones would have prevented it if they could, but since the treaties they have lost all their influence. We may regret what has happened but the matter has gone too far to be remedied. We have got to die. Let us, then, kill as many of the whites as possible, and let the prisoners die with us.”

— Rda-in-yan-ka



Taoyateduta, Dakota leader
photograph by Joel Carver and Whitney (1822-1880)
from the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society

“If you strike at them, they will all turn on you and devour you and your women and little children just as the locusts in their time fall on the trees and devour all the leaves in one day. ... Braves, you are little children—you are fools. ... Taoyateduta is not a coward: he will die with you.”

— Taoyateduta, at a war council held in his home following the events of August 17, 1862 near Acton.

Attack on New Ulm during the Sioux Outbreak August 19-23, 1862. This was the scene imagined by artist Anton Gag (1859-1908) when he created this oil painting in 1904.
from the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society



Modified from panel # 10; original syllabus title “Trials and Hanging.”

On September 28, 1862, five days after the Battle of Wood Lake, General Sibley commissioned five U.S. military officers to hear the cases of 393 of the Dakota akicita. In total, 323 Dakota were convicted of crimes ranging from murder of civilians to simply being present at a battle with U.S. troops. There were as many as 42 trials per day—many taking as few as ten minutes. Virtually no evidence was presented and basic judicial procedures were not followed. All but 20 of those convicted were sentenced to death.

A newly passed federal statute mandated that the President of the United States approve all executions. Abraham Lincoln deliberated the individual cases for just under a month and then decreased the number of Dakota to be hanged to 39. Lincoln issued orders to execute these Dakota on December 6, 1862. One of the cases was stayed due to new evidence, which lowered the final number of Dakota to be hanged to 38.

Meanwhile, 1,700 Dakota people, mainly women and children, were forced to walk from the Lower Sioux Agency in Redwood Falls to Fort Snelling in St. Paul, departing on November 7.

Prisoners were not told of the executions until December 16. On December 24, 1862, the 38 Dakota who were sentenced to be hanged were allowed to meet with their families for the last time. On the morning of December 26, 1862, in Mankato, the 38 prisoners were hung in front of an audience of over 3,000, in a town with a population of only 200 people.

Though never charged with any crimes, those at Fort Snelling were held as prisoners from the winter of 1862 to the spring of 1863. Horrid conditions caused hundreds of deaths from disease and malnutrition.

“[I]f
our friends
that we are
being removed
from this world
over the same path
they must shortly
travel. We go first, but
many of our friends must
follow us in a very short
time. I expect to go directly
to the abode of the Great Spirit
and to be happy when I get
there; but we are told that the
road is long and the distance
great; therefore, as I am slow
in my movements, it will
probably take me a long time

2013 Mankato *Free Press* “Glimpse of the Past” articles¹

(January 6). Blue Earth County rich in railroad history. R. Forseth, p. B4.

†(January 13). Tales of joy and sorrow from the Great Storm of 1873. B. Sandeen, p. B4.

(January 20). MSU production shed 600 pounds for USO tour. M. Lagerquist, p. B4.

†(January 27). Patrick's building took its time to return to roots. B. Sandeen, p. B4.

(February 3). 1920 Mankato Winter Carnival: A one-time-only grand event. H. Harren, p. B4.

(February 10). Community organizations have long abounded in St. Peter. B. Sandeen, p. B4.

(February 17). Spanish influenza pandemic hit B.E. County in 1918-1920. R. Harren, p. B4.

(February 24). Ferries once connected communities in the region. B. Sandeen, p. B4.

(March 3). Soybeans rarely grown in Minnesota before 1920. Blue Earth County Historical Society, p. B4.

†(March 10). Gag's art focused on ordinary lives of ordinary people. Brown County Historical Society, p. B4.

(March 17). Mankato once a host town for Big Top circuses. Blue Earth County Historical Society, p. B4.

(March 24). Fifteen years ago, tornado left St. Peter a different city. B. Sandeen, p. B4.

†**(March 31). Godfrey was Northern slave, black Dakota. Brown County Historical Society, p. B4.

(April 7). Vietnam protests of 1972 good example of civil disobedience. S. Burnton, p. B5.

¹ # Articles mentioning indigenous people.

† Biographical sketches.

* Articles mentioning the U.S.-Dakota War.

** Articles focusing on an aspect of the U.S.-Dakota War.

- (April 14). MSU's 'Old Abe' a longtime, beloved symbol on campus. B. Stenzel, p. B4.
- †(April 21). Mankato man died in sub disaster. E. Schmierbach. Mankato Free Press, p. B4.
- #(May 12). Swan Lake area a longtime treasure trove of resources. B. Sandeen, p. B4.
- †**(May 19). Mankato woman aided wounded pioneers in Dakota-U.S. War. R. Harren, p. B4.
- (May 26). St. Peter bridge an early one to cross the Minnesota. B. Sandeen, p. B4.
- (June 2). Newspaper initiated city nickname contest in 1925. J. Helmers, p. B4.
- (June 9). Docile Minnesota River can sometimes rage. J. Johnson, p. B4.
- †*(June 16). Harkin Store once the center of West Newton. B. Sandeen, p. B4.
- (June 23). Stories of Gage Towers will live on after implosion. J. Johnson, p. B4.
- †(June 30). Mankato soldier died on Gettysburg battle field. *Free Press* staff, p. B4.
- (July 7) Grasshoppers devastated crops in 1870s. B. Sandeen, p. B4.
- (July 14). Friends of Hiniker Pond saved swimming hole. J. Johnson, p. B4.
- (July 21). Vikings training camp brings back fans, memories. J. Johnson, p. B4.
- *(July 28). Blue Earth County home to one of state's oldest fairs. J. Johnson, p. B4.
- (August 4). Le Sueur's Giant Celebration evolved from earlier festivals. K. Burns, p. B4.
- (August 11). Competition stiff to be state hospital site. B. Sandeen, p. B4.
- †*(August 18). Pioneer's biography documented in DAR collection. A. B. Russ, p. B4.
- (2013, August 25). Mankato's Normal School was town's first college. J. Johnson, p. B4.
- (September 1). Rock Bend settlement preceded city of St. Peter. B. Sandeen, p. B4.
- *(September 8). New Ulm battery remains battle free. Brown County Historical Society, p. B6.

- (September 15). Blue Earth County home to many historic bridges. K. Matze, p. B4.
- *(September 22). Soldiers from Faribault County sent to Andersonville. A. B. Russ, p. B4.
- (September 29). Riot 10 years ago in Mankato fueled by alcohol. Free Press Staff, p. B4.
- (October 6). Economic conditions created Nicollet County's ghost towns. B. Sandeen, p. B4.
- (October, 13). Lebanese immigrants helped establish Mankato. Blue Earth County Historical Society, p. B4.
- †*(October 20). Canadian-born entrepreneur helped shape Faribault County. A. B. Russ, p. B4.
- †*(October 27). Le Sueur house once home to Mayo dynasty. K. Burns, p. B4.
- †(November 3). Man walked 9,000 miles pushing wheelbarrow. Nicollet County Historical Society, p. B4.
- †(November 10). Road named for Marine killed in Vietnam. J. Schultz, p. B4.
- (November 17). School bears name of assassinated president. E. Schmierbach, p. B4.
- #†**(November 24). Founder of Waseca's mills survived U.S.-Dakota War. S. Morris, p. C4.
- (December 1). Travel by rail was common during late 1880s. B. Sandeen, p. B4.
- †(December, 8). New Ulm natives left legacies to youth. Brown County Historical Society, p. B4.
- #†*(December 15). Faribault County newspaperman became doctor. A. B. Russ, p. B4.
- (December 22). Holidays were joyous times for B. E. County in 1885. Blue Earth County Historical Society, p. B4.
- (December 29). Shoppers flocked to Wolf & Habein's during the holidays. S. Morris, p. B4.