

FADING ROLES OF FICTIVE KINSHIP:
MIXED-BLOOD RACIAL ISOLATION AND UNITED STATES INDIAN POLICY IN THE
LOWER MISSOURI RIVER BASIN, 1790-1830

by

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Abstract

On June 3, 1825, William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and eleven representatives of the “Kansas” nation signed a treaty ceding their lands to the United States. The first to sign was “Nom-pa-wa-rah,” the overall Kansa leader, better known as White Plume. His participation illustrated the racial chasm that had opened between Native- and Anglo-American worlds. The treaty was designed to ease pressures of proximity in Missouri and relocate multiple nations West of the Mississippi, where they believed they would finally be beyond the American lust for land.

White Plume knew different. Through experience with U.S. Indian policy, he understood that land cessions only restarted a cycle of events culminating in more land cessions. His identity as a mixed-blood, by virtue of the Indian-white ancestry of many of his family, opened opportunities for that experience. Thus, he attempted in 1825 to use U.S. laws and relationships with officials such as William Clark to protect the future of the Kansa. The treaty was a cession of land to satisfy conflicts, but also a guarantee of reserved land, and significantly, of a “half-breed” tract for mixed-blood members of the Kansa Nation.

Mixed-blood go-betweens stood for a final few moments astride a widening chasm between Anglo-American and native worlds. It was a space that less than a century before offered numerous opportunities for mixed-blood people to thrive as intermediaries, brokers, traders, and diplomats. They appeared, albeit subtly, in interactions wherever white and Native worlds overlapped. As American Indians lost their economic viability and eventually their land, that overlap disappeared. White Plume’s negotiation of a reserve for his descendants is telling of a group left without a place. In bridging the two worlds, mixed-bloods became a group that by

the mid-nineteenth century was defined as “other” by Anglo-American and Indians alike. This study is the first to track these evolving racial constructs and roles over both time and place. Previous studies have examined mixed-blood roles, but their identity is portrayed as static. This study contends that their roles changed with the proximity and viability of full-blood communities with which white officials had to negotiate.

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Dedication

To my parents,
Walt, “Hook” and Rita Isenhowe

Chapter 1 - A Supporting Cast: Mixed-Blood Indians in the Historical Narrative of the Frontier

July 26th and 27th, 1888 proved emblematic of the end of a widely accepted place for a group of people in United States-Indian relations. The U.S. Congress debated the property rights of the offspring of interracial unions, or so-called “mixed-blood” Native cynicism Americans, as a formally distinguishable group for one of the last times in American history. By that time, land cession and relocation had long ago become fact. Any readily distinguishable role for Native Americans of mixed descent, too, had all but disappeared from the living memory of United States policymakers. Congressman George Adams of Illinois expressed hopeful support for allowing the children of interracial marriages to inherit reservation land. He surmised that they may “be a little nearer to civilization,” and with each generation ease the difficulties Native Americans faced in American society. Congressman Samuel R. Peters of Kansas, took a pessimistic view of the mixed-blood Indians’ potential, responding emphatically,

Some of the worst characters, the vilest outlaws, men who violate every law known to humanity as well as to Christianity, are the children of white men who went among the Indians and intermarried with them. I would rather trust my life or my property today in the hands of a full-blood Indian than trust it in the hands of a half-breed who has been raised in the midst of the barbarous influences that surround many of these tribes.¹

¹ Congressional Record, 50th Cong., 1st sess., 26-27 July 1888, 20:6886; quoted in, William E. Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods and Tribal Dissolution: Charles Curtis and the Quest for Indian Identity* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 106-107.

Introduction

Though presented to demonstrate what he considered a lesser of two evils, Peters' juxtaposition of full-blood and mixed-blood Native Americans is significant. The racial identity of mixed-blood Indians was profoundly linked to the presence and viability of a full-blood community. That identity, and its relationship to the roles in which mixed-blood individuals often thrived, evolved over time. In periods and locations where there remained large, economically and politically viable full-blood communities capable of demanding negotiation from Euro-American officials, traders, and policymakers, race played a minimal part in role and identity within frontier communities. The economic and political relationships between white, Euro-American and Indian communities demanded go-betweens and mediators with nuanced multi-cultural and linguistic knowledge. It bears mentioning that for much of American history the frontier these communities inhabited was not, as far as they could discern, strictly oriented toward the west or in any other direction.² Though the American frontier of settlement moved from east to west, and did eventually figure heavily in the changes experienced by frontier communities, the term "frontier" for the purposes of this study constitutes the region of contact between American and Indian worlds. It is merely a term for the space where cultures collided, and should not be construed as an invocation of a Turner-esque expansionist perspective.³ In

² Patricia Limerick, *Something In the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2000), 94.

³ Mary Louise Pratt articulates the difficulties of the term "frontier," writing that it has acquired expansionist connotations over time, obscuring its original meaning of borderland. Pratt ultimately eschews "frontier" in favor of her own term, "contact-zones." Given the significance of the frontier in this study due to the context of European and American encroachment, "contact zone" seems too vague a term, while "borderland" invokes a sense of rigid delineation that, in practice, simply did not exist. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

such a space, mixed-blood individuals, though certainly not possessing a monopoly on roles as culture-brokers, were advantaged in typically having been raised immersed in the cultures of both of their parents. Mixed-blood identity was defined foremost by their skill as intermediaries. However, as full-blood communities saw their economic and political leverage decline during the beginning of the nineteenth century, so too declined the roles for intermediaries and the mixed-blood people that so often thrived in those roles. The simultaneous rise of the United States as the sole policymaking power along the frontier coupled with the increased pace of American settlement brought a more “scientific” language of race into government policy and American-Indian relations. Mixed-blood individuals were specifically assigned an assimilationist role in Jeffersonian policy based on race. As white American encroachment intensified and the fur trade that primarily drove Native American economic viability dwindled, mixed-blood leaders used their familiarity with American understandings of hierarchy and politics to negotiate terms as favorable as possible with the only bargaining leverage Indian nations had left—land. As such, full-blood Indians saw their mixed-blood cousins as increasingly complicit in Euro-American schemes of dispossession. The completion of land cessions with provisions for reservations proved to be their final act as intermediaries. By the advent of land cession, mixed-blood individuals were racially defined as Indians by the American policymakers they had—by necessity—abetted. On the reservations, the actions of a few mixed-blood leaders put suspicion on mixed-blood people as a group. Both sides learned to define one another by race as “white” or “Indian,” and both defined mixed-blood individuals as a racial “other.” Thus the racial identity of mixed-blood Indians was not static. It was defined by their roles until those roles as leaders and go-betweens overseeing land cession tied them with white interests in the eyes Native Americans who defined themselves as full-blood. Yet in the

white American perception, mixed-blood Indians retained an irredeemable racial taint. Their roles endured the decline of the economic viability, but long before official government removal, mixed-blood Indians became a people without a place.

A Frontier From Each Side

Rarely was this process as evident as in the frontier world of the lower Missouri River Basin. There, near modern-day St. Louis, existed a truly multi-cultural world where Native Americans and individuals of various nationalities interacted through one of the most profitable periods in the history of American and European-Indian relations, the fur trade. The cycle of initial cooperation, increased white encroachment, conflict, redefinition of Native Americans as “other,” and eventual dispossession took place at many stages of the frontier. It happened, for example, in 1676 with the conclusion of King Philip’s War, and again with the French and Indian War, the Paxton riots, and yet again with the American Revolution.⁴ Unlike these examples, transition in the Lower Missouri region was not marked by the sharp cleaving effect of war or massacre. Furthermore, few other frontier regions displayed such an enduring multicultural aspect as the Lower Missouri River Basin, a region characterized by interactions between Native American, French, British, Spanish, and American influences long before the frontier advanced near. Also setting them apart, the communities in this region witnessed the

⁴ Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), xiii. For the French and Indian War and American Revolution see Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How the Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), xviii-xxiii, 3-4, 8-11, 123, 179-182, and 256-257. For talk of the possible need to relocate Indian west as early as the French and Indian War see also Fred Anderson, *The War That Made America: A Short History of the French and Indian War* (New York: Viking Press, 2005), 208; for pitting of Indians against colonists see, viii, 91, 95.

development and earliest implementation of a cohesive American Indian policy that formalized race roles and specifically targeted land acquisition.

Negotiated Social Norms

Significantly, frontier communities were beyond the social dictates of “proper” French, British, and American society. The typical European and American mores against racial intermixing, which already varied between French, Spanish, and English perceptions, were supplanted by the everyday commonality of the practice. Traders and officials used relationships to forge vital alliances and ties to Indian nations, and these relationships produced dual-cultured children who came of age and thrived in the frontier overlap of white and Native American worlds. When the United States concluded the Louisiana Purchase, white American observers and officials took special interest in the area and created new racial interpretations for relationships they did not fully understand. As the fur trade declined and full-blood nations lost economic leverage, this same area saw the pressures of refugee groups of Indians pushed into close proximity. Finally, during the late 1820s, the Lower Missouri River basin witnessed the necessity of land cession, the dispossession of local Indian groups, and the disappearance of an accepted role for mixed-blood Indians. This study will examine how the racial perceptions of mixed-blood Indians in the Lower Missouri River Basin were defined and changed over time. It will demonstrate how these perceptions were tied to the viability of full-blood communities and were further shaped by the perceptions and assigned roles of assimilationist policy that ultimately connected mixed-blood Indians to land cessions and, by extension, American interests. The result was a group seen as too complicit in exploitation to be Native American, yet too racially Indian to be accepted as white.

This study compares three different periods significant in the evolution of the roles commonly available to mixed-blood individuals and the racial perceptions they were viewed with by both white Euro-American and full-blood Native Americans. After establishing the status during the period of frontier diversity before 1790, the focus of the analysis will shift to the Lower Missouri River Basin just after the turn of the nineteenth century. This examination emphasizes the solidifying language of race within United States Indian policy and the roles it assigned to mixed-blood individuals and contrasts the assumptions of that policy with the economic realities and racial perceptions of the frontier. The final chapter, a case study of Chief White Plume of the Kansa, analyzes the correlation between full-blood land cessions, brought on by pressures of American encroachment and reduced economic viability, and the disappearance of widely accepted roles for mixed-blood Indians. By its conclusion, the land cession process created full-blood perceptions of mixed-blood Indians as self-serving and complicit in American policy, while U.S. officials designated mixed-blood Indians as too “savage” to join white American society.

An Evolution of Perception

The debate between George Adams and Samuel Peters was the belated conclusion to an evolutionary process that had taken over half a century for the Indian nations of the Lower Missouri. As a group, mixed-blood Indians merited mention on that occasion only because of the dwindling numbers of their full-blood counterparts. Indians on the recently created reservations in Kansas—as in other states—were increasingly unable to select full-blood next-of-kin for property inheritance because there simply were not enough of them. Under U.S. regulations, only full-blood kin could inherit because they alone could be depended upon to keep the property within the ownership of the Indian nation, with no white relatives in line to

potentially gain legal possession.⁵ The government strictly defined property rights within mixed-race marriages, but not for their children. It was an issue of concern for men like Adams who were in favor of protecting mixed-blood property rights. However, with removal and government administration long an established fact of life, full-blood Native Americans naturally objected to any additions to membership rolls, which would only divide and thereby reduce their annuities.⁶ Furthermore, white American objections against any manifestation of racial intermixing were—and by 1888 long had been—fierce.⁷ As such, property rights were no less significant to officials such as Peters, who sought to withhold reservation lands from what they viewed as “degenerate progeny.”⁸

Though George Adams and Samuel Peters felt they were speaking of simple sociological—even scientific—facts, they demonstrated in a single exchange the evolutionary nature of racial perception with regard to mixed-blood Native Americans. Peters voiced the ultimate conclusion of that evolution by the latter part of the nineteenth century. His was a hardened racial distinction whereby the offspring of interracial unions qualified as neither Indian nor white, supposedly having inherited all of the frailties, yet none of the redeeming qualities, of both societies. The perception articulated by Adams illustrated an older and more pliant—if still

⁵ Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods*, ix, 1-2.

⁶ Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods*, 68; see also Thomas N. Ingersoll, *To Intermix With Our White Brothers: Indian Mixed Bloods in the United States from Earliest Times to the Indian Removals* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 252-253.

⁷ In *The Oregon Trail*, Francis Parkman’s famous account of his 1846 travels, he refers even to the mixture of French and Indian language and terminologies as “the bastard language of the country,” and though impressed by the martial daring of one mixed-blood man, still describes the man as a “mongrel...bloody and treacherous, without honor or honesty,” 155, 178. The perception was best summarized, “half Indian, half white man, and half devil,” William J. Scheick, *The Half-Blood: A Cultural Symbol in Nineteenth Century Fiction* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1979), 16-18.

⁸ Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods*, 106.

highly racialized—interpretation in which mixed-blood Indians might benefit their full-blood counterparts due to an inherent predisposition towards “civilization.” This predisposition, as Adams’ saw it, obviously stemmed from their white ancestry. The longstanding connection of race with the treatment of mixed-blood individuals in policy also led full-blood Indian communities to similarly categorize their mixed-blood relatives as different, unwelcome competitors for inadequate resources and support.⁹

To modern sensibilities, the entire exchange is exceedingly unsavory, but it also highlights important historical questions. Less than a century before Adams and Peters spoke in racial terms they perceived as absolute predictors of behavior, mixed-blood Indians were seen as invaluable contributors to the endeavors of both Euro-American and Indian societies, even if Euro-American observers often did not approve of the racial intermixing mixed-blood individuals represented. In a frontier culture that exhibited remarkable diversity, these people possessed intimate familiarity and knowledge of multiple cultures and languages in ways few could match.¹⁰ They often served as interpreters and go-betweens, skillfully navigating the constructs of mutual misunderstandings and fictive kinships that Richard White aptly calls “the Middle Ground.” This is not to claim that all intermediaries were mixed-blood individuals or vice-versa. Especially during the years before 1790, the role created the identity, and was filled regardless of a person’s ancestry.¹¹ Nevertheless, those with dual-culture upbringings possessed

⁹ R. David Edmunds, “Unacquainted with the laws of the civilized world’: American attitudes toward the métis communities in the Old Northwest,” in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* ed., Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 189, 190-191.

¹⁰ Theda Perdue, “*Mixed-Blood*” *Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 2-4.

¹¹ Merrell discusses the fact that during the early period of colonial American frontier interactions, go-betweens were extremely varied as societies sought to discover just which kind of people best suited the need, James

a natural advantage in these roles. Even as the negotiated understandings broke down and Native Americans were recreated by white Americans as the “other,” persons of interracial ancestry remained common in intermediary and eventually leadership positions due to their aptitude as intermediaries. Where go-betweens had long been on the margins of communities, the loss of leverage experienced by Native American communities often moved those individuals best known to American officials into positions of authority. Often, these were people that American officials could identify as at least partially similar to themselves.¹² This was especially true with the introduction of Jeffersonian Indian policy that contained roles specifically for mixed-blood Native Americans.

Though the decline of the fur trade by the late 1820s reduced the leverage enjoyed by Native Americans of all ancestry, it marked an increased importance of roles associated with American officials and policy for mixed-blood Indians of the Lower Missouri. Their insight into white American culture allowed them to quickly discern the overall direction of American policy—that of land acquisition. As a result, they often took it upon themselves to negotiate the terms of land cession in a manner most beneficial to the Indian nations to which they belonged. Such mixed-blood leaders often understood better than their full-blood counterparts the gravity and extent of American lust for land. When resistance became futile, they sought land cession agreements that provided financial compensation and land reservations for their nations. As such, they often proved invaluable to American authorities, but only as long as there remained a viable, landholding full-blood community with which to negotiate. More often than not, once

H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999), 19, 54-57.

¹² Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, empires and republics in the Great Lakes region 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), i.

land cession and Indian relocation was negotiated, mixed-blood Indians were turned out by white Americans to join reservations upon which they were no longer welcome. Some, such as White Plume of the Kansa, managed to carve out personal guarantees of land for their families and those like them, but many were suddenly faced with a rootless existence; too Indian to find a home in white American society yet too complicit in land cession to be welcome on the reservation.

The link between societal roles for mixed-blood Native Americans and viable communities of full-blood Indians becomes apparent by examining mixed-blood roles and perceptions of them over a broad expanse of time. In the early republic, Native American nations still possessed enormous amounts of economic leverage. Mixed-blood identities were defined not solely by their ancestry, but by their typical skills as go-betweens, interpreters, brokers, and, and traders. Growing up in two cultures usually imparted, at a minimum, the ability to speak two or more languages, not to mention deep knowledge and familiarity with cultural nuances of kinship and behavior. The decline of Native American influence carried with it the decline of the go-between role because negotiation became less vital. That decline, coupled with frustrated attempts to “civilize” full-blood communities, led white Americans to rely increasingly on racial categorizations and explanations for Indians’ “failure” to assimilate. Nevertheless, mixed-blood Indians’ roles did not vanish with the fur trade. The moment their racial isolation solidified coincided with the moment that full-blood communities lost sufficient leverage to demand negotiation.

This study is one of racial perceptions. Race, of course, is nothing but a construct, a collection of anecdotes and stereotypes by which a people’s behavior and characteristics are seen to be predicated by genetic inheritance. From a scientific standpoint, race is a nonexistent

element. As a societal construct, however, race has a very real and very significant impact regardless of its lack of factual basis. For the better part of American history, men such as George Adams and Samuel Peters regarded race as a simple and scientific fact of life, as, unfortunately, many still do.¹³ As such, there are terms in the historical record that today are considered highly offensive. Historians in the last 20-30 years have grappled with the necessity of addressing these perceptions and terms without inadvertently lending them intellectual legitimacy. It is a delicate balance.

The most common term used throughout the nineteenth century, “half-breed,” is of course a racial slur and only appears in studies today as part of a historical quote. For some, the solution for addressing the children of interracial unions has been the French term *métis* (which will occasionally appear in this study when specifically addressing French-Indian relationships). That term, however, is potentially misleading. “Métis” also refers to a formally recognized group of biracial members of the First Nations, geographically specific to Canada and the northern United States.¹⁴ The terms “half-blood” or “mixed-blood” appear often in the historical record, both with and without explicitly negative racial connotations. Ultimately, though, “half-breed,” *metis*, mixed-blood, *mestizo*, or any other variations all refer to the same equally racist categorization and set of assumptions. Theda Perdue highlights this point, arguing in “*Mixed-Blood*” *Indians* against “blood” as an analytical category because it racializes “Native societies

¹³ Ian F. Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996), xiii-xiv, 5, 7, 100. For a discussion of the genetic similarity of human beings, the scientific falsehood of race, and the absence of a correlation between genetic variation and racially defined groups see Joseph L. Graves, Jr., *The Race Myth: Why We Pretend Race Exists in America* (New York: Dutton, 2004), ix, 1-17.

¹⁴ “Ethno-Cultural and Aboriginal Groups; Métis,” Library and Archives Canada, accessed July 21, 2011, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/genealogie/022-905.004.01-e.html>.

in ways that are foreign to Native cultural traditions.”¹⁵ And indeed, throughout this study Native Americans resist completely race-based explanations even as they become common among in American perceptions. Even when full-blood Indians eventually saw mixed-blood individuals as different, it was due to association with white American interests (though mixed-blood identity oftentimes invited that conclusion unfairly). At some level, though, the historian must concede to practical considerations. Artificial as they may be, racial classifications such as mixed-blood were in a sense made into reality by policymakers and agents who believed in them and acted upon them accordingly. Analyzing the perceptions entailed in that process requires some use—if not acceptance—of the organizational terms seen as significant by nineteenth century Americans, as well as their perception by Native American communities. Furthermore, the terms themselves changed in meaning and connotation over time. Categorization and identification struggled to adjust to “a rapidly changing and diversifying social setting” between 1790 and 1830.¹⁶ For similar reasons, the common term “tribe” referring to a group of Native Americans is avoided in this study. Few misunderstandings of Indian cultural structure were as enduring as the focus on “tribe.”¹⁷ Employed as it was by most white observers and officials, it was an ethnic term, as its use in a political context typically was accompanied by multiple misunderstandings of Native American authority, hierarchy, and community roles. “Village” serves as a more accurate unit of local political and social organization, while broader groups will be referred to as “nations” if not by specific name.

¹⁵ Perdue, “*Mixed-Blood*” *Indians*, x; see also Ingersoll, xxi.

¹⁶ Jennifer S.H. Brown, “Linguistic Solitudes and Changing Social Categories,” in *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 148; for a discussion of the changing connotations of terms for mixed-blood Native Americans, including “half-caste,” “native” and “country-born,” 150-155.

¹⁷ White, *Middle Ground*, xiv.

Studies of most Native American histories demand some concessions, too, with regard to written evidence. Often, records of Indian activities and circumstances come filtered through the pens of American Indian agents. These men were charged with supervising the transition of Native American communities into a “civilized” lifestyle of settled agriculture and market economy. Even under the best of circumstances, they typically saw their Native charges as underdeveloped and child-like, an “other.” They were not, however, consciously disdainful or dismissive. The letters and records written by trade factors such as George Sibley, who supervised Fort Osage and relations with that nation in 1808, and Indian Agents such as John Dougherty, who administered the U.S. government relations with the Kansa, demonstrate that they took their duties seriously. They also illustrate that in most cases, the actions of American Indian agents were well intentioned, if misguided. Their racialized worldview also offers an opportunity to track the perception of mixed-blood Indians over time. The need to categorize the Indians they interacted with meant that mixed-blood Native Americans were often noted as such. Little record remains from the Indians themselves. What can be reconstructed, though, is an evolution of perception by moving across both time and space. That mobility is necessary because the region of greatest interaction among white Americans and Indians—the frontier—was not static. It moved ever westward over the course of American history. In this negotiated world of both mutual understandings and misunderstandings, where mixed-blood Indians once thrived, time and place were inseparable. By moving across both, analyzing various examples and case studies, one can expose patterns of interaction and chart the evolution of racial perception.

The concept of kinship ties and fictive kinships is also vital to understanding the multicultural interactions that were so common along the frontier. The term has long been used

and debated among anthropologists in examining the passing of information through various lines of transmission, with the first theories regarding its formation emerging during the 1850s.¹⁸ The concept first appeared in relation to Native American societies in 1898 as an example used by Emile Durkheim, who noted that Omaha and Choctaw Indians used similar terms for individuals of different biological relation, but similar social relation. Durkheim also marked the introduction of kinship as a societal construct, connected with but not necessarily tied to biological relation.¹⁹ The terminology did not work its way out of anthropology or sociology and into the history of Native Americans until Gary Clayton Anderson's *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, which merits discussion at various times within this study. Anderson defines kinship as the "social framework" that regulated relations both within a nation and with outsiders, lending a nation "a strong sense of identity that distinguished them from other people" and provided commonly understood norms of behavior.²⁰

Tracking perception and role change over place and time also frees examination from the typical demarcations of Native American viability—those of the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, and the War of 1812. Though succession of the dominant Euro-American powers in North America is tidily represented by those three conflicts, they suggest a suddenness of transition that simply did not occur. Perceptions that shaped mixed-blood roles throughout the first half of the nineteenth century developed long before the conflicts that represented major shifts in governmental policy. Changes in the roles of mixed-blood Indians can be best detected

¹⁸ David M. Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1984), 3-5, 97-99.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

²⁰ Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1997), x-xi.

by contrasting their roles *during* different periods, not at transitional points *between* periods. As such, this study cannot be an in-depth discussion of Native Americans and the American Revolution or the War of 1812. Those events will certainly merit mention, but the treaties and alliances they generated have been skillfully examined by other scholars and are not the focus of this study. Mixed-blood Native Americans enjoyed well-established roles in a North America of competing European interests before 1790. The Jeffersonian period during the first decade of the nineteenth century saw the formation of racialized categories of Native Americans that proved significant for the roles of mixed-blood Indians as go-betweens and dual-cultured leaders. Finally, the waning of the fur trade after the boom of the 1820s precipitated Indian relocation and land cession that demanded all the skills of mixed-blood individuals, only to leave them perceived as too tied to both sides' interests to be accepted by either.

This approach also ameliorates some of the difficulties of lacking source material. Not all Indian agents kept equally meticulous records, just as better records exist for some Native American nations than for others. However, the racial categorization of mixed-bloods did not vary much whether a given group was of French-Osage, British-Creek, or American-Kansa lineage. For American policymakers, it ultimately could be simplified to “white-Indian,” to mixed-blood. As a result, accurate and broadly applicable inferences can be made regarding the perception and assigned identities of mixed-blood Native Americans in general by drawing from the best-recorded experiences.

Many significant works have been written about the interaction between white settlers, policymakers, agents, and Native Americans along the frontier. The first to closely examine interactions on the frontier, rather than exclusive top-down policy history, was a dissertation-turned-publication in 1891 by Frederick Jackson Turner. In his work, Turner highlights many of

the positive and negative effects of the fur trade. He notes, for example, that the trade provided essential commerce on which all participating parties came to rely on, but at the same time encouraged Native dependence on trade factors and ultimately destroyed Native institutions. Unfortunately, Turner also constructed race-based interpretations that proved slow to fade. Turner's Indians were devoid of agency, acting not out of explainable motives but out of irrational, racial "tendency." Trade, according to Turner, failed to "elevate" Native Americans because their racial deficiencies were simply too large to overcome.²¹

It took nearly a century for focus in Native American history to shift away from characterizations of Indians largely as reactors, and at best, victims. Richard White's aforementioned *The Middle Ground* was enormously important in this shift for Native Americans of the Great Lakes region. It was part of an entirely new movement examining Native American agency, highlighting the concept that negotiated meanings and kinships—often inaccurate ones—functioned as the basis for interaction between Native Americans and Euro-American traders and agents.²² Gary Anderson's *Kinsmen of Another Kind* explores the same theme among the Dakota Sioux.²³ Theda Perdue examines how misinterpreted observations of Native American women became cultural references justifying Indian removal in "Native Women in the Early Republic."²⁴ Each study broke new ground on the mutual

²¹ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Character and Influence of the Indian Trade in Wisconsin," in *Studies in Historical and Political Science*, Ninth Series, ed. Herbert B. Adams (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1891), 549, 574, 602-608.

²² Richard White, *The Middle Ground*, x.

²³ Gary Clayton Anderson, ix.

²⁴ Theda Perdue, "Native Women in the Early Republic: Old World Perceptions, New World Realities," in *Native Americans and the Early Republic*, ed. Frederick Hoxie et. al. (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1999), 85-87.

misunderstandings present along the frontier in their respective regions of focus, and the consequences for a particular group of Indians.

Curiously, Native Americans of mixed-race ancestry remained largely peripheral throughout this renaissance of Indian agency. More often than not, they were lumped in with their full-blood counterparts in terms of experiences. Historians unintentionally repeated some of the same assumptions that American policymakers had applied at the conclusion of the land cessions. Those policymakers assumed that mixed-blood people, as Indians by virtue of their racial inheritance (and by extension unfit for white American society), would simply find a place among their “tribes” (that term itself largely meaningless as a historical political or cultural unit).²⁵ 150 years later, many historians have unwittingly assumed that by virtue of their poor treatment by American policymakers, mixed-blood experiences were similar to those of the larger Native population of any given nation.

That is not to suggest that mixed-blood roles have gone entirely unnoticed. Perdue’s *“Mixed-Blood” Indians* offers a tightly focused examination of mixed Creek, Cherokee, and Choctaw communities along the frontier in the Upland South. She demonstrates as many—if not more—instances of European and American traders assimilating into Native society as instances of Native individuals feeling compelled to adopt white customs.²⁶ Another excellent analysis of the mixed-blood experience is Tanis Thorne’s *The Many Hands of My Relations*, which examines how interracial marriage and biracial children in fur trade families affected those families choices, allegiances, and opportunities over time.²⁷

²⁵ Tanis Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996), 250.

²⁶ Perdue, *“Mixed-Blood” Indians*, 9-21.

²⁷ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 5.

Thorne's work merits particular discussion because of its focus on kinships and mixed-blood Indians with regard to large populations of full-blood Indians. She writes that these kinships did not necessarily create long-lasting relationships, but that they kept open communication that facilitated solutions and trade. For Native Americans of the trans-Mississippi West, the function of identifiably mixed ancestry was not merely ethnic categorization. As Thorne writes, "ethnic identity was never monolithic, but rather a multifaceted and dynamic expression of group adhesion based on residency, kinship, common language, material interdependence, and shared worldviews and ceremonies." These kinships included not only mixed-blood members of a particular nation, but also Europeans with the same political awareness of shared understandings concerning behavior, residency, and trade.²⁸ Thorne also debunks the tired myth that opportunistic traders who abandoned their Native American kin as soon as their business was concluded fathered most mixed-blood children. She provides lists of mixed-blood claimants for nations such as the Sac and Fox as well as legal documents that demonstrate most fathers in interracial relationships "acted responsibly as parents." Most sons of these unions followed their European fathers into occupational training away from village life. In nearly all cases, interracial parents provided their children with education and arranged advantageous marriages to further strengthen kinship ties.²⁹ According to Thorne, it was only with removal to reservations that most mixed-blood individuals found it more advantageous to deny their Indian heritage and amalgamate into American society. Mixed-blood Indians in the United States were eligible to live on the reservations, but they often had

²⁸ Ibid., 60-62.

²⁹ Ibid., 173.

divergent interests with full-bloods that caused conflict.³⁰ Most importantly, even at this point ethnic identity still had more to do with choice, language, kinship, and “fluctuating historical forces” than it did with biology.³¹

As important as *The Many Hands of My Relations* is, it is not an evolutionary study. Like Perdue’s “*Mixed-Blood*” *Indians*, the images of mixed-blood peoples are static. None trace the evolution of their roles and racial identity—itsself an assigned construct—over time. Both works are also primarily studies of mixed-blood roles in village life. Other works such as William E. Unrau’s *Mixed-Bloods and Tribal Dissolution* examine mixed-blood roles with regard to government-enforced removal or identity after removal.³² None synthesize the evolution of perceptions of Euro-American policymakers with the practical roles of mixed-blood Indians and the resultant evolution of relationships with full-blood Native Americans. A shift in any of these relationships affected all of the others within a complex web of changing policy, perceptions, and kinships.

The nearest any one work has come to charting an evolutionary role of mixed-blood Indians is Thomas Ingersoll’s ambitious *To Intermix With Our White Brothers*. Ingersoll contends, though, that from the earliest moments of interaction, people of interracial origin faced racism and alienation because there was no faction of Euro-American society in which interracial marriages were acceptable. On a philosophical level, perhaps this was true, as representatives of all white societies ranging from French military commanders, Jesuit priests, British colonists, Spanish administrators, and American territorial governors expressed consternation at the prospect. The touch of such authority, however, proved time and again to be exceedingly light

³⁰ Ibid., 249.

³¹ Ibid., 250.

³² Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods*, 6, 7, 62-63, 70, 83, 88-89, 103-104.

along the frontier. On a practical level, the sheer frequency of such unions—formally recognized or not—suggests that the practice was more or less accepted as a part of frontier life. Ingersoll also highlights the well-documented role of mixed-blood members of the Cherokee nation in resisting the removal policies of Andrew Jackson. He does so primarily from the perspective of “official correspondence and congressional debates.” While these examples are compelling, they do not fully represent the nuanced relationship of many other mixed-blood leaders with removal policy.³³

For most Native American nations, the difficulties of land cession or removal were never heard on the congressional floor. The role of mixed-blood Cherokees were documented mostly due to Jackson’s insistence that without the influence of “designing half-breeds,” the Cherokees could never have proved so capable at resisting removal. In reality, the Cherokee nation was exceptionally acculturated to American standards and familiar with the legal channels available to resist removal, regardless of the influence of its mixed-blood members. Their ability to resist was born of long association with Anglo-American culture and more importantly, the deliberate decisions made by many Cherokees to adopt white American ways.³⁴ With nations much farther to the North and West such as the Osage and Kansa, such familiarity with American customs was not disseminated as widely. Western nations such as the Sioux and the Kansa also differed in that they underwent relocation more than once, and would not face government-enforced

³³ Ingersoll, xiv-xv; see also White, *Middle Ground*, 58.

³⁴ The Cherokee removal issue also produced mixed-blood leaders on both sides of the issue, Ingersoll, 118, 120, 171. For Cherokee acculturation and a “mixed-blood’s” discussion of old ways destined to fade, see also John Ridge to Albert Gallatin, February 27, 1826 in Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2005), 35-44. For mixed-blood John Ross’ denial of removal’s legality see, John Ross, “Letter in Answer to Inquiries from a Friend,” July 2, 1836 in Perdue and Green, 154-159.

removal—from their newer western lands in Missouri—for another 30 to 40 years after the Cherokees.³⁵ For mixed-blood leaders among those less acculturated and influential nations, influence did not peak with a futile resistance to removal. It peaked, rather, with a semi-successful attempt to both accommodate American encroachment and mitigate the harm done to their nation. Ingersoll mentions this almost as an afterthought, without noting the effect it had on the leaders identified as mixed blood within full-blood nations.³⁶

Some historians argue that the study of Native American history must leave behind the constructs of racial perceptions and identities as analytical categories.³⁷ That is an understandable position, and on a philosophical level, even a laudable one. As can be seen with the warped analysis of otherwise accurate data found in Turner’s “The Character and Influence of the Indian Trade in Wisconsin,” race-based interpretations have wrought mischief in the historical narrative of Native Americans second only to the severe consequences they caused in the history itself. Racial interpretations must *always* be kept in the proper context as perception-shaping misconceptions. But they cannot be wholly abandoned, nor should they be. The way race simplified and explained complex issues demands that those explanations be understood. Artificial and misinformed as racial constructs may have been, real people held them as truth and acted upon them. The consequences were hardly artificial. Mixed-blood Indians often thrived as particularly suited go-betweens in the frontier interactions between the Euro-American and Native worlds for almost 200 years, yet their distinction for much of that time was regarded more as socio-economic than racial, with people of all backgrounds performing the roles of culture brokers. With the breakdown of the fur trade in the lower Missouri River Basin by the 1820s,

³⁵ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 9, 243.

³⁶ Ingersoll, xviii-xx, 210.

³⁷ Perdue, “*Mixed-Blood’ Indians*,” x.

mixed-blood individuals in the region felt an urgent calling to use their greater familiarity with Euro-American authorities and their customs to protect the interests of their nations. They performed this role as best they could. As Ingersoll highlights, those with education in American culture and law could create significant roadblocks to removal. However, their knowledge of encroaching Euro-American cultures also led them to recognize the hard truths of their odds for long-term success. When resistance could no longer be maintained, they often operated within the framework of land cession as the only leverage Native American nations had left. As a result, their interests became more closely linked to their American partners than to their full-blood kinsmen. Yet, when the land cessions were complete, the United States government and American society defined them racially as Indians, turning them away to join reservations upon which they were no longer welcome. The purpose of this study, then, is not to discover a place in North America that held “a generous and tolerant attitude” towards mixed-blood Indians.³⁸ To attempt to describe such a place by today’s standards of tolerance would be a fruitless task. Regardless of their broad acceptance by the cultures they interacted with, it was possible in the frontier setting for mixed-blood individuals to carve out roles for themselves in which they proved so skilled and valuable that their racial identities were largely overlooked. The evolution of those roles and their ultimate disappearance offers greater understanding of the process of racialization and the limits of human adaptability.

³⁸ Ingersoll, 20.

Chapter 2 - Thriving In-Between: Mixed-Blood Indians Before 1790

To understand the roles of mixed-blood Native Americans, just what made their roles so important must be understood as well—the North American fur trade. More than anything else during the eighteenth century, the fur trade made the activities of North American Indians a global matter. Empires stood to gain or lose—both economically and politically—based on their ability to navigate the cultural and political terrain of the trade.³⁹ Private traders, too, had ample motivation to risk the unknown along the frontier in search of an enormous wealth of pelts. Early estimates of profits to be made on pelts during the 1680s from men such as the Baron de Lahontan, a young French officer and nobleman stationed in various locales of the Great Lakes for nearly ten years, promised “most considerable gains” up to 700 percent of the original investment. More conservative—and experienced—estimates still offered a healthy 50 to 100 percent during the 1720s.⁴⁰ In only one year, the Sioux post near Lake of the Woods brought in almost 100,000 pelts at a value of 178,000 French *livres*, and posts along the Mississippi during the 1750s generated 150,000 francs each year.⁴¹ Frederick Jackson Turner went so far as to argue that through 1824, the only activity accounting for Euro-American presence in Wisconsin at all was the fur trade.⁴²

³⁹ White, *Middle Ground*, 53, 95.

⁴⁰ Louis Armand de Lam d’Arc, Baron de Lahontan, *Lahontan’s New Voyages to North-America*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, LL.D. vol. 1 (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co, 1905), 100-101; see also White, *Middle Ground*, 118.

⁴¹ Gary Clayton Anderson, 51.

⁴² Turner, “Character and Influence,” 565-566.

The fur trade was just as important for the Native Americans. It provided an avenue through which they could acquire iron weapons and tools to lend an advantage over their rivals. In leaner times, Indians also leveraged the trade of beaver pelts into securing basic needs, such as adequate food.⁴³ Contrary to the popular image of the duplicitous trader cheating the hapless Indian out of his valuable pelts in return for mere trinkets, Native Americans were remarkably knowledgeable of the goods available.⁴⁴ Though European traders may have considered the knives or gunpowder they offered a bargain for a beaver pelt, Native Americans were no less satisfied.⁴⁵ They came to depend upon the trade to furnish items, such as cookware and knives, which would otherwise require tedious labor to fashion by traditional means. As such, they became highly selective as to what goods were acceptable and which would give them cause to await the business of a different trader.⁴⁶

⁴³ Daniel Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2001), 50-51.

⁴⁴ De Lahontan articulates this stereotype well, lamenting the effects of European contact on Indians he regarded more as victims than active participants. A lengthy—and likely invented—“dialogue” with “Adario,” “a Noted Man among the Savages,” describes the inferiority of these goods relative to equivalent Native American-made items. According to “Adario,” in return for valuable beaver pelts, the French offer “Fusees, that burst and Lame many of our Warriors, Axes that break in the cutting of a Shrub, Knives that turn Blunt...and Kettles so thin and slight, that the very weight of Water makes the Bottoms fall out.” De Lahontan, 576.

⁴⁵ De Lahontan was critical of the French traders he observed, writing, “these Sparks call’d *Coueurs de Bois* bite the Savages most dexterously,” de Lahontan, 100.

⁴⁶ Fintan O’Toole, *White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 51-52. For a thorough discussion of the trade savvy of Native Americans see Arthur J. Ray, “Indians as Consumers in the Eighteenth Century,” in Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray ed., *Old Truth and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 255-268. For Indian complaints to manufacturers about low-quality goods, 258-259; for Indian demands of durability due to lack of repair resources and harsh conditions, 260-261; for Indian inspection of metal goods 261-263; for insistence on quality tobacco by Euro-American officials to maintain trade, 263-264; for Indian use of complaints and competition between traders to bargain lower prices on goods, 266-267.

Worth stressing is the fact that trade did not immediately orient all Native activity to the economic ends of European empires. Indeed, the opposite was true. The European demand for pelts meant that throughout most of colonial period, Euro-American interests needed the trade more than did the Indian nations. When their own interests such as war, hunts, or ensuring adequate crops demanded attention that did not accommodate trapping beaver for trade, Native Americans more often than not prioritized their own interests.⁴⁷ Europeans, then, had to find ways of realigning those interests with their own primary interest of acquiring pelts. The result was a complex and evolving set of solutions from multiple sources. Measures ranging from gift giving to force were employed at different times to varying degrees of success. The chances of that success could be increased dramatically with personal familiarity and influence within a given Native community.⁴⁸

In negotiating their own terms of trade and interaction with European powers as well as each other, Indian nations wielded leverage during this period as during no other period in American history. Indeed, Native American customs often dictated European behavior and even official policy. Indian leaders rarely concerned themselves with matters of European customs or securing interpreters, letting any language barrier be the problem of European officials.⁴⁹ Typical French colonial policy barring the use of Indians as slaves was even altered in North America to accommodate the Algonquian practice of presenting captives as gifts to cement alliances and trade agreements. Officials were compelled to accept these gifts despite their

⁴⁷ White, *Middle Ground*, 24.

⁴⁸ For discussion of Euro-American traders using kinship ties to influence village political decisions see Gary Clayton Anderson, 29, 30-38; for discussion of importance of incorporating Native American customs in the Arkansas Valley, a similar process, see also Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 5-6.

⁴⁹ Merrell, 57-58.

hesitancy, so important was Indian trade and alliance. The French government accepted this reality and legalized the practice.⁵⁰ In the minds of European traders and in the policy of governments, they were not yet a monolithic construct of “Indians.” Rather, each nation stood in its own particular relationship with its neighbors and its trading partners as Ottawa, Osage, Sioux, or Potawatomie. To work effectively, Euro-American traders had to remain cognizant of a dizzying web of alliances and kinships, all ever changing in response to frontier events. They not only had to know their own nation’s relationship with each group, but also the relationships of those groups with other Native American and European entities. The French, British, and later the Americans all found in succession that tracking the complex web of interactions proved nearly impossible for an outsider. The best method of overcoming the issue, it was soon discovered, was to become part of the Native community.⁵¹

Nous sommes tous Sauvages: White and Indian in the “Middle Ground”

The reasons why people of interracial ancestry were so well suited to the frontier setting before 1790 are myriad and varied, but they can for the most part be reduced to one fundamental truth: there were not two separate Indian and white spheres, but instead one shared frontier world. Cultural brokers were vital and common, providing a steady stream of opportunities for those with multicultural aptitude. This can be seen with the French-Indian experience in the

⁵⁰ Brett Rushforth, “A Little Flesh We Offer You:’ The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 60, no. 4 (Oct. 2003), 779-780; see also, de Lam d’Arc, 94, 169.

⁵¹ This should not be taken to suggest that fur traders in colonial North America were exclusively of French, British, or American origin. Other Europeans, such as the Spanish and Dutch, also frequently appear in the historical record. For the purposes of this study, however, France, Great Britain, and the United States represent the three sets of policy and approach most significant in the evolution of Native American and mixed-blood roles.

Great Lakes region, or the *pays d'en haut* as it was called at the time. Neither group was in a position to force its standards and methods on the other, so negotiation was key to success.⁵²

The blurring of racial, economical, and social lines between Europeans and Indians that occurred in the process is well documented, as it caused observers of the time no shortage of consternation. When René de La Salle returned to his destroyed, looted, and deserted fort in Illinois in 1680, he found the culprits had signed their handiwork. It was neither his British rivals nor Indian raiders, but his own men, who wrote of their departure *Nous sommes tous Sauvages*, or, “we are all savages.” The departed Frenchmen did not mean that they had literally chosen to “go native,” but rather that they had embraced a world, which, as they perceived, was entirely without the hierarchical order that subordinated them to La Salle.⁵³ In reality, order could, and was, created, but it was not an order that Europeans readily recognized. European pursuits did not necessarily take precedence over Indian priorities. The various European priorities were not in all instances even compatible with each other. Some French, for example, came to find furs as licensed traders from the royal government; others were illegal small traders exploiting the absence of strong government authority in the wilderness, and still others arrived as Jesuit priests to save Indian souls. British interests, too, were similarly divided, as were later

⁵² White, *Middle Ground*, xi-xiv, 52.

⁵³ White, *Middle Ground*, 57. Not only the event, but also the quote, must have been of considerable note, as it appears in multiple accounts. Francis Parkman, author of one of the earlier histories of La Salle’s exploits and himself a source of race-based observations of Indian culture, also made special note of the quote, see Francis Parkman, *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1907), 217. For multiple accounts see Relation du voyage de Cavalier de La Salle, du 22 Aout 1680 a l’automne de 1681, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2: 133, in White, *Middle Ground*, Henri de Tonty, *Mémoire*, 1684, 1693, and *Déclaration faite par devant le Sr. Duchesneau, Intendant en Canada, par Moysse Hillaret, charpentier de barque cy-devant au service de Sr. de la Salle, Aoust, 1680* in Parkman, *La Salle*.

the Americans'. None were in a position of control in this frontier world, and all had to create alliances to ensure survival.

Fortunately for the various French interests, the Algonquin nations of the *pays d'en haut* also needed allies, as the combination of ferocious Iroquois attacks and European diseases had turned many of them into refugees.⁵⁴ Though rarely prominently mentioned, it is at the meeting points of these alliances of necessity that mixed-blood peoples, because of their linguistic and cultural knowledge, typically appear.⁵⁵

Peter Chartier is one individual who demonstrates just how tenuous the authority of any single entity was in the Great Lakes region. He was the product of a union between a French man and a Shawnee woman and as such was what Richard White calls “the prototype of the new political brokers” of the area. Chartier had arrived in the Ohio country with the Shawnee migration of the late 1720s, an event caused by land disputes between the Shawnee and the Iroquois. He promptly began to negotiate trade with the British, but soon began to do the same with the French although the Iroquois forbade both pursuits. By all appearances he was an unlikely candidate to achieve any kind of power or influence with any party. His opportunistic sense of loyalty initially won him little trust or respect. Nevertheless, by 1745 he established himself as a political leader rivaling the power of one of the Shawnee “kings” (actually an appointed overall leader of several autonomous units). Chartier’s power was derived from gifts made directly to the warriors of the village, and undoubtedly no small amount of coercion in the form of debt that the Shawnees incurred from Chartier’s trade activities. He cultivated a following of Shawnees into his own personal faction. The result was that this *françois métis*

⁵⁴ White, *Middle Ground*, 28, 58-60.

⁵⁵ Merrell, 74; see also Thorne, *Many Hands*, 136; and Ingersoll, 145-147.

whom the Shawnees had not even regarded as a member of their nation was, by 1750, referenced by Louisiana governor Phillippe Rigaud de Vaudreuil as a Shawnee chief.⁵⁶

The example of Peter Chartier should not be interpreted to suggest that all mixed-blood Native Americans were opportunistic and self-serving. At the risk of repetition, it must be stressed that mixed-blood is a racial construct and as such is no more a legitimate predictor of behavior than “Indian” or “white.” What Chartier does demonstrate was the incredibly open opportunities for people to recreate hierarchies of order in a frontier world absent the traditional orders of society. The skill with which men such as Chartier exploited this openness exposed such individuals to distrust, but the necessity for such skills during the period often outweighed the perceived risks.⁵⁷

For the French, the remoteness of the royal government and the absence of regulated trade disrupted traditional authority and made cooperation with Indian norms necessary.⁵⁸ By the eighteenth century, Native Americans no longer traveled in large groups to French trade hubs. Instead, individual French traders—some licensed, others not—were required to venture into Indian lands, laden with valuable goods, hoping to beat each other to sources of freshly taken beaver pelts. The British, too, had to contend with relatively weak authority in the Ohio country with the additional wrinkle—before the American Revolution—of regulating the trade and settlement endeavors of the American colonists. For Native Americans, the stakes of traditional disputes between nations had only increased. Extended periods of war, encroachment, and disease had transformed nations from powerful to weak, weak to powerful, and some groups—such as the Algonquians—from one condition to another and back. Each

⁵⁶ White, *Middle Ground*, 189-192; see also Merrell, 74-75.

⁵⁷ Richter, *Facing East*, 183.

⁵⁸ Rushforth, 791.

group tried to make order out of these trials and opportunities as best as they could. Amidst this search, mixed-blood individuals had opportunity to prove adept and valuable to all parties.⁵⁹

Métis individuals and their families were instrumental in French diplomacy by influencing Native groups that could not otherwise be convinced or coerced to align with the interests of French trade. That is because of the fictive kinships that the French came to depend on in the Ohio. Though it was French trade and assistance that eventually allowed the Algonquian nations to overcome the Iroquois threat, the tangled web of alliances was never without need of maintenance. Studies of Native American history must never lose track of the fact that the myriad Native American nations of a given region—even those who shared similar language and culture, such as the Algonquians—did not have any greater tendency for harmony than the quarreling nations of Imperial Europe. French officials found it constantly necessary to use indirect means of influence to interrupt and defuse Native plans for warfare against other Indian nations allied with the French. Undeniably, this was French influence at work, but it was wielded almost entirely within a Huron and Algonquian framework. French officials, who traditionally would have turned to military strength to enforce their authority, were instead forced to work with the fur traders. The traders, many of whom had mixed-blood families or were themselves of interracial origin, came to have dual roles as agents of commerce and of diplomacy.⁶⁰

In the Ohio country, this diplomacy often entailed mediating tense situations involving Indians who traded with both the French and British. Disagreements began when French traders raised their prices on goods to better reflect the realities of returns. Though trade was still

⁵⁹ Richter, *Facing East*, 49.

⁶⁰ White, *Middle Ground*, 34-35.

profitable enough during the mid 1700s to be worthwhile, it hardly lived up to Baron de Lahontan's predictions of 700 percent returns. Still, regardless of the market forces behind French price changes, the attempt to force a mercantilist construct of trade relations went against the Algonquian understanding of the relationship.

Algonquian understandings of material goods, and the understanding Native American cultures writ large, was based on need, not possession. By this understanding, authority figures demonstrated their influence by their generosity, not by their accumulated wealth. To withhold items from any in need went against basic Indian norms.⁶¹ Consequently, many turned to British traders who by that time were numerous enough to offer plentiful goods at better rates. Stung by this perceived betrayal, French officials made a brief attempt to force their Indian allies back into exclusive trade and evict British traders from the region. Yet attempted coercion only led to further breaches of the perceived protocol as understood by both sides.

In their efforts to establish ties among the Algonquians, French traders had constructed fictive kinships of patriarchy. These kinships not only linked them to Algonquian villages but also afforded them a level of protection in a world where they would otherwise only be vulnerable, isolated outsiders laden with easily taken goods. What they failed to understand, was that these kinships came with the aforementioned duties of generosity and protectiveness towards their Native American "children." By attempting to increase prices of goods regardless of the effect on Indian hunters, they were selfishly ignoring the needs of the village members. When Indians responded by turning to the British, the French worsened the situation by pursuing

⁶¹ Richter, *Facing East*, 51-52.

punitive action, violating Indian conceptions of their assumed duties. The result was a wave of violence and murders of French traders across the region.⁶²

The French government in North America did not fully comprehend nor prioritize that Native Americans, too, had alliances to maintain. Indian nations in the *pays d'en haut* did not barter with British traders solely to leverage a reduction of French prices. They also needed the aide of British power to secure the following of other Native American nations in the region.⁶³ French officials were instead focused on the ongoing imperial rivalry with the British. In 1744, European hostilities of the War of Austrian Succession spilled over to North America in the form of King George's War. By 1745, the French saw their fortified capital of Ile Royale off Nova Scotia taken by a collection of militia from the British colonies.⁶⁴ Officials in the American colonies such as Massachusetts governor William Shirley had, for their part, been provoked into the action by the French-led Indian assault on Annapolis Royal in Nova Scotia.

With hostilities escalating, the importance of colonial militia and Indian allies was clear. The French made the decision to quash any further threats quickly. A display of force consisting of 265 men under Pierre-Joseph de Céleron, a captain in the French Canadian infantry, set out to reinforce French authority, mark out land claims, and impress the wayward Indians back into cooperation. The "tour" transformed into a rude reality check when in 1749 it found itself deep in Indian country with no allies. British traders only vacated the immediate path of the expedition and then resumed their activities as soon as it passed. Worse yet for the French, de

⁶² White, *Middle Ground*, 200-202.

⁶³ Fred Anderson, *War That Made America*, 23-24.

⁶⁴ B.A. Balcom, "Louisburg (1745 King George's War Campaign)," in *American History* Vol. 30, Issue 3 (1995): 42; see also Robert Leckie, *A Few Acres of Snow: The Saga of the French and Indian War* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1999), 246-254; see also Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 207, 250-251, 254.

Céleron, outnumbered by over 4 to 1 by Algonquian warriors, was able only to humbly request cooperation from the Ohio Country Indians he had been sent to forcibly admonish.⁶⁵

Since many traders were either part of a *métis* family or were *métis* themselves, the French found the traders' influence on village politics a far more effective avenue for diplomacy. Following the Céleron debacle, the French sent an intermediary named Sieur Chabert de Joncaire to repair relations with the Ohio villages. More important than the goods he brought was his familiarity with the culture. The French realized that the only way to evict the British from the area was to convince the villages themselves to make British traders unwelcome. Iroquois Indians populated most of the villages, and Joncaire was half-Iroquois. While the French government and the Jesuit priests worried about the prevalence of intermarriage between French and Indians, more local officials welcomed such useful ties as Joncaire's. In their view, the only alternative to *métis legitimes*, who tended to retain French loyalties, were increased numbers of *métis bâtards*, whose skills might end up employed by any number of unpredictable interests. Though the Ohio villages proved unwilling to cease trade with the British, Joncaire was successful at reestablishing French trade in the villages. Additional appeals to village chiefs with *métis* ties such as Le Maringouin and Le Porc Epic—himself a *métis*—reminded Indian leaders of the benefits of cordial relations. Worth noting, too, is that the reason for the Ohio villages remaining in the area had little to do with either the British or the French; the inhabitants were attracted to the area's plentiful game.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ White, *Middle Ground*, 200-207; see also, Fred Anderson, *War That Made America*, 26-27; and, Richard White, "Fictions of Patriarchy: Indians and Whites in the Early Republic," in Hoxie, ed., 63-67.

⁶⁶ White, *Middle Ground*, 214-215. For officials' views on mixed-blood risks and benefits see also Thorne, *Many Hands*, 65. For frequency of traders being mixed-blood see, Richter, *Facing East*, 177.

Deeper into Indian country, the importance of interracial unions and mixed-blood individuals in establishing and maintaining kinship ties was just as significant in interactions between Euro-American traders and the Dakota Sioux. The Sioux did not differentiate between short-term business association and lasting family ties. All relationships were defined as extant or not based on reciprocal gift giving (or the lack thereof). Traders therefore sought out the daughters of important Sioux chiefs to join them in “country marriages,” or marriages *à la façon du pays*. These unofficial unions were valuable to traders in establishing lasting trading relations, but also to the Sioux as they provided both a steady source of goods and males from outside the family (which included a great many more members relative to European standards). The distinction between legal legitimacy from the viewpoint of Euro-American authorities and common acceptability along the frontier is important to bear in mind with regard to Thomas Ingersoll’s argument that interracial marriages were never regarded with acceptance. While some traders sought such marriages as a mere method of accessing trade, many others returned year after year, providing for their Sioux families and raising and educating their mixed-blood offspring. These traders enjoyed increased status over time, and eventually became trusted community members with a voice in Sioux politics.⁶⁷ Though French culture at-large, as well as the Catholic Church, may not have ever approved of interracial marriages, the realities of trade centers in the Great Lakes region were far removed from either of those influences (save for overwhelmed Jesuit priests).

Biracial culture, on the other hand, was so prevalent in these areas that for a time it superseded—or at least competed with—many of the traditional French mores. For example, nearly 40 percent of the baptisms recorded at the Catholic Church at Michilimackinac between

⁶⁷ Gary Clayton Anderson, 30-31; see also Thorne, *Many Hands*, 4-6.

1698 and 1765 were mixed-blood individuals. That percentage only increased with time, as nearly 72 percent of baptisms at the same location were *métis* individuals from 1765 to 1797. The St. Anne Parish records of the village of Chartres from 1726 to 1751 offer a similarly “steady reference” to offspring of interracial unions—both sanctioned and *à la façon du pays*.⁶⁸

The potential consequences for neglecting the duties of kinships with the Sioux were as serious as those coming from their Algonquian rivals. The lucrative posts near Lake of the Woods that brought hundreds of thousands of pelts in for shipment east in return supplied goods and weapons to Sioux rivals such as the Cree. As was often the case, warfare between two or more French allies became imminent, with the best hopes of safety of French traders depending on strict neutrality. Despite this, Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de La Vérendrye, had been sent by the governor specifically to establish trade in the area. As a French official with a European mindset, he felt obliged to demonstrate French commitment to their new Cree allies militarily, lest his traders be seen as cowardly. To that end, in May, 1734 he made public the attachment of his son, Jean-Baptiste, to a Cree-Monsoni war party. The junior La Vérendrye in fact did little, shortly abandoning the war party. Nevertheless, after his departure, the Cree and Monsoni performed raids on the Dakota Sioux, and La Vérendrye’s affiliation was not forgotten. In June 1736 over one-hundred Sioux and allies discovered by chance La Vérendrye’s whereabouts. They parlayed with the young Frenchman’s trade party on a small island in Lake of the Woods, then slaughtered the entire group.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Jacqueline Peterson, “Many roads to Red River,” in Peterson, 49; see also M.J. Morgan, *Land of Big Rivers: French and Indian Illinois 1699-1778* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 114-115. For discussion of official French disapproval contrasted with practice see also, Charles G. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 333-336.

⁶⁹ Gary Clayton Anderson, 42, 43-44.

Less prone to such disastrous missteps were the mixed-blood offspring of the kinships established by fur traders. The Chouteaus, one of the most prominent trading houses in North American history, favored employing mixed-blood individuals for their dual cultural, geographic, and lingual knowledge. The trading family drew upon a “skilled pool” of *métis* employees to create a trade dynasty that endured three major governmental shifts and helped establish the city of St. Louis along the way.⁷⁰ Beyond hiring mixed-blood individuals, the Chouteaus themselves engaged in interracial unions and used personal family ties to strengthen their trading relationships, creating a “commercial society” with Native American nations, especially the Osage.⁷¹ Smaller traders such as Antoine Morin, who was the son of French Sergeant Louis Morin and a Missouri woman called Françoise, purchased goods from the Chouteaus on consignment or worked directly for the trade-house as seasonal traders, or *engagés*.⁷²

More than simply working for large trading houses such as the Chouteaus, mixed-blood individuals prospered by using their connection to work both with, and around, trade officials and regulations. Upon taking control of St. Louis and the Louisiana territory in 1770, the Spanish attempted to cut out foreign competition, as per their standard policy, by outlawing all British goods and requiring licenses for all traders. Established and wealthy traders such as the Chouteaus were loathe to risk losing trading privileges by trading illegal goods, but their legal

⁷⁰ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 96-97, 247; see also William E. Foley and David C. Rice, *The First Chouteaus: River Barons of Early St. Louis* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), ix.

⁷¹ Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in the Fur Trade Society 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 4; see also Richard Edward Oglesby, *Manuel Lisa and the Opening of the Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 17.

⁷² Thorne, *Many Hands*, 85. The Morin family was also demonstrative of the Indian construct of kinship defined by behavior; despite his marriage to Françoise, the elder Morin, along with his entire garrison, was massacred by the Missouri in retribution for French “misbehavior,” 61-62.

avenues were limited by Spanish goods that, compared to British items, lacked in both quantity and quality. Mixed-blood traders such as Joseph Papin (who eventually married into the Chouteau family), Antoine Reilhe, Joseph Roy, and Nicollas Marchesseau offered kinship ties on both the French and Spanish sides. Through their ties in French Canada, these go-betweens proved more than capable at bringing superior British goods from the Great Lakes region. They operated with near-impunity from Spanish legal action due to their status as French-Indian *métis*.⁷³

Spanish officials periodically made a shows of seizing illegal goods, but such displays were mere interruptions to the flow of goods. The traders themselves were free to simply make up the loss on the next shipment. Just as importantly, the direct participation of the Chouteaus went undetected, protecting their trading privileges in the Spanish-controlled territories. For all their desire to prevent trade to their British rivals, the Spanish desired even more to avoid alienating the valuable French-Indian traders, upon whom they heavily depended for access to Osage trade.⁷⁴

The Osage were actually divided into two divisions readily discernable to most observers, the Great Osage and the Little Osage. For their part, the Great Osage commanded Spanish consideration because they controlled enormous hunting grounds from which most of the skins sent through New Orleans originated. The Little Osage, portrayed as unruly foils to the Great Osage's Spanish-accommodating stance, also accounted for enormous amounts of trade, albeit of the illegal variety. Both worked extensively with French *voyageurs* to aggrandize an impressive

⁷³ Ibid., 86-91.

⁷⁴ DuVal, 103, 122-124, 127; see also Thorne, *Many Hands*, 86-91; for Spanish reliance on French trading mechanisms see also Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 141, 143, 149.

economic empire in addition to their long established military prowess. In 1777, the Osage alone accounted for 60 percent of the skins sent downriver, and their average never dipped below 50 percent. And along with the Missouri and the Kansa, who were alternatively allies, enemies, and subordinates, the Osages consumed up to 68 percent of the goods shipped upriver. The Osage, as Tanis Thorne writes, “were unquestionably Spain’s most valuable trading partner.”⁷⁵

Never to be left out of such a lucrative market, the Chouteaus early on established ties to the Osage. Some were mixed-blood allies such as Jean LaFon, a trader who eventually was identified as a chief at a 1787 Osage conference in St. Louis.⁷⁶ The Chouteaus generated other mixed-blood ties themselves, as both elder brothers were considered adoptive members of the Osage nation, and several children listed as *mestizo* and bearing the name Chouteau appear briefly in the historical record.⁷⁷

Domino Theory: Trade, Allies, and Foreign Policy

Without a doubt, part of what allowed mixed-blood individuals to thrive in the along the frontier was the weak reach of official and cultural influences into their world. As discussed,

⁷⁵ The statistic of “skins” sent through New Orleans is not exclusively beaver pelts, but also deerskins, Thorne, *Many Hands*, 91-92; see also DuVal, 105-106, 108; for relationship with Missouri and Kansa see, 185, 187.

⁷⁶ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 94.

⁷⁷ Foley and Rice, *First Chouteaus*, 139. One of the mixed-blood Chouteau children, Anthony, or Antoine, was himself a small-time trader by 1792. These ties only multiplied with future generations, as François, Auguste Jr., A.P., Paul, and Edward Chouteau together accounted for sixteen mixed-blood children by Osage women by 1842, Thorne, *Many Hands*, 95-96, 139. In addition, Chouteau cousin Pierre Papin fathered a mixed-blood child by a “Sophie,” thought by John McDermott to be Sophie Mongraine, the sister of three Osage leaders, one of whom was supposedly married to a Chouteau daughter. Tixier himself believed her to be the mixed-blood daughter of a Julien Peras and a woman called Achinga, see Victor Tixier, *Tixier’s Travels on the Osage Praries*, ed. John Francis McDermott (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1940), 117, 118-119. See also John Joseph Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961, reprint 1973), 297.

attempts by government officials or Christian missionaries to enforce European standards were typically either ignored or met with retaliation. When official policy did manage to have an effect—such as the repeated Spanish licensing policy against British goods and the cautious measures the Chouteaus took in response—the extensive kinship ties of mixed-blood people gave them a political ambiguity that allowed them to work around regulations.

Nevertheless, the experience of mixed-blood individuals in the frontier environment cannot be divorced entirely from the official policies of the governments attempting to regulate that frontier. The fur trade held political implications for European empires that went far beyond the protection of future trade for their own agents and the disruption of trade for their rivals. After incredible profits in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the returns on fur trade investments in the *pays d'en haut* steadily decreased by the late 1700s. As seen by the declining percentage of beaver pelts out of total pelts collected at Forts Niagra and Frontenac, the lucrative beaver pelts began giving way to less profitable skins such as deerskins (see Table 2.1).⁷⁸

The decline of the trade was to become a recurring pattern as the frontier moved west. Nevertheless, neither Indian negotiating leverage nor mixed-blood roles disappeared completely along with the economic viability of the fur trade. Profit alone, then, did not account for the massive amounts of men and material expended on maintaining positive relations with the Native American nations. In the *pays d'en haut*, alliances remained vital to Euro-American foreign policy.

⁷⁸ White, *Middle Ground*, 124-125; see also Thorne, *Many Hands*, 103.

Table 2.1 Total Fur Receipts for Forts Niagra and Frontenac Source: *Estate de la vente de pelleteries, 1726, 1728, 1730, 1736, 1738; Estat de pelleteries, 1733, 1734; all in AN, C11A, vis. 48, 50, 52, 53, 62, 66, 70; in White, *Middle Ground*, 126.*

Year	1726	1728	1730	1733	1734	1736	1738
Livres	8,108	39,948	52,308	11,844	34,296	21,410	21,124
% Beaver	28%	N/A	30.5%	23%	17.8%	24.3%	11.3%

As early as 1755, one French official wrote that were it to buy acceptance of French boundaries in the region, he would happily see all trade ceded to the British, for all the “fur trade of the Great Lakes and the Ohio Valley was not worth 1 percent of the expense it had cost the Crown.” The British, of course, were not prepared to accept French territorial claims, and so maintaining a cordial alliance with the Native Americans became crucial to French foreign policy. Even if maintaining the trade became a losing venture, losing the Indian nations would not just compromise the trade, but send important allies, their kinship ties, and their alliances to the British in a cascading effect that might ultimately deliver the entire colony to Britain.⁷⁹

The political considerations of relations with Native Americans were no less significant for British officials, and they weighed heavier upon that regime as maintaining control over American traders, and eventually its American colonies, grew more difficult. Later, the Americans too wrought further changes in the political landscape, with different goals and emphases from the British and certainly from the French. As discussed, the economic goals of the Spanish were also felt through official policies in the Louisiana Territory, if only briefly. Farther Northwest, Russia developed official policies regulating fur trade for its traders in Alaska

⁷⁹ White, *Middle Ground*, 125.

as well as the roles perceived as appropriate for mixed-blood individuals.⁸⁰ Each had its own designs not only for trade, but also for the purposes of its territories. While Russia and Spain remained largely in the margins of North American Indian policy, the French, British, and Americans combined to define the three main periods of government policy towards trade and Indian relations.⁸¹ The differences had profound effects on the long-term relationships with Native American nations, and for mixed-blood individuals.

For all the wide range of territory populated and traversed by French traders, with the exception of French Canada, French occupancy in North America was never undertaken with the end goal of colonization and settlement. Frederick Jackson Turner's contention that French presence always revolved around trade is over-simplistic given the subordination of profit concerns to preserving Indian allies. Nevertheless, Turner hit upon a key factor that separated the French from the two major powers that followed.⁸² French efforts in North America did not exclusively serve the end of promoting trade through the end of French dominance in the "middle ground," but the pursuit of trade during the halcyon years of the late seventeenth and

⁸⁰ Russia's presence in Alaska was relatively tiny, never numbering more than 600 Russian traders. They did, however, produce a substantial mixed-blood population that was unusually well supported and welcomed by official policy as a method of aligning Aleut, Tlingit, and Kodiak loyalties with Russian interests. Examples such as mixed-blood Orthodox Priest Iakov Netsvetov and Deacon Vasilii Shishkin serve Ingersoll's point as well as this study. Russian policy treated both as Aleut when Alaska was sold to the U.S., denying passage to Russia along with Russian-born clergy. Nevertheless these men also represented the opportunities and roles created for mixed-blood individuals in the Russian version of the "middle ground" that—while it existed—they never could have achieved directly "under the regime of metropolitan, aristocratic rule," Ingersoll, 20, 21-23. For further reading of the Russian trade see James R. Gibson, "The Russian Fur Trade," in Judd and Ray ed., 217-230. For specific roles of Native hunters see Gibson, 222-223, 225; for preference of American goods due to quality, 226; for over-hunting of fur bearers, 227.

⁸¹ Turner, "Character and Influence," 565-566.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 578-580.

early eighteenth centuries did drive the extent to which the French became installed in North America. Pursuit of trade explained French traders venturing out of Montreal to distant villages. Pursuit of trade inadvertently generated the most ambitious expeditions of exploration until the Corps of Discovery under Lewis and Clark. *Voyageurs* such as Pierre Radisson and Médard Des Groseilliers, who recorded much of what is now known about the *pays d'en haut* in the 1650s and 1660s, first ventured into the wilderness with their Huron allies hoping “but to do well” in the trade.⁸³ Trade, then, may not have kept the French in their alliances by the mid 1700s, but it did explain their presence, and by its transformation into a form of foreign policy geared by that time to preserving French colonial claims, demanded continued investment.

The connection between French-Indian alliances and foreign policy did not develop only after the decline of fur trade profitability, either. During the 1680s, French policymakers in Montreal perceived a line of vulnerable territorial holdings that might fall like dominoes should their Algonquians allies receive inadequate support. Total defeat of the Algonquians by the Iroquois would, it seemed, certainly destroy French presence in Illinois. After that, it would only be a matter of time before trade with Ottowas in Wisconsin and Green Bay fell as well. Canada itself would be exposed to hostility from pro-British Iroquois groups. Lost in the imagined process was the fact that Algonquians and Iroquois contained factions sympathetic to both European powers. Each group tended to lean toward one or the other as British and French saw it, yet for Native Americans, a strong European ally was profitable, but the ability to play two off one another was better still.⁸⁴

⁸³ Turner, “Character and Influence,” 566-574; See also White, *Middle Ground*, 5-6.

⁸⁴ White, *Middle Ground*, 30, 33; see also Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1992), 271.

Developing a policy of mediation to secure Indian alliance often proved much easier than actually implementing it. The duties implicit in a Native American alliance often aligned poorly with European understandings of alliances. The French commonly formed trade alliances with rival nations, a practice that most endured without significant incident. But arms and ammunition were a different matter. Trading weapons with enemies or even an enemy's ally constituted a breach of the relationship. This was complicated by the fact that Algonquians regarded outsiders by default as potential enemies. Also difficult for the French to comprehend at first was the centrality of gift giving in alliances. What the French regarded as mere business (when they offered low beaver prices) or Native American greed (when Indians demanded better goods) was perceived by Algonquian nations as the reaffirming of kinship. The cessation of appropriate gifting marked also the end of the relationship. French traders, at that point, reverted by default back to enemies, and for Algonquians, the appropriate manner of exchange with enemies was theft.⁸⁵ Subsequent lootings led to French accusations of breaching agreements, which the Indians felt had already been breached by French traders.

The complexity of the frontier situation meant that the preservation of peace and a viable foreign policy required individuals of no less skill and adaptability than the fur trade did. Mixed-blood individuals were often in a position to meet the challenge. On the opposite extreme, when mediation failed and hostilities erupted, mixed-blood individuals were no less prominent. One such individual was Jean-Baptiste Ducoigne, a Catholic Kaskaskia chief of mixed ancestry. Ducoigne, acted as the chief of the Illinois. He would eventually find the limits of his skills while unsuccessfully attempting to win the favor of Thomas Jefferson, but in the frontier world

⁸⁵ White, *Middle Ground*, 106-108.

of negotiation, Ducoigne enjoyed influence among the Illinois through the 1780s and 1790s.⁸⁶ His involvement in a complex June 1752 confrontation between members of the French-Algonquian alliance and Miami “rebels” against that alliance demonstrated the ambiguous political nature of the *pays d’en haut*.

The Miamis, who were in rebellion against the authority of the French-Algonquian alliance, were bartering with British traders at the town of Pickawillany when Ottawa and Chippewa warriors representing the French-Algonquian alliance surprised them. The British traders initially barricaded inside the Pickawillany stockade but quickly surrendered upon receiving promises of protection. Nevertheless, the Miami rebel chief, La Demoiselle, refused to surrender the post to the French-Algonquian coalition. In the ensuing skirmish, the Alliance warriors quickly captured the rebel chief and brought him to their own leader, Charles Langlade. Langlade symbolically had La Demoiselle cooked and eaten in sight of his Miami followers. The standoff between the French-Algonquian alliance and Miami relatives seemingly ended decisively in favor of the alliance, but in reality the entire situation represented only a partial affirmation of French strength in the region. The rebelling Miamis returned to the alliance, but they were convinced to do so without the intervention of a single Frenchman, a stark contrast to the utter rejection Pierre de Céleron had met just three years earlier. Therefore, even when force was necessary in preserving French influence, it was most effectively exercised when used in conjunction with Native American ties and diplomacy. The rebel chief La Demoiselle was neither French nor had he before been an alliance chief. Charles Langlade, who led the Ottawa and Chippewa force, was a *métis* from Michilimackinac said to exercise “power...on the minds

⁸⁶ Robert Owens, “Jean-Baptiste Ducoigne, the Kaskaskia, and the Limits of Thomas Jefferson’s Friendship,” *Journal of Illinois History* 5, no. 2 (summer 2002).

of the Indians.” Certainly, he was no ideal embodiment of French authority. Though he represented French interests in at Pickawillany 1752, by 1760 Langlade was a supporter of the British. His switch should not be interpreted as a lack of loyalty, but rather a demonstration of where his true loyalty lay. His loyalties prioritized neither French nor British agendas, but the interests of the Great Lakes Indians.⁸⁷

Charles Langlade may have exerted power over Native American minds in affecting events in the French-Indian alliances, but mixed-blood individuals also proved adept at exercising power over European minds. Amidst the intensifying hostilities that eventually became the French and Indian War, the Iroquois found themselves on the edge of encroaching British settlements. At the same time, they required British aide against the French and their Algonquian allies. Military protection was an immediate need, but the Iroquois had to ensure they would retain their land after the conflict was resolved. Consequently, the Iroquois half-king, Tanacharison—along with the other Iroquois chiefs—made the seemingly odd move of confirming a 1744 land cession granting permission for the construction of a British outpost.

The land cession confirmation was in fact more complicated, furthering both British and Iroquois aims. The council where the confirmation was signed was requested and arranged by a British interpreter named Andrew Montour. Montour was a *métis* of French-Delaware lineage, and demonstrated the adaptability often found with individuals in his go-between role. Montour arranged the agreement as a “trap” for the British military and colonial settlers, represented by a number of Virginians. With the confirmation, Montour and Tanacharison laid the foundation for the Iroquois to later deny the cession’s legitimacy. The logic was that in seeking permission (in

⁸⁷ White, *Middle Ground*, 230-231; see also Fred Anderson, *War That Made America*, 32-34; and Ingersoll, 155, 162; and Calloway, *American Revolution*, 41; and Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 128.

the form of the confirmation signed by Tanacharison) to build a fort on Iroquois land, the Virginians acknowledged they did not have claim. Within a year, Montour successfully denied that the Iroquois had ever ceded the Ohio land. All claims undertaken by the Virginians were void. Subsequently, Tanacharison was able to enter into negotiations with the French on the premise that the Ohio country belonged exclusively to the Indians.⁸⁸

The limits that renewed Iroquois authority placed on colonial land claims, however, did not disadvantage British officials. In fact, the British saw the confirmation as a way to back out of earlier negotiations with western Delaware and Shawnee groups. These groups were eager to break away from Iroquois control, but could do so only if they had independent standing with British officials and traders. During the chaos of the French and Indian War, these breakaway groups managed to secure promises to independent land from the British. Unfortunately for the British, the claims destabilized the region as the war progressed, with competing interests between Pennsylvania settlers, Virginia speculators, pre-war Iroquois claims, and the claims of the breakaway factions. Regulating such a disparate collection of interests was all but impossible. Thus Sir William Johnson, the well-known and highly effective British Superintendent of Indian Affairs, sought ways to reestablish stability. The Iroquois represented the best opportunity to achieve that goal. Johnson, with his extensive kinship ties to the Iroquois and Mohawk wife, also had personal interests in seeing the Iroquois maintain authority and stability. By creating an opening for the Iroquois to reassert control over the Ohio Country and

⁸⁸ White, *Middle Ground*, 236-237; for Montour as “culture broker,” see also Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Thomas Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1999), 278; and Merrell, 75-77.

the Delawares and Shawnees inhabiting it, the British once again had a powerful, centralized Indian ally to help control the region.⁸⁹

The examples of Montour and Johnson also highlight the additional wrinkle of British, and later American, policy towards Native Americans—that of colonization and settlement.⁹⁰ The British interest in colonization changed the approach, and stakes, of Anglo-Indian policy considerably from that of the French. The disappearance of the French as a major colonial rival in North America after the French and Indian War removed some ability of the Native American Nations to play the competing rivals against one another, but in other ways it made the frontier less predictable than ever. Native American nations that once were at least partially coordinated and cautioned against hostilities by French policymakers were, after 1763, free to act entirely on their own interests. Indian war along the frontier became a major driving fear of British policy.

Initially, British policy tried to separate white colonists and Native Americans as distinctly as possible. After Pontiac's rebellion seemed to confirm these fears, Johnson attempted to implement new trade regulations that prohibited trade outside of the supervision of military posts. Only select traders would be given license to trade. American settlers who had ignored the Proclamation of 1763—prohibiting unauthorized colonial activity beyond a line roughly following the Appalachian Mountains—were to be immediately evicted. For Johnson, the point was not to cut out specific traders, but to prevent Indian war. He reasoned that unsupervised trade conducted in the Native villages invariably defrauded Indians of their goods. With “no other recourse,” he argued Indians would retaliate with violence that settlers and traders would interpret simply as murder and robbery. The eventual conclusion, Johnson feared,

⁸⁹ Anderson, *Crucible*, 269-270, 276, 279, 330, 531.

⁹⁰ Turner, “Character and Influence,” 582-591.

would be war.⁹¹ To prevent war, then, it was necessary to create an Indian buffer zone separating American settlers from Indian country.⁹²

Johnson was not the sole authority determining interaction and trade with in the region, however. Unfortunately for British regulatory policy, other authorities lacked Johnson's personal kinship ties and cultural familiarity. General Jeffery Amherst, Johnson's superior, ignored many of the hard-learned realities the French had been forced to contend with for decades by 1763. He also ignored the Johnson's counsel and experience. Amherst intended to "avoid all presents in the future," continuing to treat Indians in a "friendly manner" but to enforce good behavior by punishing misdeeds, not rewarding what he saw as minimal cooperation.⁹³ Though the French once sought similar trade regulations in response to the problems of an unrestricted frontier, they eventually came to regard their traders and the *métis* members of the French-Algonquian alliance as essential to its survival. Amherst's attempt to marginalize the French-Indian and Algonquian populations rather than incorporate them proved to be the undoing of his policy.

To make matters worse, the regulations were no more popular with British traders authorized to be in the area, who often responded by selling their pelts down-river rather than pay to ship them east through British markets. They were able to secure higher profits by

⁹¹ White, *Middle Ground*, 318; See also Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts 1790-1834* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), 6.

⁹² François Furstenberg, "The Significance of the Trans-Appalacian Frontier in Atlantic History," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 113, no. 3 (June, 2008), 650, 652-654.

⁹³ O'Toole, 235-236.

cooperating with French traders who had simply moved to the other side of the Mississippi, and *métis* who had not moved at all.⁹⁴

The reduced role for mixed-blood individuals in British policy was not solely due to the ill-conceived choices of authorities such as Amherst. Many children of British traders and Native American women did not have the same benefit of a dual-culture upbringing that the earlier French *métis* had. The turmoil of the French and Indian War and later the American Revolution made the frontier a dangerous place, causing many British traders to flee, leaving their Indian families behind. Some prominent mixed-blood individuals still thrived as go-betweens. Alexander McKee, a British Indian commissary was familiar with the cultures of the region, spoke several Algonquian languages, and was considered by the Shawnee as a member of their nation by virtue of his Shawnee mother.⁹⁵ McKee, however, represented only the portion of the mixed-blood population that found their way into the official employ of the British government. Many more French *métis* along the frontier had no intention of ceasing their lucrative trade, especially when there was little incentive to do so. The only change Amherst's cutbacks and regulations did effect was to increase the number of Indians visiting the British forts and to undermine the positive regulatory effects Johnson had hoped to achieve. Demands for goods and gifts only increased.

Compounding all of these problems was the British government's severe cutback on funds coupled with stubborn refusal by the American colonies to take on part of the financial

⁹⁴ White, *Middle Ground*, 319.

⁹⁵ George Croghan to William Johnson, Sept. 18, 1769, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. VII, ed. Alexander C. Flick (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1931), 182; see also, White, *Middle Ground*, 324.

burden.⁹⁶ The British settled on the only option they seemed to have left which was, ironically, to place the enforcement of trade regulations into the hands of the colonies. This, of course, proved no more successful than British endeavors, as American colonial policymakers had even fewer connections in Indian country. As a result, American colonists pressed further beyond the boundary line, and unlicensed traders operated with impunity. The British Parliament attempted to remedy the situation by placing the western territories under the control of the governor of Quebec with the Quebec Act of 1774, but Quebec governor Guy Carleton did not receive his instructions until January 1775.⁹⁷ He still required time to draft and implement a set of trade rules. Although Carleton had a previous proposal upon which to base his regulations, the British, quite simply, ran out of time. The American Revolution was shortly underway, marking a substantial shift in policy and the negotiating possibilities for Native Americans.

“Probably Thou Are Not a Chief:” The United States Enters as a Frontier Power

Colin Calloway writes in *The American Revolution in Indian Country* that at the outbreak of the American Revolution, British Indian agents and American traders both initially urged neutrality, rather than support, from the various Indian nations with whom they had ties. Native American nations were inclined to agree, viewing the odd spectacle of Englishmen killing one another as “a family quarrel.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ White, *Middle Ground*, 320-322. This American refusal, of course, was only part of a generally vehement reaction to the Stamp Act, see, Prucha, 24.

⁹⁷ Prucha, 20-25.

⁹⁸ Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, reprint 2006), 28-29; see also Silver, 230.

That characterization, perhaps, was all too accurate, as the American Revolution changed the political landscape of the Indian country indelibly. It also set the foundation for the eventual disappearance of British influence from the western territories.⁹⁹ Much like a family enduring turmoil, no frontier groups, whether tied by real or fictive kinship, were unaffected. Many Native American groups did ultimately take sides, their hands being forced by aggressive settlers along the frontier and enticements of alliance from both sides. Their involvement had a profound influence on the American approach to Indian relations immediately after the war, when the United States attempted to characterize all Native American nations as British allies that had been “conquered.” Mixed-blood individuals were represented during the war as during all periods. Prominent examples include James Dean, an American interpreter and an American-Oneida mixed-blood, and Creek chief Alexander McGillivray, of Creek-Scottish origin, who after the war became known as *nuestro mestizo* for his repeated efforts to work American and Spanish interests to his nation’s advantage.¹⁰⁰

There was also Simon Girty who, since his capture in 1755, had lived in Indian country with his Seneca kinsmen and also functioned as an American interpreter.¹⁰¹ John Montour, a shadowy French-Delaware *métis* (possibly related to Andrew Montour, the British interpreter Tanacharison had worked with during the French and Indian War) held the rank of captain in the

⁹⁹ This process, of course, was not completed until the conclusion of the War of 1812, but for the reasons previously discussed, this study is not, and cannot, be an inclusive study of Native Americans and the American Revolution or the War of 1812. For an in-depth discussion see Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country* and the final two sections in White, *The Middle Ground*.

¹⁰⁰ Calloway, *American Revolution*, 17, 60, 276; see also Unrau, *Mixed Bloods*, 152.

¹⁰¹ Calloway, *American Revolution*, 17, 177.

United States Army during the war. Six of his brothers also participated in the conflict, five of whom did not survive.¹⁰²

More than another set of opportunities along the frontier, the American Revolution represented a disruption of the frontier that did not abate for at least another 12 years after hostilities between Americans and British ceased. For many Native Americans, peace would be even longer in coming.¹⁰³ Compounding the disruption of roles for mixed-blood individuals was the United States' initial attempts at Indian policy.

Policy in the early Republic was shaped by the notion that Native American nations were by default hostile towards the U.S.¹⁰⁴ Indians met U.S. officials at the bargaining table under the impression that Americans desired peace, only to find that the Americans believed they were negotiating Indian surrender. American officials held a fiction of conquest that Native Americans did not share. Though many Native American groups had fought for the British, many more had done their best to remain neutral and maintain their own best interests throughout the war. Still others, such as the Tuscaroras and Oneidas, fought for the Americans.¹⁰⁵

Few, if any, felt that they had been defeated in any respect by the Americans, and none were any better prepared to be treated as a monolithic “other” than they had been before the war. U.S. policymakers, too, soon realized that their attempt at creating a fiction of conquest actually united Indian interests in opposition. Better, they reasoned, to revert to the fiction of “patriarchy” employed in the past by both the French and British. Still, Indians did not readily

¹⁰² Calloway, *American Revolution*, 280.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 288-289.

¹⁰⁴ Prucha, 31.

¹⁰⁵ Calloway, *American Revolution*, 85.

accept these fictions, familiar though they might have been.¹⁰⁶ While the French and British had offered the trade and protection of a great empire, the Americans seemed “a distracted republic,” whose interests were often divergent with those of the Indian country, and whose youth as a nation did not readily qualify them as “fathers.”¹⁰⁷

In the *pays d'en haut*, where interactions had for over a century been defined by kinship ties and communities of *métis*, Americans such as John Filson entered a world devoid of the sharp definition they sought to perceive. In 1785, Filson took note of his travels to Vincennes, a thoroughly mixed community of some 300 homes consisting of, among many others, French, Miami, Kickapoo, Shawnee, and Wabash peoples. Additionally, there were seventy American families attempting to claim lands simply by their presence.¹⁰⁸

The community was supposed to have already been officially incorporated into the U.S. In 1778, the American general George Rogers Clark had gained fame by leading an expedition into the region, pushing the British out of settlement after settlement as French and Indian residents proved largely uninterested in fighting the Americans. Clark’s campaign culminated in the capture of Vincennes, which allowed Virginia to extend its territorial claims into the Illinois Country.¹⁰⁹ However, nearly a decade later in the Illinois Country, those claims manifested few signs of American presence or interest.

It was, as White highlights, the perfect setting for Americans to learn and adapt to the workings of the *pays d'en haut*. Instead, by 1786, Wabash warriors moved along the rivers

¹⁰⁶ White, “Fictions,” 71-65, 77-83.

¹⁰⁷ White, “Fictions,” 70; see also, Calloway, 276.

¹⁰⁸ White, *Middle Ground*, 421-422.

¹⁰⁹ Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 143-146; see also, M.J. Morgan, 207.

killing American settlers. Filson himself fell victim by 1788. Much of the tension that spawned the conflict stemmed from the liquor trade, which while not perpetrated by American squatters alone, was certainly more prevalent among them. Worse than alcohol was the predisposition of Americans in the area for confrontation. Convinced that British agents were behind every French and Indian action plotting subversion, Americans were not judicious in solving disputes. After a series of confrontations in the woods involving Indians, armed parties of Americans moved into Vincennes, where they literally killed the first Indian they could find. Despite several French and *métis* attempts to mediate, events culminated in a reckless punitive expedition by Clark. He succeeded only in alienating every local group he came into contact with force and threats before losing half of his men to desertion, and retreating.¹¹⁰

Clark and American officials like him failed in the negotiated frontier world because they refused to negotiate. Rigidity characterized the American approach from Clark as well as individual settlers. Where the Illinois Country had before the American Revolution been a region of constantly shifting boundaries, Americans sought to implement strictly delineated land titles. The sizes of their claims were also a departure from the previous French custom, which had generated plots of about 130 acres. American speculators staked claims in Illinois for tracts of hundreds of thousands of acres, most of it already inhabited by French settlers and Native Americans. Virginia's 1778 claims through Illinois Country extended all the way to the Mississippi.¹¹¹

As Illinois and Indiana land titles were negotiated and the U.S. supplanted the British as the main Euro-American influence in the region, Americans attempted to enter not as potential

¹¹⁰ White, *Middle Ground*, 421-429; see also Silver, 260; and Griffin, 194.

¹¹¹ M.J. Morgan, 205-207.

allies but as conquerors. Before leading his expedition into the Great Lakes region, Clark had made public his intention to put the unruly Native Americans in their place. The chiefs of the *pays d'en haut* were unimpressed. One chief, a warrior of the Wea, remarked in reply that because of Clark's boastful recklessness, "probably thou are not a chief." The region's inhabitants were also uninterested in sharing Clark's fiction of conquest. The Wea warrior chief concluded his reply to Clark with a confident and ominous salutation, "Hope to hear from thee soon."¹¹²

The "middle ground," indeed, was anything but conquered. Even as American militiamen attempted to force their influence in a negotiated world, mixed-blood individuals attempted to mediate by functioning as go-betweens. A French-Potawatomie subordinate Miami chief called Pacane served as Clark's intermediary with the Wabash. When regular troops arrived in 1787 to evict American squatters settled on Indian land as per their previous land title negotiations, Pacane again attempted to secure for them a place among the Great Lakes kinship ties. The Americans remained unwilling to provide gifts. They did not understand the symbolic gestures of fictive patriarchy, and so they remained, for the moment, in the margins of Native American regard. Before long, Native American residents regarded American troops as little better than the "Big Knives" they had been sent to evict.¹¹³ The violence and retaliation they wrought represented a total American failure to incorporate into the negotiated world along the frontier.

That world remained vibrant, however, as French, British, and Indian communities continued to support and contribute to it. Kekionga, the governmental seat of the Iroquois

¹¹² White, *Middle Ground*, 426.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 429-433.

Confederacy, was a mixed town boasting six villages of three different Indian nations along with French and British traders. Not a collection of European and Native American villages that happened to be in close proximity, Kekionga's homes were intermixed among one another within the town. The chief of the Miamis directly across the St. Joseph River was Jean-Baptiste Richardville, a *métis* whose mother also worked as an interpreter and trader.¹¹⁴

The retreat of the French and later the British as national influences in Indian country signaled a major shift in the frontier world where mixed-blood individuals thrived. Traders and posts representing those nations continued to be an economic alternative to the Americans for some time, but Indian ability to use alliances with governmental and military authorities to push back against encroachment was greatly diminished. Already by 1800, census returns recorded 59,856 free, white persons in the western territories of Indiana, the Ohio, and the Mississippi. The population of the United States as a whole had already eclipsed 5 million.¹¹⁵ These were only the individuals with legal claims who could be recorded. American policy, as Francis Paul Prucha writes, “was sincerely interested in preventing settlement on Indian lands only up to a point, and it readily acquiesced in illegal settlements once they had gone so far as to be irremediable.”¹¹⁶ Mixed-blood individuals did, as always, carve out roles that in many ways resembled the go-between duties they had performed so well for both European empires. The situation, however, was much less stable. An entire generation of young Indian warriors had

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 448-450, 452.

¹¹⁵ “Return of the Whole Number of Persons Within the Several Districts of the United States According to ‘An Act providing for the second Census or Enumeration of the inhabitants of the United States,’” (Washington: Printed under order of U.S. House of Representatives, February 28, 1800), 3.

¹¹⁶ Prucha, 186.

come of age knowing mostly war with white men.¹¹⁷ Already unpracticed at mediation compared to their forbearers, they stood across the frontier from a new American nation similarly unaccustomed to and uncertain of its diplomatic relations with Native Americans. The next period of negotiation was characterized by that uncertainty. Americans defined and redefined their relationship with Indians, and Native Americans recalibrated their approaches to a new system of relationships and leverage. Mixed-blood roles were similarly required to adjust, but as usual, their familiarity with both cultures allowed them to adjust to—and quickly facilitate—the adjustment process with a deftness often lacking on either side of frontier.

¹¹⁷ Calloway, *American Revolution*, 288; see also Colin G. Calloway, in Hoxie, ed., 3-4.

Chapter 3 - Racialization and Reduced Leverage: Perceptions and Realities of the Frontier in the Jeffersonian Vision

1803 marked a critical point in the evolution of mixed-blood roles. It was, of course, the year in which Thomas Jefferson doubled the size of the United States with the Louisiana Purchase, but more significant than the act was the man who signed it and what he represented for the future of Native Americans in the United States. The Jefferson administration marked the genesis of Indian Removal policy, an approach that would be defined by ultimatum, not negotiation. In its earliest form removal was often poorly—even contradictorily—articulated and slow to be implemented. Simply put, the United States was not yet strong enough in its new sphere of influence to affect removal during Jefferson’s administration. Nevertheless, a policy that held at its core the assumption that Native Americans were destined to gradually fade into history, coupled with the unrelenting encroachment of American settlement, created a world where many Native American nations such as the Osage, Kansa, and Shawnee were already moving during Thomas Jefferson’s lifetime.¹¹⁸

In 1803, however, many of these developments were yet in their infancy. William Clark—the man who himself eventually was faced with the challenge of mediating the impossible complexity of territory—was only beginning to embark upon the expedition that

¹¹⁸ Thomas Jefferson famously died on July 4th, 1826, the same day as close friend, fellow signer of the Declaration of Independence, and former president John Adams, and the 50th anniversary of American Independence. By that date, treaties ceding all lands east of the Mississippi River belonging to the Kansa, Osage, and Shawnee were about a year old, Unrau, *Kansa Indians*, 56; see also Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 243.

would make him, along with Meriwether Lewis, known to history. They travelled into a world that was less an unknown wilderness than they readily believed. The United States may not have known much about its new territories, but there were many others who did. Indeed, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark spent the first evening of the expedition beyond the frontier not in a rustic tent, but in the 10,000-square-foot St. Louis mansion of Auguste Chouteau.¹¹⁹ Over the course of their expedition, they periodically encountered individuals like Chouteau and English-speaking Indians such as one Kansa-Osage chief, perhaps called White Plume, whom they noted for his helpfulness, who demonstrated that the young Americans had far more to learn about their new territory than it had to learn from them.¹²⁰ Lewis and Clark proceeded with instructions to inform any Indians they encountered “of our wish to be neighborly, friendly & useful to them.”¹²¹ Unfortunately for the Native American nations of the Louisiana Territory, American participation in their world was typically clumsy, at best. The frontier soon transformed from a region where worlds overlapped to one where they touched, but often pushed against one another.

¹¹⁹ Shirley Christian, *Before Lewis and Clark: The Story of the Chouteaus, the French Dynasty That Ruled America's Frontier* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004), 3-5.

¹²⁰ This encounter, unfortunately, is difficult to verify beyond doubt because it comes from the autobiography of Charles Curtis, Vice President of the U.S., 1928-1932, and a descendent of White Plume. The Curtis autobiography is in private hands and unavailable to the public, though the Kansas State Historical Society has portions of it. Given White Plume's later selection by Clark to meet Thomas Jefferson, however, the Kansa chief obviously made himself known to the American explorers, Unrau, *Mixed Bloods*, 10.

¹²¹ Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents*, vol. I (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), 64. The Lewis and Clark Expedition is another voluminous topic which—though an essential part of the history surrounding this study—lies outside its specific scope. For further reading on interactions between the expedition and Indians see, James P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark Among the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); for a narrative of the expedition see, Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995).

Fathers and Brothers: Mixed-Blood Indians and the Genesis of Assimilationist Policy

For American policymakers tasked with planning the management of the United States' new territory, mixed-blood Indians were to play a prominent role, both by design and by accident. They were thought to be beneficial for the "civilizing" influence they could have on their full-blood relatives. If full-blood Native Americans were "children" in the view of men like Thomas Jefferson, then mixed-blood Native Americans could be described as having a role similar to that of an older brother in Jeffersonian U.S. policy. They undoubtedly retained subordinate status to their white American "fathers," but were seen as more predisposed to "civilization." Their presence among full-blood populations was desirable, for according to Jefferson, the lower condition of Native American societies resulted not from a biological defect, but from circumstance. Jefferson was open to the theoretical possibility of reshaping Indian peoples into the American ideal, and he noted supposed "improvements" in aspects such as childbearing rates with the addition of even partial Euro-American influence.¹²²

In practice, mixed-blood familiarity with the American political and legal system would make them focal points of Native American resistance to land cession, but also its eventual completion. American policy was intended from the outset to provide protections of Indian land rights by setting and enforcing boundaries, controlling land sales to private citizens, regulating trade and alcohol, mediating crimes to prevent retaliatory hostilities, and promote "civilization" to facilitate assimilation. The purpose was an "orderly advance" of the frontier. Nonetheless, it was to be an advance. These goals must also be understood as a developmental process that

¹²² Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row, 1964), 58-59, 90.

would take years of trial and error to develop. They did not represent a clear and coherent agenda from conception onward.¹²³ To understand the roles mixed-blood individuals played in this process, the fundamental assumptions and flaws of Jeffersonian Indian policy must first be understood.

The history of Jeffersonian Indian policy raises the same issue as almost every other period of Indian policy in United States history—that of exploitation. American Indian policy often inhabited the gray areas between design and unintended consequence, intention and result, and knowledge and ignorance of frontier realities and Native American culture. Francis Paul Prucha calls it “the myth of ruthless dispossession.”¹²⁴ Prucha highlights the important point that, at its core, Indian policy was rarely designed to be overtly exploitative *as interpreted by American officials*. The qualifier is extremely important. While American policy was not designed to be exploitative, it assumed that Native Americans—at least in their “savage” form—represented an “antique” way of life that, like other obsolete items, was destined to fade away.¹²⁵ The numbers seemed to support this assumption. In contrast with the rapidly growing U.S. population, the land speculator and traveller Gilbert Imlay estimated that already by 1791, as few as 20,000 Native Americans remained within the borders of the United States.¹²⁶ Regardless of its intentions, Jeffersonian Indian policy contained the seeds for dispossession.

¹²³ Prucha, vii, 2-3.

¹²⁴ Prucha argues that the “unprincipled practices” of American settlers created this myth, and here he does have an important point. American settlers, who constantly encroached on Indian lands, bore the brunt of Indian retaliation. As such, their views on Indian assimilation were consistently more pessimistic and harsh. When they took matters into their own hands, violence such as the aforementioned debacle at Vincennes was the typical result, Prucha, 143.

¹²⁵ Wallace, 76-79, 104-105.

¹²⁶ Gilbert Imlay, *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* (New York: Samuel Campbell, 1793), 87.

The effect of this belief was perhaps best summarized by Brian Dippie, who explained in *The Vanishing American*, that “the belief in the Vanishing Indian was the ultimate cause of the Indian’s vanishing.”¹²⁷ Jeffersonian policy also assumed as the basis for its relations the fictive patriarchy that had proved so useful to the French and British. Patriarchy represented an improvement for U.S.-Indian relations compared to the previous fiction of conquest, yet it was also an eventual disaster for Native Americans. Patriarchy did provide American and Indians with a shared language, other than overt force, with which to negotiate their relationship. But it was no longer an equal exchange.

Patriarchy had a long tradition as the chosen metaphor of exchange between Euro-American officials and Native Americans, but the meanings of that metaphor had been defined by heavy input from both sides. After defeat at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, Native Americans lost much of the control over patriarchal definition they had once enjoyed. An Algonquian patriarch was a caretaker, a benevolent father who had “pity” for his children when in need and shared generously whenever able. For Native Americans, the position of patriarch was not one of ultimate authority, as white Americans understood it, but of gentle influence derived from generosity. Native American leaders at the Treaty of Greenville attempted to remind their new American fathers of their duties, imploring,

Listen to your children, here assembled; be strong, now, and take care of your little ones. See what a number you have suddenly acquired. Be careful of them, and do not suffer them to be imposed upon. Don’t show favor to one, to the injury of any. An impartial father equally rewards all his children, as well those who are ordinary, as those who may be more handsome; therefore,

¹²⁷ Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 71.

should and of your children come to you crying and in distress,
have pity on them, and relieve their wants.¹²⁸

The U.S. interpreted its patriarchal duties as benevolent, but not accommodating. This was the foundation of “Jeffersonian philanthropy.” American policy approached Native Americans as children in the literal sense. They were perceived as a group of people still growing into the “maturity” of civilization.¹²⁹ As such, they required guidance, protection, and assistance. Additionally, the end result of the process had to meet a preconceived American vision of assimilation.¹³⁰ The American interpretation also meant that the lessons imparted by American “fathers” denied Native Americans the agency of knowing what was in their own best interest. They were, in terms of civilization, seen as too “young” to be trusted with the direction of their development.

The perception of Native Americans as children is important because it allows for the prospect of “civilizing.” That prospect shaped policymakers’ approach to Indian relations. Essentially, the theory was to make Native Americans as “white” as possible. A slowly advancing frontier would convert the Indians it passed over to participants in the U.S. agricultural economy. The resultant society would not be ethnically diverse mix of white and Indian worlds, but one where Indian society disappeared in the face of what Jefferson assumed to be a superior and dominant civilization.¹³¹ Jefferson’s vision was an optimistic—and unrealistic—plan in which Indians more or less voluntarily gave up their “primitive” practices of

¹²⁸ Treaty of Greenville, Aug. 7, 1795, Speech of Tarhe, *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, ASP07 Ind.aff.67/1, 1:580.

¹²⁹ Bernard Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 152-153.

¹³⁰ White, “Fictions,” 83.

¹³¹ Wallace, 206.

hunting and trapping in exchange for the settled agricultural life. Any relocation was to be the “result of their [Native Americans] own inclinations” to continue hunting as a way of life.¹³²

The plan, to say the least, demonstrated a decided unfamiliarity with the realities of the frontier world.

The prospects for success of Jeffersonian Indian policy were undermined by several practical factors that Jefferson himself never fully grasped. Perhaps the most vexing for his agents was the lack of available support along the frontier. Indian agents were charged with regulating broad swaths of frontier amidst a culture and economic system still characterized by French, American, British, and *métis* traders conducting business in Indian villages, far from removed from government oversight. More difficult still, were encroaching American settlers, who often could only be removed by force that was rarely available in sufficient quantities to maintain the intended effect. Ironically, it was Jefferson’s own cuts to the army that did the most to create the lack of available units.¹³³ Even when units were available to enforce Indian policy, jurisdictional ambiguities often pitted Indian agents against military officers who tended to sympathize with encroachers over Native American retaliators.¹³⁴

This perception of Indians as “children,” and frustration with jurisdictional ambiguities, and tension between Indian agents or trade factors and the soldiers sent to assist them can be found in the records of George Sibley, a trade factor sent in 1808 to administer relations, and hopefully assimilation, of the Osages and Kansa surrounding his post. Sibley, like most factors and agents, was generally sympathetic with the nations he was charged with assisting. The Osages in particular delighted Sibley with their seeming eagerness to “abandon” villages and

¹³² Prucha, 226.

¹³³ Wallace, 216-218.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 211.

settle near the government-sponsored trading center, or “factory,” he administered. His enthusiasm was coupled with a strongly stated desire to make good on any promises or assurances made to the Indians.¹³⁵ At the same time Sibley demonstrates his adherence to the Jeffersonian ideal by recording his belief in “civilizing” the Indians. He hoped that introducing them to the trappings of a settled life through trade would eventually lead to their participation in the agricultural economy.¹³⁶ Though troubled by the “endless cycle of debt” inherent in the factory system, Sibley maintained faith in its goals even after others called the system into question. Writing as late as 1811 in a letter to William Clark, Sibley insisted that “This factory system may be made a place of great Resort for the Indians, and I am determined to moat no exertions on my part to promote its Success.”¹³⁷ Nevertheless, he recorded that his limited authority frequently stymied by his ability to intervene on behalf of his charges, and his opinion of the military men there to assist him was consistently low. Drunkenness, insensitivity to Indian culture, arbitrary punishment of Indians, and a general disdain for Sibley’s interest in the welfare of the Osages and Kansa on the part of the soldiers appear often in frustrated letters to William Clark.¹³⁸

The consequences of the debt cycle explain much of the antipathy towards Native Americans from the soldiers and settlers. As with instances where French or British traders attempted to increase prices, white Americans typically did not examine their own business practices with the same scrutiny as those of Native Americans. Just as the earlier French and

¹³⁵ George Sibley, *Seeking a Newer World: The Fort Osage Journals 1808-1811*, ed. Jeffrey Smith (St. Charles, MO: Lindenwood University Press, 2003), 80-81.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 17-20.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 22, 131-133.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 121-127, 142-145, 163, 178.

British, then, they were surprised when Indians retaliated harshly. The perpetual nature of indebtedness to Euro-American traders was not lost on Indian groups, who responded by turning the system against offending traders. The *Missouri Gazette* offers an account of one such incident. An unnamed trader among the Osages was forcibly relieved of all of his trade goods at the conclusion of a trade for pelts. The man protested that he would never trade with the Osages again, and in the future would discourage others from trading with their group. According to the *Gazette*, the Indians “heard him out very patiently, when one of their leaders pertly asked him if he did not return as usual the next season, to obtain their peltries and furs, how he intended to pay the persons from whom he purchased the merchandise, which they had taken from him.”¹³⁹ The article concluded by articulating the perceived “savage” mentality, “that the white men are like dogs, the more you beat them and plunder them, the more goods they will bring you...this sentiment at present constitutes the rule of actions among the Osages, Kanzaas [sic], Soos [sic], and others.”¹⁴⁰ To many American interpretations, the violence still had an economic element, but it was also was telling of an inherent disharmony between races.

Difficult as the soldiers and settlers could be, Sibley’s ultimate frustration came from the Native Americans he was supposed to condition for eventual assimilation. Sibley, like nearly all officials of Jeffersonian Indian policy, never fully understood the economic disparities between agricultural markets and fur trade markets along the frontier. Despite his optimism upon arrival, Sibley found the Osages to be—in his estimation—still distressingly prone to “savagery” three years later. Their gruesome retaliation on an intruding Iowa Indian startled Sibley so much that he feared for the safety of white families under his protection. Discouraging too, was his

¹³⁹ “CLATSOP,” *Missouri Gazette*, August 2, 1808, Vol. 1 No. 4 (St. Louis, Missouri), 2-3, State Historical Society of Missouri.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

relationship with the army garrison, which had deteriorated to the point that its commanding officer, a Lieutenant Brownson, refused to send soldiers with Sibley to secure the families.¹⁴¹ Though he expressed pride and a stubborn hope for the “civilizing” prospects of the Kansa (of whom he initially had a very low opinion), Sibley left Ft. Osage largely a disheartened man.¹⁴² For him, the reluctance of the Osage to embrace a completely settled life and give up their habits of trapping was inexplicable.

Sibley represents the second major disconnect between Native American perceptions and those of American authorities along the frontier. Not only did policymakers and executors have a different interpretation of their kinship duties from Native Americans, but they also held different perceptions of the viability of frontier markets. For Jeffersonian Indian policy—and the Jeffersonian vision for all the U.S.—nothing was more desirable than the virtuous and stable life of the yeoman farmer raising crops to sustain his family and surplus to sell at market. To Jefferson, the Native American insistence on trapping along the frontier represented an irrational sentimental attachment to antiquated habits. American policymakers exhibited little knowledge of actual frontier market conditions. In reality, their sheer distance from viable markets economically stymied settlers on the farthest edges of the frontier. Relatively few goods were available to settlers along the frontier even were they able to transport their crops for sale. The abject poverty of many settlers, which did not seem to abate even if they brought in a successful harvest, did not go unnoticed by Native Americans.¹⁴³ The supposed allure was perplexing, then, when traders and trappers with long experience on the frontier knew that the fur trade offered plentiful markets and substantial returns.

¹⁴¹ Sibley, 170-171.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 178-180.

¹⁴³ Wallace, 195-203; see also Sheehan, 123.

While agricultural endeavors promised tedious effort with little monetary reward, the fur trade offered profits sufficient to buy whatever an Indian or mixed-blood trader could not procure himself. A single buffalo robe was worth 100 pounds of flour or up to 25 bushels of corn.¹⁴⁴ The economic rationale behind maintaining the fur trade is demonstrated by an exchange between an Osage mixed-blood and Union Mission Reverend F. Vaille. The reverend extolled the virtues of the settled agricultural life, to which the Osage replied,

Father, I don't understand this kind of happiness you talk of. You tell me to cut down tree—to lop it—to make fence—to plough—this you call being happy. I no like such happiness. When I go to St. Louis to see Chouteau or Clark He says “hello”—and negro come in with great plate with cake, wine, etc. He says “eat, drink.” If he wants anything else he say “hello”—three four five six negro come in and do what he want—that I call happy—he no plough—he no work—he no cut wood.¹⁴⁵

The basic assumption of Jeffersonian Indian policy was fundamentally flawed. Native Americans did not insist on maintaining the hunt solely out of sentimental attachment. Hunting retained a strong emotional and cultural influence for Native Americans, but on a practical level they also continued trapping and hunting because furs were their cash crop.¹⁴⁶ Unfortunately for the Native Americans, it was not American policymakers who would suffer for their misconceptions. Jeffersonian Indian policy contained provisions to remove through debt-coerced land cessions or military force Indian nations that resisted voluntary assimilation.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 145.

¹⁴⁵ Washington Irving, *The Western Journals of Washington Irving*, ed. John Francis McDermott (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1944), 103.

¹⁴⁶ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 297-300.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 238-240, 252-260.

These provisions were intended as last resorts only after the failure of assimilationist measures. Resistance to policy was all but assured, however, due to its inherent flaws, which were born of American authorities' misunderstandings of the frontier world.

Hospitable Savages

The beginning of the United States as the sole legal possessor of the Louisiana territory also marked an increased—if not entirely new—emphasis on race with regard to Native Americans. Whether in support of “civilizing” Indians, removing them, or simply to “let nature take its course,” a language of race was to increasingly become the language of debate for American Indian policy.¹⁴⁸ Yet, mixed-blood individuals were not characterized as an entirely separate category. Though their place between American policy and Indian consequences became more pronounced, they remained as yet in the periphery of formal American planning. Recognized as little different than full-blood Indians, their place in Native American society was still defined by the roles they performed. Since their first contact with the French *voyageurs*, mixed-blood Indians rarely regarded themselves as anything identifiably separate. They were, rather, Kickapoo, Potawatomie, Osage, Sioux, Kansa, or Miami; mixed-blood as they might be, they were “full” members of their communities. A record of Shawnee hospitality from French traveller Nicolas de Finiels illustrates this point.

De Finiels was a French engineer who likely fled to the United States from France after its revolution. Through an acquaintance in Philadelphia, he eventually secured a position

¹⁴⁸ The latter argument was put forth by George Vest of Missouri and Richard Coke of Texas, who later in the century favored the dissolution of the reservation system altogether as the most expedient method to solving Indian assimilation issues that they—among others—felt were moot. In their view, protecting the American Indian only delayed their inevitable extinction, Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 36-37.

working for the Spanish government in the Louisiana Territory in 1797.¹⁴⁹ He travelled extensively through the Missouri River Valley and Upper Mississippi regions during the early 1800s, making observations that were often as instructive for what he did not note as what he did. One such account was of being—as he records—virtually accosted by friendly Shawnee Indians while attempting to pass through their village. De Finiels spent nearly the entire day in the “hut” of the chief, conversing with the important men of the village.¹⁵⁰ These Indians demonstrated interest in him for his ability to speak English, a skill they shared. De Finiels offered no speculation as to their ancestry, taking them to be representative of the entire Shawnee nation. He was favorably impressed, and reckoned the Shawnees to be “good men and capable of more civilization than has been generally thought possible for Indians.” De Finiels was particularly struck by their “more regular features,” lighter skin, and “predilection for cleanliness and good taste.”¹⁵¹

De Finiels was evidently unaware that his hosts were most likely mixed-blood members of the Shawnee village. Their appearance and Anglo-American education suggests as much. Just as important to note is the fact that these Shawnees represented the village leadership and it was they, not a warrior chief, who decided to meet and learn about this curious Frenchman who traveled not at the head of soldiers or bearing trade goods. Perplexed at the contrasts between

¹⁴⁹ Nicolas de Finiels, *An Account of Upper Louisiana* ed., Carl J. Eckberg and William C. Foley, transl. Carl J. Eckberg (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 1-5.

¹⁵⁰ According to another traveller, Amos Stoddard, the Shawnee villages were quite large and permanent, consisting of some 80 houses, some two-story, “built of logs” with shingled roofs, and “well-furnished” interiors. Stoddard’s description contrasts sharply with the impression given by de Finiels’ perfunctory label of “huts,” which had more to do with what de Finiels called a house inhabited by an Indian than its physical characteristics, Amos Stoddard, *Sketches, Historical and Descriptive of Upper Louisiana* (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1812), 215.

¹⁵¹ De Finiels, 35.

these Shawnees and the Indians in a nearby village whom he regarded as “still savages in the full sense of the term,” de Finiels offered a significant—if misinterpreted—explanation.

In reflecting upon the first steps toward civilization that the Shawnees seem to have made, I believe that I perceive the reasons for this progress precisely...in the example set for them by several whites who while mingling with them seem to have adopted their customs. This especially true of Monsieur Lorimier, son of a white man and a Shawnee woman, who alternatively adopts European and Indian customs and who appears, along with his son, sometimes in European garb and sometimes in the dress of these children of nature.¹⁵²

De Finiels’ theory regarding the Shawnees and Louis Lorimeier demonstrates the perception of roles and race at work at that point in time as well as key differences in perceptions. For American official policy, mixed-blood individuals were increasingly defined by race as Indians. Records of births, deaths, and baptisms of Native Americans in the region were spotty at best. According to data accompanying de Finiels’ account, the voluminous *Dictionnaire généalogique de familles canadiennes* contains no record of Lorimier, though it does record the presence of his father, Claude Delorimier.¹⁵³ This is logical for Louis, because his mother was Shawnee, would likely have been left out of the Catholic records as a Shawnee Indian.

For de Finiels, Lorimier, with his French surname, who often dressed as a proper European and had become a familiar entity as he guided them through the Ohio country and into Spanish Illinois, was far too white to be the same as their English-speaking Shawnee hosts.¹⁵⁴ In

¹⁵² Ibid., 35.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 35, see note 29.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., see note 28.

this sense, de Finiels represents a transitional moment in racial perception. Unlike earlier observers, de Finiels did not describe Native Americans as just one more element of the “natural” landscape through which they passed.¹⁵⁵ The Indians he observed were described as people. While de Finiels spoke the language of race that was to become increasingly prevalent, that language was not yet wholly deterministic. In his mind, *sauvages*, as demonstrated by the Shawnees, could become civilized.

What never occurred to de Finiels, of course, was that his English-speaking Shawnee hosts and the Shawnee man with his son in their “European garb” did not, as yet, consider themselves different at all. If de Finiels saw Lorimier as more closely associated to a white man, it was only because his current role had created that tie. Lorimier and the surrounding community appear to have had no such clear delineation between white and *sauvage*. His only identity was that of intermediary. Though de Finiels mentions the association only in passing, Lorimier was the founder of the village of Cape Girardeau. His wife was French-Shawnee, and together they had six children. Upon her death in 1808, her epitaph read, “She was the noblest matron of the Shawnee race.” Lorimier continued to work as a go-between with the Spanish government and the Delwares and Shawnees. He negotiated their resettlement to game-rich areas between the French Creoles and the Osages; also creating a buffer that helped the Spanish government keep the peace.¹⁵⁶ Lorimier’s accomplishments were, of course, made possible by

¹⁵⁵ Bernard Romans’ 1775 work *A Concise History of East and West Florida*, in which Romans commented on Native American habits such posture while urinating as if they were naturally inherent traits found across all Native American cultures; in Perdue, “Native Women,” 85. For more on Indians being “naturalized,” or of the elements, see Elise Marienstras, “The Common Man’s Indian: The Image of the Indian as a Promoter of National Identity in the Early National Era,” in Hoxie, ed., 295.

¹⁵⁶ De Finiels, 34. For founding of Cape Girardeau and intermediary work with Spanish, see Thorne, *Many Hands*, 80-81; for children see Louis, Lorimier, Will, 1808 (C2124), State Historical Society of Missouri.

his role as a skilled intermediary, not by his ancestry. Still, the race-based idea of the “civilizing” effect of white proximity articulated by de Finiels was an important one. Though not yet viewed as a categorical element by Native Americans, it was to become a key component in Jeffersonian Indian policy.

De Finiels was, in a sense, privy to a frontier world in transition. Some aspects of this transition were more readily apparent than others. In the most literal sense, the frontier was no longer *where* it used to be, having shifted west to encompass the lower half of modern-day Indiana and parts of Illinois, nearly reaching to the Mississippi (see Figure 3.1). Along with the frontier moved settlement. As result of game depletion, the large beaver populations were farther west as well, and, as older hunting grounds in the *pays d'en haut* became largely devoid of the animals, there followed the Indians and traders who relied on them as a source of income. Not that the fur trade was nearing its end. To the contrary, the trade remained the most important connection between Indians and white Americans, even if its political importance was reduced as French, British, and Spanish influence faded from the territory.¹⁵⁷ Many continued their trading activities with the same French and British colleagues they had traded with before the American Revolution. New hunting grounds of the upper Mississippi were known to be abundant, if less accessible.¹⁵⁸ Trading houses such as the Chouteaus continued to thrive in a business that was still sufficiently lucrative to create fortunes. The fur trade also continued to generate demand for skilled go-betweens. Pierre Chouteau remarked in 1805 that in many cases, Indian demands were “suggested to them by the interpreters, or are even made solely by them.”¹⁵⁹ Their influence was undeniable, as was demonstrated by the Chouteaus’ use of their ties to the Osage

¹⁵⁷ Prucha, 66-68.

¹⁵⁸ White, *Middle Ground*, 477.

¹⁵⁹ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 117.

to effectively coerce alliance between that nation and the United States.¹⁶⁰ The U.S. similarly employed Manuel Lisa as Indian agent to secure the loyalty of the Omaha—who considered him a “brother by marriage”—and Missouri nations.¹⁶¹ As such, each company required such individuals to ensure that negotiations and demands worked in their favor.

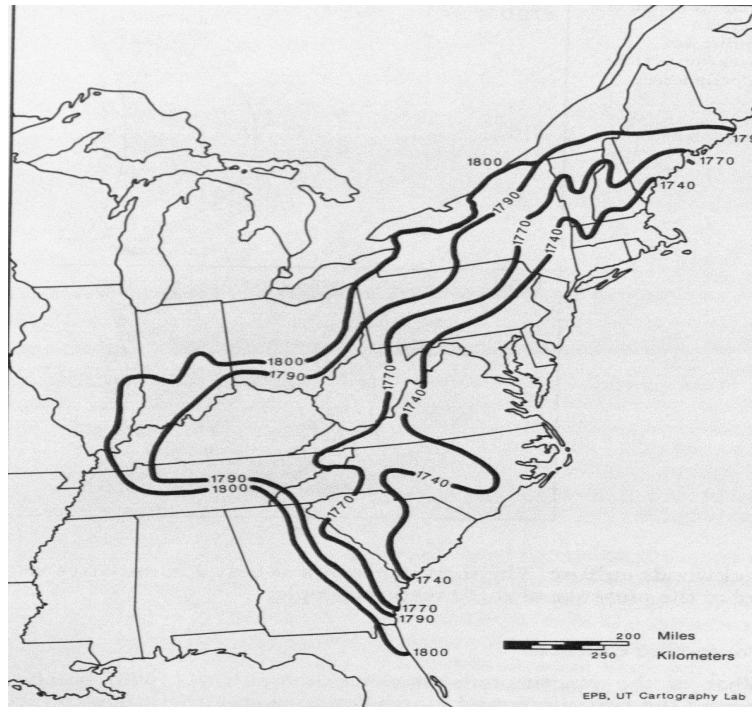


Figure 3-1 Expansion of the American frontier to 1800.

SOURCE: Jordan, Terry G. and Matti E. Kaups, *The American Backwoods Frontier: An Ethnic and Ecological Interpretation* pp. 13, Fig 1.6 © 1989 The Johns Hopkins University Press. Reprinted with the permission of the Johns Hopkins University Press.

Meanwhile, unencumbered by the foreign policy concerns attendant with being the regulatory powers, British companies were profitable than before the American Revolution. It was the merchants in North American who had to contend with the new American competition that was expected to arise as soon as the former colonies were from under the regulation of the

¹⁶⁰ Sibley, 86; see also Thorne, *Many Hands*, 119.

¹⁶¹ Walter Douglas, *Manuel Lisa*, ed. Abraham Nesatir (New York: Argosy-Antiquarian, 1964), 82-91; see also Oglesby, 154; Thorne, *Many Hands*, 121.

Crown.¹⁶² The North West Company was formed to meet that competition. Though it did not control the entire Great Lakes region, the North West Company proved to be remarkably influential within those areas it did control. Less than 5 years after its organization, it managed to push the deregulation of liquor trade in Indian country and the repeal of the licensing system that allowed only certain specified traders to legally do business along the frontier. By 1798 it had grown into an enormous portion of the fur trade, controlling over 79 percent (though much of it from territory in Canada). A company of such influence, of course, required skilled employees who could be effective in the *pays d'en haut*. As such, the North West Company employed some 1,276 interpreters, traders, guides, and clerks. Most of these individuals were *métis* or their French relatives.¹⁶³

The American competition took no more significant shape than the American Fur Company. The Astor family fur dynasty represented the most successful of American forays into the fur trade, but by no means the only important venture. Efforts to break into the trade held in monopoly by the Chouteaus and their *métis* networks began as early as 1802 with Manuel Lisa's repeated voyages up and down the Mississippi River.¹⁶⁴ This era of trade also represented the peak of trade as a mechanism for implementing government policy, as the U.S. would increasingly pursue a dictated course of assimilation designed to discourage lifestyles based on the hunt. During this formative era of Jeffersonian policy, race was employed as a categorization but not a concrete determiner of behavior or ability to assimilate. In 1808, newspapers in St. Louis still blamed the increasing difficulties of encroachment and Indian resistance on the failed

¹⁶² White, *Middle Ground*, 476.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 478.

¹⁶⁴ Oglesby, viii; see also Foley and Rice, 60-64.

trade regulation policies of the Spanish government. Those policies generated “evils which flowed from those measure as well to the Indians as the whites.”¹⁶⁵

If racial perception was not yet hardened enough in 1808 to become the focus of American attention, the frontier situation was already becoming crowded and tense. A number of accounts of “Indian Hostilities” near St. Louis as early as 1808 involved parties of Choctaw Indians.¹⁶⁶ These Indians, originally inhabitants of the northern Mississippi, were already being pressed North and West into the St. Louis area by American encroachment and the movement of frontier trade. The Missouri, Kansa, and Osage, too were being pushed by the Sac and Fox and Ioway, who were themselves moving to keep up with the hunting grounds. The Sac and Fox were able to accomplish this push in part because they were armed by the British leading up to the War of 1812, an event that in itself drastically affected U.S. Indian relations by removing the last of European governmental influence from the Trans-Mississippi West.¹⁶⁷ Even nations with a reputation for political savvy, such as the Kansa, were finding themselves pressed into ever-closer proximity to other similarly distressed nations.¹⁶⁸ This pressure would make managing Indian relations a nightmare for Indian agents and make negotiation with American officials necessary for Indian nations in the years of fur trade decline. Frustrated efforts by the U.S. to assimilate the Indians would cause many officials to fall back on the language of race inherent in Jeffersonian Indian policy to explain their failures. Nicolas de Finiels, for example, could not

¹⁶⁵ “CLATSOP,” *Missouri Gazette*, August 2, 1808, 2, State Historical Society of Missouri.

¹⁶⁶ *Missouri Gazette*, September 12, 1808, Vol. 1 No. 11 (St. Louis, Missouri), 3, State Historical Society of Missouri.

¹⁶⁷ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 111; see also Richter, *Facing East*, 232-233.

¹⁶⁸ The Kansa proved remarkably adept at maintaining neutrality through the period of European imperial conflict and changing policy through the American Revolution. Like many nations, however, they found that power reduced upon the emergence of the U.S. as sole policymaker. William E. Unrau, *The Kansa Indians: A History of the Wind People, 1673-1873* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 55-79.

explain the lack of agricultural productivity he saw among the French-Indians but for a natural “indolence and sloth.”¹⁶⁹ Even having seen the lack of markets for an agricultural economy, de Finiels was unable or unwilling to explain frontier residents’ behaviors solely with economic circumstances.¹⁷⁰ The failure to assimilate by frontier communities seemed too strongly to correlate with the presence and concentration of the Native American element. The language of race was becoming stronger in the lower Missouri River Basin. Nevertheless, identity as seen by American officials was not yet compartmentalized into racial categories. Rather, it more resembled a sliding scale, with white on one side and Indian on the other. Propensity to assimilate into American society could be predicted by an individual or group’s position on that scale. Mixed-blood individuals, recognized that—for the moment—American officials better heard their voice than that of their full-blood counterparts. Because of their preferential place in Jeffersonian policy, they gained experience that typically wrought a more complete understanding of the insatiability of American land acquisition.¹⁷¹ Mixed-blood individuals were to be instrumental in the final chapter of their own role in between cultures.

¹⁶⁹ De Finiels, 55.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 124.

¹⁷¹ Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods*, ix.

Chapter 4 - A Chasm Opens: Land Cession and the Loss of Place

After the Fur Trade

Even as the policies of the young United States and the decline in the lower Missouri fur trade by the end of the 1820s reduced the negotiating leverage wielded by Indian nations, it created new and perhaps more important roles for mixed-blood individuals. Many took their trade skills elsewhere, leaving behind traditional full-blood territories and pursuing the still-booming fur trade farther north and west around the Rocky Mountain rendezvous during the 1820s and 1830s.¹⁷² Those that remained in the lower Missouri region faced the need for adaptation. Negotiations with white Americans became more difficult the power of the United States grew more established. At the same time, the stakes for those negotiations rose. The success of negotiations and mediations had for over 100 years meant the difference between success or failure of an alliance, allowance of trade, or protection from attack. In this new world of aggressive American settlement and a single Euro-American nation of influence, a botched negotiation could mean complete dispossession of place for an entire Indian nation. None understood this better than the people who maintained the closest familiarity with the American world, among whom mixed-blood Indians were well represented. This was especially true as the younger generation of full-blood Indian warrior chiefs increasingly held that armed retaliation as

¹⁷² For a discussion of the various rendezvous see *Trappers of the Far West: Sixteen Biographical Sketches*, ed. LeRoy R. Hafen (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 80, 81, 111, 171, 299; see also, Theodore J. Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration: Opening the Far Northwest 1821-1852* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 136-137; for participation of mixed-blood individuals, 69, 72, 95, 135; see also, Dale L. Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1953), 316-317.

the only medium Americans could understand.¹⁷³ The gap between American interests and Indian interests was wider than ever. Curiously, the widening of that gap precipitated a final period of close association—though not agreement—between mixed-blood Indian nation members and American officials.

“Ardent Spirits:” Decline of the Fur Trade, Adaptation, and the Deterioration of “Full-Blood” Communities

When the *Missouri Gazette* referenced the “evils” evident in the corroding relationship between Indian and American frontier inhabitants, primarily in mind was the “cycle of debt” lamented by the Fort Osage Trade Factor George Sibley, and the increasing prevalence of liquor in trade exchanges.¹⁷⁴ Not only did both elements contribute heavily to difficulties in Indian-American relations in their own right, they also reinforced the negative aspects of each other. Liquor had long been employed by less scrupulous traders to cheat Native American hunters when trading for their valuable pelts. The North West Company had successfully lobbied for the repeal of British restrictions on the use of liquor as early as 1790, and, the importance of liquor in the commerce of the lower Missouri River Basin drastically increased through the 1820s. This increase roughly correlated with the decline of fur trade profits, which had peaked mid-decade.¹⁷⁵ The fur trapping in the region was aggressive enough that Indian Agent Joshua Pilcher reported fur-bearing animals to already be “rapidly diminishing” by 1827.¹⁷⁶ Eager for the supplemental profits, John Jacob Astor’s American Fur Company in 1826 lobbied the United

¹⁷³ White, *Middle Ground*, 424; See also Calloway, 288.

¹⁷⁴ “CLATSOP,” *Missouri Gazette*, August 2, 1808, 2, State Historical Society of Missouri.

¹⁷⁵ White, *Middle Ground*, 478.

¹⁷⁶ Pilcher’s actual report was made in 1831, but he had been slow in responding to requests for information. Pilcher’s data was for the years 1803-1827, Sunder, 84-85.

States government for permission to sell alcohol, though without success. The reasoning was that the use of liquor gave “lawless” traders and British competition an unfair edge, so powerful was its effect upon Native Americans.¹⁷⁷

Despite the prohibition, the American Fur Company continued to sell liquor illegally, using its influence to secure acquittal for its traders. Although the company became the most effective distributor of the spirits along the frontier, Astor was himself opposed to the use of liquor, and it was not competition from the North West Company that played the largest role in forcing his hand. It was, rather, the innumerable small traders who used liquor to tip negotiating power with Native Americans back in their favor and undermine the American Fur Company’s monopoly. On the Missouri, in particular, competition was so fierce that the American Fur Company inadvertently risked losing its trading license due to various schemes to circumvent prohibitions of “ardent spirits.”¹⁷⁸ Regulations prohibiting the use of liquor were also undermined by the same jurisdictional ambiguities that frustrated officials such as George Sibley. Though Indian country was legislated dry, settlements along the frontier often fell outside the technical boundaries of those regulations.¹⁷⁹

The temptation for using liquor in trade, unscrupulous as it may have been, was understandable considering the dwindling fur profits it replaced in the Lower Missouri Valley. It not only filled the profit vacuum left by the declining trade, it was easily movable using the same networks and systems of exchange that had been in place for decades.¹⁸⁰ Liquor traffickers could expect profits of 200 to 400 percent, returns that were reminiscent of the best days of the fur

¹⁷⁷ Prucha, 100-101; see also Dippie, 54.

¹⁷⁸ Prucha, 110-111, 119-120.

¹⁷⁹ Prucha, 117-118, 135-138; see also Gary Clayton Anderson, 112-114.

¹⁸⁰ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 196-200.

trade.¹⁸¹ In many cases, mixed-blood individuals were both perpetrators and victims of the practice. Mixed-blood Indians, practiced at adapting to changing markets, engaged in many supplemental ventures. They distributed the government annuities that were often part of land cession treaties to full-blood Indians and also supplied missions and government agencies in the region. From an economic perspective, liquor trafficking was just another easily adopted business venture.¹⁸² Unfortunately for their prospects as well as their reputation as perceived by white American society, mixed-blood Indians suffered from alcoholism along with their full-blood associates. Lucien Fontenelle, himself a successful mixed-blood trader and the patriarch of a prominent mixed-blood family, committed suicide after alcoholism led him to financial ruin. Lucien's son, Logan, a prominent interpreter and trader in his own right, also suffered from the addiction to alcohol.¹⁸³

The flow of alcohol along the frontier undercut the economic interests of native communities and deteriorated kinship ties even as it literally reduced their numbers through disease and murders during drunken brawls. Culturally and socially, alcohol did much to reduce the viability of full-blood communities.¹⁸⁴ Of course, the corrosive effects of alcohol were not exclusive to the kinship ties within full-blood communities.

Beyond its devastating effect on Native American communities, alcohol trafficking also dealt a crippling blow to the reputations of mixed-blood intermediaries and their families.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 195.

¹⁸² Ibid., 179, 206.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 207-208.

¹⁸⁴ Dippie, 34-36; see also Unrau, *Indians of Kansas*, 58, 64; and, Paul Wilhelm, Duke of Württemberg, *Travels in the Interior of North America 1822-1823*, transl. Robert Nitske, ed., Savoie Lottinville (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 184-185; and, Thorne, *Many Hands*, 192, 198, 204, 208; and, Richter, *Facing East*, 246.

Searching for explanations—and in some cases scapegoats—for their inability to control the liquor trade in their agencies, American officials blamed the old French merchant-trader houses as the source. Superintendent of Indian Trade Thomas McKenney even embarked on a short-lived vendetta against the Chouteau brothers.¹⁸⁵ Specifically, they looked to the mixed-blood Indians who possessed ties to both the trading networks and the villages.¹⁸⁶ Writing in 1827, Indian Agent John Dougherty perceived a clear link between the presence of mixed-blood trading families with village ties and the flow of liquor into full-blood communities. Dougherty complained specifically of several “Frenchmen” living near the Kansa:

These men have Kanza Squaws for wives and all speak the Kanza language well. Their squaws have numerous relations [within the Kansa] who of course make frequent visits to their white relatives [the “Frenchmen”] who are all kind of ardent spirits and generally contrive the means of keeping a stock on hand, all this [liquor trade] is well calculated to entice the Indians into our settlements where they meet with temptations every minute to part with their most valuable articles for whiskey.¹⁸⁷

The accusations were not always ungrounded. In 1828, one fur trader and patriarch of a mixed-blood family, Jean Pierre Cabanné, sold alcohol to a mixed-blood Indian in Council Bluffs, near one of the factory system trading posts. Much to Cabanné’s dismay, the alcohol was

¹⁸⁵ Herman J. Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney: Architect of America’s Early Indian Policy: 1816-1830* (Chicago: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1974), 54-55.

¹⁸⁶ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 206.

¹⁸⁷ John Dougherty to William Clark, 12 October, 1827, no. 9, Dougherty, John (1791-1860) Letter Book 1826-1829, 1 vol., State Historical Society of Missouri, Manuscript Collection.

promptly bartered illegally to full-blood Indians.¹⁸⁸ In another botched attempt to best his rivals, Cabanné sent his clerk, Peter Sarpy, to attack barges belonging to a competitor, Narcisse Leclerc, and seize the liquor on board. Sarpy hired a crew of mixed-blood Indians including Martin Lamalice of the Kansa and a L. Lamalice of the Omaha for the job, intending that the operation appear to be a raid by “full-blood” Indians. The ruse was unsuccessful. Sarpy and the mixed-blood raiders were identified and Cabanné was banned from Indian country.¹⁸⁹ Other French-Indian families and mixed-blood traders such as Jean Baptiste Roy, Joseph Robidoux Jr., Baptiste Dorion, and Louis Dorion, or “the drinker,” were widely known to distribute alcohol as well as to personally indulge heavily.¹⁹⁰

Observers such as Paul Wilhelm, a German traveller, keenly noted the peculiarities of Native American groups and frontier culture, often commenting on alcohol use. What Wilhelm did not record (and what modern readers must not forget) is that the prolific use of alcohol along the frontier was born of shared economic circumstances, not shared genetic traits. Wilhelm commented that mixed-blood peddlers of alcohol, “reveal a degree of immorality which is unknown even to the wildest savage,” and “may be regarded as one of the main causes of the decay of the Indians.”¹⁹¹ White American settlers, whose bloodlines were presumably “clear” of

¹⁸⁸ Tanis Chapman Thorne, “Liquor Has Been Their Undoing: Liquor Trafficking and Alcohol Abuse in the Lower Missouri Fur Trade,” in *Gateway Heritage* 13:2 (Fall 1992), 17-18; see also Gary Clayton Anderson, 245-246. For Cabanné background see also Thorne, *Many Hands*, 166, 196.

¹⁸⁹ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 196; see also John E. Sunder, *Joshua Pilcher: Fur Trader and Indian Agent* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 101-102.

¹⁹⁰ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 197-199.

¹⁹¹ As an outside observer, Wilhelm’s opinion on mixed-blood Indians was somewhat complex. He encountered many during the course of his travels who were helpful, and conceded that many were “clear-headed fellows who, if they are so minded, could accomplish much.” However, this possibility was only attainable if they

Native American genes and whose culture had not been as connected to the frontier as the French trading families, were equal participants in liquor trade and consumption. Reports and depositions of illegal liquor sales abounded on the desks of U.S. Indian agents and Indian Superintendent William Clark. Nevertheless, proving settlers guilty of the crime was difficult for lack of witnesses who would testify. Few settlers were willing to offer testimony on behalf of the Indians they so often held in contempt, and in many cases offering testimony would have meant risking one's own illegal liquor enterprises. In an April 9, 1824 letter to Clark, Indian Sub-Agent L. Forsyth lamented, "Almost every settler house is a whiskey shop." Any inquiry into the illegal sale of liquor brought only the haughty reply from settlers, "Prove it and the justice will fine me." Forsyth showed his frustration, adding, "I have not herd [sic] of but one trader who has sold whiskey to Indians and when spoke to him about it he told me I might commence action against him as soon as I pleased...The information of whiskey selling to Indians I procure from the Indians themselves *therefore no proof can be had*" (emphasis added).¹⁹²

Forsyth's frustrations demonstrate several aspects of the complicated frontier situation. They serve as a reminder of the seriousness with which most U.S. government Indian agents took their duties to protect the interests of their charges even as they sought to implement assimilation. But as Francis Paul Prucha notes, the dedication of many U.S. Indian Agents who

received strict guidance to over come what he described as their natural "laziness, indolence, and combativeness," Wilhelm, 199.

¹⁹² "Extract of a letter from L. Forsyth date Peoria 9th April 1824 respecting Whiskey being sold to Indians," U.S. Superintendency of Indian Affairs, St. Louis, Records, 1824-1851, Roll 1, 1824-1826 (2970), State Historical Society of Missouri, Manuscript Collection.

were “zealous beyond measure” at times created as many administrative problems as it solved.¹⁹³ At the very least, the flow of alcohol that accompanied the decline of the fur trade made their jobs even more difficult. Forsyth’s difficulties also illustrate the racial perception of Indians held by American settlers streaming westward into the Lower Missouri River Basin by the 1820s. Missouri gained official statehood in 1821, opening the former territory to unrestricted American settlement. The U.S. census recorded 66,586 settlers and slaves already by 1820.¹⁹⁴ Where once the weak presence of “civilized” American culture and authority in the region allowed local norms of interaction to dominate, white American settlers by the mid 1820s dictated that Indian witnesses were not even fit to offer credible testimony. Worse still for the prospects of regulating the activities of settlers, military and Indian Agency officers who took action against settlers often found themselves fighting lawsuits in court, regardless of the illegality of the settler’s presence.¹⁹⁵

The description Forsyth provides also demonstrates the final role widely available and suited to mixed-blood individuals in the Lower Missouri River Basin, that of government employee. Whether acting as actual Indian Agents or Sub-Agents or contracted by white agents to assist in administering Native American relations, mixed-blood individuals became increasingly tied to the efforts of the United States government. It was a logical match. Mixed-blood Indians, most of whom still thought of themselves as full members of their respective nations, saw in local Indian agents willing allies who genuinely desired to improve increasingly destitute conditions among the full-blood nations. Conversely, white Indian agents saw in

¹⁹³ Prucha, 183.

¹⁹⁴ “Census for 1820” (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1821), 18.

¹⁹⁵ Prucha, 182.

mixed-blood Indians individuals whose dual-culture background could provide much-needed assistance.

A deposition enclosed by Forsyth with his letter to William Clark illustrates the difficulties of men required to mediate between worlds that were pulling further apart. The deposition was given by Joseph Ojai, a resident of Forsyth's agency and an interpreter who had worked for the U.S. government for nearly two years. Ojai claimed that on at least two occasions he was forced to intervene in quarrels between settlers and local Indians for "had I not been present murder would have been committed." Two settlers in particular, a Mr. Moffat and a Mr. Dougherty, were known by Ojai to sell whiskey to local Potawatomie Indians and in exchange barter the Indians out of their "horses, rifles, blankets, dried [sic] deer skins, hats, etc." On separate occasions in late 1822-1823, both Dougherty and Moffat were forcibly relieved of the remainder of their alcohol. So enraged was Moffat that he followed one Potawatomie to Ojai's residence, declaring his intent to kill the man, ostensibly for stealing vegetables from Moffat's garden. Ojai defused the confrontation, but like Forsyth, felt little sympathy for Moffat, whose true motive was evidently common knowledge. For the two Indian agency employees, Moffat represented the daily trial of trying to prevent exploitation of Native Americans in a frontier where, as Ojai claimed, "I derely [sic] believe that nine tenths of the inhabitants in the environs of this place sell whiskey to Indians for any articles that they may have."¹⁹⁶ Indian Agent John Dougherty (of no relation to the settler in Ojai's statement), whose agency was populated mainly by the Kansa, echoed Ojai's observations when he wrote to William Clark that settlers "are anxiously waiting for the arrival of the Kanza annuities for the purpose of trading

¹⁹⁶ "Copy of a deposition of Joseph Ojai respecting spirituous liquors," 19 April, 1824, U.S. Superintendency of Indian Affairs, St. Louis, Records, 1824-1851, Roll 1, 1824-1826 (2970), State Historical Society of Missouri, Manuscript Collection.

from them their guns, axes, hoes, blankets, knives, kettles, powder, ball...and in short everything belonging to these poor beings of the wilderness for which they receive nothing more than a little whiskey.”¹⁹⁷

Neither L. Forsyth nor William Clark offer specifics on the ancestry of Joseph Ojai, though his residence among the Potawatomies as well as his job as an interpreter suggest at least partial identity with the Potawatomies. Amidst the frustrations of restricting liquor and controlling recalcitrant settlers, Forsyth had little concern for the racial background of his interpreter, at least not enough to report it to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs. Joseph Ojai’s position was typical of those filed by mixed-blood individuals in the region. The *Missouri Gazette and Public Advertiser* both reported that the U.S. government was seeking the services of a mixed-blood named Edmund Fulsom to convince a group of reluctant Choctaw Indians who were “opposed to exchanging their lands” to move to the west side of the Mississippi River. The message was clear. President Jefferson’s executors, men such as Lewis Cass and William Clark, followed his Indian policy to its conclusion.¹⁹⁸ Native Americans who elected to maintain their “savage” ways of life were deemed to have made the tacit decision to relocate “sufficiently far west to prevent collision between them and the whites.”¹⁹⁹ As was the case with Mr. Fulsom, mixed-blood individuals often were employed as both the bearers and the facilitators of that unwelcome news.

¹⁹⁷ Dougherty to Clark, 12 October, 1827, State Historical Society of Missouri, Manuscript Collection.

¹⁹⁸ Lewis Cass later served as Secretary of War while William Clark, of course, became governor of the Louisiana Territory and Superintendent of Indian Affairs, an office also filled by William Henry Harrison before he gained fame at the Battle of Tippecanoe. Ultimately, however, the most significant associate of Jefferson with regard to Indian policy proved to be his former correspondent, Andrew Jackson, Wallace, 537-538.

¹⁹⁹ *Missouri Gazette and Public Advertiser*, ___ 3, 1821, Vol. XIV No. 679 (St. Louis, Missouri), State Historical Society of Missouri.

“The Bad Feeling That Now Exists:” Land Cession and a Perception of Betrayal

The proximity of growing numbers of American settlers to Native American communities was, as demonstrated, an administrative nightmare for the Indian Agents charged with fostering “civilization” and maintaining order. Enforcing liquor regulations was all but impossible, and full-blood communities demonstrated little sustained interest in adopting American agriculture.²⁰⁰ To policymakers in Washington and in the Lower Missouri River Basin, separation of Indian villages from American settlements increasingly seemed the only option with any prospect of success. As a result, the period 1825-1830 saw a flurry of treaties with the region’s Indian nations designed to solve these pressures of proximity by ceding remaining Indian lands in Missouri and moving their populations west of the Mississippi River. The treaties were not a mere land-grab by American officials on the behalf of the settlers clamoring for more land. Policymakers reasoned, as John Joseph Mathews writes, “that the east-of-the-Mississippi tribes had no homes.”²⁰¹ The Osages signed a treaty at St. Louis on June 2, 1825.²⁰² Another land cession treaty between the United States and the Kansa was signed at the same location the next day.²⁰³ A second treaty with the Osages followed in August of the same year, meant to acquire lands guaranteeing passage for a road connecting the U.S. to Mexico that

²⁰⁰ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 144.

²⁰¹ Mathews, 518.

²⁰² Mathews, 519; see also “Treaty with the Osage, 1825,” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, vol. 2, ed. Charles J. Kappler (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 217.

²⁰³ “Treaty With the Kansa, 1825,” Kappler, 222; see also Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods*, 196. See also Thorne, *Many Hands*, 142.

would become known as the Santa Fe Trail.²⁰⁴ By November 7, 1825, the Shawnees, too, had ceded their lands in Missouri.²⁰⁵ The Treaty of Prairie du Chien ceded the eastern lands of the Chippewas, Ottawas, and Potawatomes and Winnebagoes to the U.S. with virtually a single stroke on July 29, 1829.²⁰⁶ The Sac and Fox, meanwhile, had already been forced to begin ceding lands as early as 1822.²⁰⁷

The role that many mixed-blood leaders played in these treaties was not only highly visible to both white American and Indian observers, it was also the most formally recognized involvement in the history of U.S.-Native American diplomacy within such a concentrated region and time span. Beyond ceding the eastern lands of numerous Indian nations to the United States, each treaty contained provisions to establish “half-breed” tracts for the mixed-blood participants of the treaties.²⁰⁸ The collective village leadership of the Indian nations rarely felt that the representatives sent to confer with the Americans had been authorized to sign such sweeping treaties in the first place. The addition of personal land guarantees for many of the signees’ families only worsened the sense of betrayal, especially since nearly all were granted along waterways in prime locations for commerce.²⁰⁹

These kinds of concessions to treaty participants who were of mixed-blood ancestry were, in actuality, not unprecedented. American authorities had offered “exclusive benefits” to

²⁰⁴ Mathews, 522; see also Thomas McKenney to James Barbour, “Report on Indian Affairs,” in *The New American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, vol. 1, ed., Thomas C. Cochran (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1972), 56.

²⁰⁵ “Treaty with the Shawnee, 1825,” Kappler, 262; see also, Unrau, *Indians of Kansas*, 56.

²⁰⁶ Prucha, 180.

²⁰⁷ Prucha, 181; see also “Treaty with the Sauk and Foxes, 1822,” and “Treaty with the Sauk and Foxes, 1824,” Kappler, 202, 207.

²⁰⁸ For a discussion of the similarities of these provisions see Thorne, *Many Hands*, 142-144.

²⁰⁹ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 143.

mixed-blood individuals as rewards for treaty assistance, as well as managing affairs within Indian country, since before the American Revolution. The frequency of such offers increased, however, during the Jeffersonian period, correlating with increased emphasis on the intended “civilizing” effects that American policy hoped to promote.²¹⁰ Beyond mixed-blood participation receiving greater emphasis within Jeffersonian policy in general, increased favoritism was shown to mixed-blood individuals who directly cooperated with the U.S. government. While the familiar names of prominent trading houses, the treaty signatories, and the children of government employees were included other mixed-blood names were conspicuously absent.²¹¹

To full-blood communities, this favoritism only further reinforced the perception that mixed-blood leaders held white American interests dearer than those of their own nations. At the same time, it illustrated the racial perceptions of American officials toward mixed-blood Indians. The relative minority who performed admirably in assisting the U.S. government received special considerations, but most were treated in practice by U.S. policy as Native Americans by default. As of 1825, neither Native Americans nor the U.S. government had yet grappled with the issue of mixed-blood membership that became so divisive on reservations by the end of the century. The precedent set in treaties leading up to 1825 was to count mixed-blood Indians simply as Indians. The Great Nemaha “Half-Breed” Tract established by the Treaty of Prairie du

²¹⁰ Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods*, ix. Thomas N. Ingersoll offers a more racial separatist interpretation of the motive for forming “half-breed” tracts, arguing they were also designed to separate mixed-blood from full-blood Indians so as to minimize the effect of, as a letter to the Secretary of War called mixed-blood individuals, “those intervening and counteracting agencies.” This is logical as Ingersoll comments primarily on their manifestation within Jacksonian removal, rather than Jeffersonian Philanthropy. Even so, the tracts still functioned to draw mixed-blood leaders to the treaty table. Furthermore, in the case of the Lower Missouri tracts, the “half-breed” reserves were adjacent to the full-blood reservation, suggesting little concern for segregating the two; see Ingersoll, 223.

²¹¹ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 143; see also “Treaty With the Kansa, 1825,” Kappler, 223.

Chien between the Great and Little Nemaha Rivers and 10 miles west of the Missouri River, was more of an economic provision for a gathering spot to accommodate trade rather than a broad cultural or racial distinction made by American officials.²¹² The point is important, for it demonstrates that the racial perception of mixed-blood Indians not only changed over time, but that the change was not necessarily linear. Mixed-blood Indians who functioned as traders in a post-fur trade economy came to be regarded by American authorities as something worse than Indian, a scapegoat for the failure of assimilation. Mixed-blood Indians who facilitated the conclusion of Jeffersonian policy, in contrast, could at least partially escape that perception. In either case the one thing no mixed-blood could do was become white enough for white Americans.²¹³

The difficulties of the Native American nations were increased by American misunderstandings of Indian political hierarchy. The patriarchal fiction that had dominated political dialogue between Native Americans and the U.S. since the Treaty of Greenville was still in use, but it was a more lopsided affair than ever before.²¹⁴ No longer did the Native American nations in the Lower Missouri River Basin have the political or economic leverage to negotiate the meanings of patriarchal duties and demand Americans fulfill them. Their leverage was reduced to their lands, and even then the issue was not whether or not they would be ceded, but rather how much Native American nations might receive in return. Further complicating matters was the fact that U.S. Indian Agents consistently operated under the impression that chiefs wielded similar authority in Indian politics to that of an American diplomat authorized by

²¹² Thorne, *Many Hands*, 143; see also “Treaty With the Sauk and Foxes, Etc., 1830,” Articles IX and X, Kappler, 307.

²¹³ Thorne, *Many Hands*, 145-148.

²¹⁴ White, “Fictions,” 82.

Congress. Of course, that was not the case. This misperception was nothing new, but the circumstances of land cession endowed it with greater significance. Native American leaders who grasped the differences in the understandings of American officials and village politics endeavored, to the end, to protect the interests of their nations in the best way they could. They employed their knowledge of both sides' misunderstandings in an attempt to secure promises of reserved land for their nations in return for concessions they likely would not have been authorized to make by village leadership.

Few individuals demonstrated these complexities better than Nompawah, or White Plume, of the Kansa. As the head of the Kansa delegation, White Plume affixed his signature to the Kansa land cession treaty in June of 1825 hoping to secure the preservation of his people. Simultaneously, he isolated his family from his nation for the foreseeable future.²¹⁵ American officials had long regarded White Plume as a "progressive" Indian who not only accepted the realities of American presence, but also embraced that presence in order to further his hopes of beneficial alliances for the Kansa. This was in some sense true, but White Plume's complexity went far beyond being sympathetic to assimilation. It was White Plume who had made an impression on William Clark and Meriwether Lewis in 1804 during their Corps of Discovery expedition.²¹⁶ As evidenced by his emergence from the exceptionally contentious environment of political power-struggles among the Kansa, White Plume did not want for ambition. By 1821 he managed to be selected as a member of a delegation sent to Washington to discuss "peace and allegiance to the United States."²¹⁷ His selection was no doubt assisted by his early association

²¹⁵ "Treaty With the Kansa, 1825," Kappler, 223.

²¹⁶ Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods*, 10.

²¹⁷ Louise Barry, *The Beginning of the West: Annals of the Kansas Gateway to the American West, 1540-1854* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1972), 94-95. For power struggles between Kansa chiefs see Craig

with European and American officials and traders. His daughter was married to the fur trader and interpreter Louis Gonville, and eventually his family tree grew to include many of the prominent trading names such as Papin and Charbneau in addition to close associations with the Chouteaus.²¹⁸ Though not a mixed-blood in the American sense of the term, White Plume identified strongly with the mixed members of the Kansa nation through his experiences and his family ties. He used that experience to lobby for support from U.S. authorities, claiming that he identified himself not only as a Kansa Indian, or a mixed-blood leader, but also as a white man. When he returned from Washington, White Plume bore a medal from the President naming him a “full chief” of the Kansa.²¹⁹

White Plume’s obvious ambition should not be taken to suggest that he proved the perception of mixed-blood individuals as wholly self-serving. Due to his long experience with American politics, White Plume seemed to understand, earlier than either White Indian Agents or the full-blood Kansa leadership, what Jeffersonian Indian policy would bring to the Kansa. He returned to Missouri with the backing of the U.S. government as chief, but he also carried vital information gleaned from his meeting with President Monroe. No doubt seeking to impress the Kansa chief and encourage future cooperation, Monroe had detailed not only the military

Miner and William E. Unrau, *The End of Indian Kansas: A Study of Cultural Revolution, 1854-1871* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 101. For a description of the delegation and visit to Washington see Herman J. Viola, *Diplomats in Buckskins: A History of Indian Delegations in Washington City* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 25, 72; for discussion of ceremony and delegation’s dress, 96-97; see also Katherine C. Turner, *Red Men Calling on the Great White Father* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), 45-46.

²¹⁸ Charles E. Hoffhaus, *Chez Les Canses, Three Centuries at Kawsmouth: The French Foundations of Metropolitan Kansas City* (Kansas City: The Lowell Press, 1984), 141-142; see also Unrau, *Kansa Indians*, 32 and Barry, 77.

²¹⁹ Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods*, 18-19.

strength of the United States, but also its burgeoning population. More than any military threat, White Plume was troubled by the mounting pressures on Kansa lands that would result from the growing population of the White settlers, U.S. plans to increase commerce with newly independent Mexico by opening the Santa Fe Trail, and Missouri statehood. Each of these elements brought interconnected pressures. With statehood came unrestricted settlement, meaning an increasing American population. To promote economic growth, the Santa Fe Trail was to enable commerce, promoting further settlement in the long term, while in the short term seizing Indian lands directly in its path. The Americans also discussed plans to relocate eastern Indian nations further west. White Plume, of course, was aware that the diminishing game of his nation's lands would not support more people, and that the lands north and west of the Kansa were blocked by the Dakotas and the Pawnees. Incredible pressures were impending, and White Plume believed only shrewd negotiation concerning the lands the Kansa possessed would prevent their being crushed between more powerful Indian nations and American settlement.²²⁰

Ensuring Kansa survival, then, became for White Plume a process akin to combating a wildfire. With statehood and open settlement, the magnitude of encroachment would be too great to be extinguished should the Indians remain. The only tenable solution seemed to be a move west to create a firebreak that would keep the Kansa from becoming engulfed. Creating a firebreak, of course, means even more area must be burned so that some may be saved. The Kansa lands in Missouri would be that firebreak. Securing the authority necessary to implement that decision was not easy. However, unlike competing Kansa chiefs such as Mabetonga or, "The American," and "The Hard Chief" Kyhegawachehe (listed in the 1825 treaty as "the chief of great valour") who sought to consolidate their power mostly within the nation, White Plume

²²⁰ Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods*, 18; see also "Treaty with the Osage, 1825," in Kappler, 217.

allied himself with the white American authorities he understood would ultimately be the deciding authority at the treaty table.²²¹ In a period where friendliness towards American officials was increasingly seen as a liability in village politics, White Plume actively pursued such alliances.²²² By 1827, he lamented to William Clark that he was frequently forced to “crop the ears and strip the backs” of lesser chiefs to assure his authority. “My people are bad and need to be corrected,” he told Clark, but assured the Superintendent of Indian Affairs that “I am determined to come and live near the whites, and in doing so I have with the feeling of [as if I were] a white man.”²²³ White Plume’s ruthless pursuit of authority unquestionably reflected the levels of his personal ambition, but it also demonstrated the lengths to which he would go to implement his solution for preserving the Kansa.

White Plume thus sought not to be a chief on Kansa terms, but a chief as American officials understood the position. It was a position of overriding authority, the type of “king” that the Americans had long mistakenly believed influential chiefs to be, within a village political framework that in fact recognized no such authority.²²⁴ White Plume used political ties with American officials such as William Clark to legitimize his claims to authority above those of competing Kansa chiefs. His extensive kinship ties with the substantial Kansa mixed-blood population added to that authority a sufficient following in the Kansa nation to maintain a position of leadership in village politics.²²⁵ Though tainted by unabashed ambition and at times violence aimed at eliminating competitors, White Plume’s interest in negotiating the Kansa

²²¹ Miner and Unrau, 101; “Treaty With the Kansa, 1825,” Kappler, 222.

²²² Thorne, *Many Hands*, 202; see also Hoffhaus, 142, and Christian, 434.

²²³ Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods*, 19; see also speech by White Plume to William Clark, 17 May 1827, RG 75, St. Louis Superintendency, M 234, R 748, National Archives, quoted in Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods*, 19.

²²⁴ White, *Middle Ground*, 36-40; see also Lepore, xvi.

²²⁵ Miner and Unrau, 102.

treaty appears to have been genuine. He spearheaded negotiations to secure monetary compensation for lands, substantial livestock to be furnished by the U.S., support for the construction of schools, U.S. payment of Kansa trade debts, and an immediate delivery of \$2000 worth of merchandise. Most important was Article 2 of the treaty, reserving for the Kansa lands from “twenty leagues up the Kansas river” to the Kansa village on the river, and extending thirty miles wide. In comparison, the Shawnee treaty signed at roughly the same time offered a compensatory tract for Shawnee use, but not a guaranteed full-blood reservation, and the Sac and Fox treaty of 1822 similarly stopped short of promising land to be protected and reserved. The 1830 Treaty of Prairie du Chien also omitted such promises, though it guaranteed a “half-breed” reserve.²²⁶ Though the Kansa compensations were smaller than those received by the Osages in the same year, it must be remembered that the Kansa, never a military or trading power like the Osages and long the victims of war and disease, had considerably fewer numbers, less leverage, and smaller influence. As White Plume seemingly guided the Kansa towards assimilation and security with the 1825 treaty in the presence of Clark and U.S. Commissioner George Sibley, the former Fort Osage trade factor whose only consolation in 1811 had been the “improvement” made by the Kansa, it must have seemed a vindicating moment for all three men.²²⁷

²²⁶ “Treaty With the Kansa, 1825,” Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9; in Kappler, 222-223; see also see also McKenney to Barbour, “Report on Indian Affairs,” in Cochran, 57; and “Treaty With the Sauk and Foxes, Etc., 1830,” in Kappler, 305-308.

²²⁷ Mathews, 519-520. The Kansa were reported to number about 5,000, or approximately 1,500 families, according to a 1702 French report. By 1750 they had suffered at least a 50 percent population decline, with only 300 men as a high estimate. By contrast, the Osages numbered “at least 6,200 individuals” during the same period. Though the Kansa population decline stabilized somewhat by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Zebulon Pike counted only 1,565 Kansa men, women, and children in 1806, Unrau, *Indians of Kansas*, 33, 34; see also “Treaty With the Kansa, 1825,” Kappler, 225.

White Plume's belief that creating a reservation in Kansas would save his nation from American encroachment seems naïve, given the pattern of U.S. Indian policy to 1825, but it was a belief born more of stubborn hope than naiveté. Article 10 of the treaty contained provisions for legal recourse for Kansa whose reservation rights were violated by settlers. To help assure cooperation on the part of any encroachers, Article 7 offered financial compensation to any settlers who were evicted as part of the treaty, even though their presence was illegal to begin with.²²⁸ White Plume hoped the treaty would differ from previous treaties that simply ceded lands and relocated Native Americans west with the vague suggestion that the move would put them beyond American settlement. The reservation provision offered hope that the Kansa would retain a place, however reduced and surrounded it may become. In this fashion, the 1825 Kansa Treaty stood out from the group of land cession treaties that effectively removed the presence of viable Native American nations from Missouri and the old commerce centers of the Lower Missouri River. It was a testament to White Plume's negotiating skill. Only the Osage, who commanded many times more warriors and more importantly, greater amounts of land, received similar guarantees of reserves for the full-blood community.²²⁹ The hope existed, however unlikely, that the incessant push of American settlers was finally ended.

Despite his hopes, any naiveté on the part of White Plume evaporated when he considered how the full-blood Kansa would perceive his family after being uprooted and relocated to Kansas. Article 6 of the treaty provided "Reservations for the use of half-breeds," and unlike the later treaty of Prairie du Chien, specific tracts of one square mile were reserved

²²⁸ "Treaty With the Kansa, 1825," Kappler, 223-224.

²²⁹ "Treaty With the Osage, 1825," Articles 2, 4, 5, 7, 12, and 13, Kappler, 218-220. For discussion of Osage influence, see also Wilhelm, 238-239.

for specific families, all of whom were members of White Plume's extended kinship ties.²³⁰ Because of this, White Plume and his family remained connected to the Kansa nation, but they were no longer welcome as full members; no one was more aware of this when he met William Clark at the treaty table than the ambitious and savvy Kansa chief who had managed through dual cultural and political understandings to become overall chief in a nation that recognized no such authority. Clark saw the "Half-Breed" tract as a reward; White Plume saw it as a refuge. Therefore, White Plume actually negotiated two reservations, one to ensure a place for the Kansa, and another to ensure a place for his family. One year later, Indian Agent John Dougherty recorded how White Plume's actions affected his relationship with the full-blood Kansas.

They appear to be very much dissatisfied with the White Plume, in consequence of his having been down last Spring and chosen such articles as he thought proper—and having a part himself, all of which they say done without being authorized by the nation. I am of opinion Sir that for the purpose of doing away the bad feeling that now exists among them generally against their Chief, it would be well. Should you deem it proper to send them a few lines from under your own hand explaining to the conduct of their Chief relative to that affair.²³¹

The dissatisfaction of the Kansa was understandable, given the reality of their situation. Far from rescuing the Kansa from a difficult situation, the treaty only moved them into an equally difficult position in a different area. Rather than competing with American settlers, they

²³⁰ "Treaty With the Kansa, 1825," Kappler, 223; see also Hoffhaus, 142; and, Thorne, *Many Hands*, 143.

²³¹ The 1825 Kansa treaty was signed June 3, 1825, but was not proclaimed to take effect until December the same year, thus surveying of reservation lands and White Plume's tracts would have still been in progress by Spring, 1826, John Dougherty to William Clark, 30 September, 1827, no. 5, Dougherty, John (1791-1860) Letter Book 1826-1829, 1 vol., State Historical Society of Missouri, Manuscript Collection.

found themselves competing with a myriad of other nations that were also relocated to Kansas at the same time. The treaty process eventually transplanted over 10,000 Native Americans to Kansas, concentrating almost all of them in the immediate vicinity of the Kansa and Osage whose cessions had been among the first.²³² The Reverend Isaac McCoy, who was commissioned to survey the reservations, wrote of the mass relocation to Kansas, “We are going to look for a home for a homeless people...we are limited to the regions west of Arkansas Territory, and Missouri State. Should the inhospitableness of that country deny them a place there, they will be left destitute.”²³³

Many of the Kansa were indeed left destitute. John Dougherty visited them shortly after their arrival in Kansas and wrote that he “found them in a more deplorable condition than I can describe.” The majority of the Indians were stricken with dysentery, and nearly thirty died in only a few days. Many of their provisions were lost crossing the Kansas River, and according to Dougherty, the Kansa were “too much afraid of the Pawnee to procure Buffaloe [sic].”²³⁴

By January 1828, Dougherty described a desperate competition for game, writing that the Sacs were moving in on the only viable game land left in the area, “crowding the Ioways until they [the Sacs] get possession of a country to which they certainly have no claim whatever.” He continued, adding that over half of the Kansa, “a poor miserable set of beings,” were crowded in close vicinity to the protection of the post. White Plume, though despised by many Kansa and likely not personally in need due to the special considerations he received as part of the treaty, led expeditions to the plains to acquire buffalo for the Kansa at considerable risk. Impressed,

²³² Unrau, *Indians of Kansas*, 56, 58.

²³³ Journal of Isaac McCoy, July 6, 1828, quoted in George A. Schultz, *An Indian Canaan: Isaac McCoy and the Vision of an Indian State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 103.

²³⁴ Dougherty to Clark, 30 September, 1827, State Historical Society of Missouri, Manuscript Collection.

Dougherty commented, “Tis very certain that nothing but starvation could have so far overcome his just fear of the Pawnees.”²³⁵ So wary was Dougherty of the Pawnees, he warned Isaac McCoy to use caution while surveying, for a war party of some 1,500 was thought to be active in the area.²³⁶ Regardless of his continued efforts, the Kansa did not forgive White Plume for his complicity in creating the situation. Dougherty recorded, “Many of the Kansas that we have around us complain very much of the injustice that was done them.”²³⁷

The richest of White Plume’s rewards for his cooperation in negotiating the Kansa land cession proved to be the tracts set aside for his family. Adapting as always, the French-Indian mixed-blood family of White Plume represented a large portion of the business ventures surrounding the Kansa reservation through the latter years of the century, but the Native American ancestry they inherited from White Plume was not overlooked. The Kansa chief himself had a stone house built on the lands along the north bank of the Kansas River, but for all his cooperation and all his ambition, he could never assimilate into white American society.²³⁸ The fierce political rivalries that White Plume kept in check to negotiate the treaty splintered the nation after a smallpox epidemic further decimated their numbers. Many moved back towards the east to be nearer the U.S. Indian agency post, while White Plume was left with a following consisting almost entirely of mixed-blood Kansa.²³⁹

Chief White Plume of the Kansa provides an excellent case study of the mixed-blood stereotype by 1830. A complex mixture of role and race shaped the way white American

²³⁵ John Dougherty to William Clark, 5 January, 1828, no. 41 Dougherty, John (1791-1860) Letter Book 1826-1829, 1 vol., State Historical Society of Missouri, Manuscript Collection.

²³⁶ Schultz, 111. For discussion of acrimony between the Pawnee and Kansa see also Wilhelm, 196.

²³⁷ Dougherty to Clark, 5 January, 1828, State Historical Society of Missouri, Manuscript Collection.

²³⁸ Miner and Unrau, 102; see also Hoffhaus 138; and Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods*, 9-10.

²³⁹ Unrau, *Indians of Kansas*, 55; see also Wilhelm, 280.

officials as well as his fellow Kansa perceived him. His actions and roles initially identified his character, but he became racially identified as a mixed-blood as his actions seemed increasingly ambiguous in a world where the lines between white American and Indian spheres were hardening. Ambitious and shrewd, his attempt to maintain simultaneous loyalties to the Americans that supported his authority, as well as the interests of the Kansa, produced results that answered the problems of neither side. In the minds of full-blood Kansa, his failure to protect Kansa lands or security with a cession that, despite all promises of U.S. protection, only restarted the cycle of destitution and more land cession eclipsed the sincerity of his intentions and the difficulties of his efforts. White Plume believed he was buying the future security of the Kansa with the 15 million acres of land he ceded to the U.S. Ultimately it only bought a stone house and a “half-breed” tract on the Kansas River.²⁴⁰ The formation of White Plume’s identity as a mixed-blood Indian is also ironic, because though he was the patriarch of a large mixed-blood family, he was not actually a mixed-blood himself. This is appropriate, as it demonstrates the malleable and illogical nature of racial perception. Regardless of his ancestry, White Plume belonged to a group of people that by 1830 was not remarkably distinct to American officials. U.S. officials still paid lip service to the differences between mixed- and full-blood Indians with rewards for assistance in treaties. Yet in terms of treatment and assimilation, mixed-blood Indians were still put on reservations. Their negotiating power disappeared with the viability of the full-blood communities they had so often mediated for. They were still kept out of white American society.²⁴¹ The language of race formalized within policy during the Jefferson administration had only strengthened, but by 1830 the openness to a possibility of assimilation

²⁴⁰ Unrau, *Indians of Kansas*, 87.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

that had accompanied it was disappearing.²⁴² The U.S. no longer needed to negotiate with the nations of the Lower Missouri, it could simply dictate. From the perspective of the newly created full-blood reservations in Kansas, however, these mixed-blood individuals became something “other.” From the long examples set by American policy, which created distinctions between people and initialized negotiations that always worsened the situation of full-blood communities, they learned to categorize and distrust those Indians with too many ties to white, American authority. American policy had nurtured the increasing distrust full blood communities held. Mixed-blood assistance in land cession left no doubt.

Conclusion

Examining the history of mixed-blood identity is similar to watching the entire length of a film while studying only the background characters. The camera, or on this case the historical narrative, always tries to return focus to center-frame. Though the roles of mixed-blood individuals in the areas between cultures are widely noted as important and numerous, they rarely garner complete attention. Their experience is too often subsumed by the larger Native American experience of exploitation and dispossession. When mixed-blood experiences are examined specifically, they have been treated as having a static racial identity over time and geography. By highlighting (over time) the roles as intermediaries, interpreters, go-betweens, political leaders, and traders that mixed-blood individuals typically gravitated towards by virtue of their multi-cultural backgrounds, an evolution of racial identity is discernable. That identity is profoundly linked to the viability of Native American communities capable of demanding

²⁴² The language of Jeffersonian policy was by no means beneficial, but its view of Native Americans as ignorant inhabitants—not possessors—of the wilderness, and children to be instructed was more accommodating than the Jacksonian view of Native Americans as barriers to be removed, Marienstras, 296.

negotiation and compromise from the European and American policymakers of North America. With the disappearance of those communities also came the disappearance of the frontier gray area between worlds, and so too vanished the intermediary roles so often filled by mixed-blood individuals.

Before 1790, the frontier of North America was one of the most culturally diverse regions in the history of the continent. Nowhere was this more evident than in the Great Lakes region of the *pays d'en haut*, where Algonquian nations, French *voyageurs*, British traders and agents, Iroquois allies, and American squatters, inhabited a shared world in which none had the strength to dictate the terms of interaction to another. These entities worked with and against each other, competing for the lucrative fur trade and for the survival of the European colonies. Navigating the incredibly complex webs of alliances, cultural norms, mutual misunderstandings, and fictive kinships required individuals of extraordinary cultural deftness. Though the official policies of the French, British, and eventually the Americans did not condone the intermixing peoples, recurrent failed attempts to dictate Euro-American standards to the frontier demonstrated that Euro-American powers needed the mixed peoples of the frontier as much, if not more, than residents of the frontier needed the involvement of them. The *pays d'en haut*, however, was also a region that underwent enormous change in the closing years of the eighteenth century. The leverage of Native American nations began a decline as European powers, first the French and then the British, dropped from the scene. The most significant change for the entire frontier was the emergence of the United States, with its stated emphasis on land acquisition, as the policymaker of the frontier.

The beginning of the Jeffersonian era proved to be an incredibly significant transitional period for the philosophy of American Indian policy and for the future roles of mixed-blood

Indians. Though conceived within a framework of assimilation that was meant to convert Native Americans to an American agricultural economy, Jeffersonian Indian policy also assumed the inevitability of the extinction of Native American culture as a foundational principle. As such, it became the genesis of removal by putting into official policy the concept that the only alternative to assimilation was relocation. It also formalized the language of race in American Indian policy, assigning to mixed-blood individuals the role of catalysts for assimilation. This role was assigned not solely on the basis of multicultural skills, but on the basis of racial ancestry. At the same time, the frontier world was also in transition. The frontier by the beginning of the nineteenth century had literally shifted west, making the Lower Missouri River Basin the new locale of the overlap between Indian and American cultures. In the multicultural environment of the frontier, racial identities for mixed-blood Indians was still defined more by their roles than by their biology. Nevertheless, European and American travelers observed the region with the language of race, foreshadowing the approach of U.S. officials after the Louisiana Territory became part of the United States after 1803. Though still thriving as traders and go-betweens, mixed-blood people around the Lower Missouri already had reduced roles compared to their pre-1790 counterparts, as Native American communities in Missouri were not able to leverage the competition of French and British interests against those of the U.S. government. The roles for intermediaries in the region were reduced to economic pursuits, represented largely by the fur trade that was just opening by 1807, and negotiation with U.S. officials.

As throughout previous changes, the mixed-blood individuals and families adapted to the changing economy along the frontier as the fur trade in the Lower Missouri began to show signs of diminishing by the late 1820s. The movement of game, coupled with increasing encroachment by American settlers, pushed full-blood Native American communities into ever-

closer proximity with one another and with settlers. The resulting strife produced an administrative nightmare for U.S. Indian Agents, who often turned to mixed-blood interpreters as knowledgeable sources of much needed assistance. Simultaneously, the adaptive economic pursuits of frontier traders flooded Native American villages and trade centers with illegal alcohol. Though nearly all frontier settlers engaged in the liquor trade to some degree, Indian Agents witnessing their charges succumb to an epidemic of alcohol-related problems highlighted mixed-blood individuals as the links that frustrated government efforts to keep alcohol out of Indian country. The old trading houses of the Lower Missouri, nearly all of whom possessed substantial mixed-blood kinship ties, received a disproportionate amount of blame, which dealt a significant blow to the reputations of mixed-blood individuals and their perception by American officials.

The alcohol epidemic also contributed to the loss of economic leverage by full-blood Indian nations and proved symptomatic of the changing Lower Missouri economy. No longer needed to negotiate economic arrangements as before the late 1820s, or to navigate complex political agreements as before 1790, the last remaining role for intermediaries was in close association with U.S. officials within the land cession process. It was the ultimate conclusion of Jeffersonian Indian policy. Unrealistic expectations for assimilation led to Native American rejection of American agriculture, which was interpreted by U.S. officials as a tacit decision to relocate west of the Mississippi River. Due to their preference within that policy, mixed-blood individuals open to the idea of assimilation led many of the region's Indian nations. An excellent example of such an individual was the Kansa Chief White Plume, who although not technically a mixed-blood, was the patriarch of a large mixed-blood family and was identified as such by both American authorities and other Kansas. White Plume regarded American

settlement and overtaking of Kansa lands as inevitable. Feeling assimilation to be the only way of survival, he sought to negotiate a treaty guaranteeing a small reserve for the Kansa where they could have the protection of the U.S. government while adapting to white American culture. Yet in negotiating the treaty, White Plume acted as a chief within the American understanding of the word, not the Native American understanding. He fomented the removal of the Kansa without the consent of that nation whose lands he ceded, instead using the power of the U.S. government to back his authority. Though acting on what he believed to be the best interests of the Kansa, he alienated himself and his family from the nation they considered themselves full members of. Tellingly, the treaty he negotiated contained provisions for separate reserves for his mixed-blood family, and it was the same with the flurry of treaties signed between the years 1825 and 1830 with the Osage, Sac and Fox, Kansa, Sioux, Missouri, Omaha, and Ioway. Repeatedly, land cession treaties provided for separate tracts for the mixed-blood relatives of participating chiefs. Undoubtedly, this was seen at least partially as a reward for cooperation. The case of White Plume, however, suggests that Native American negotiators were attempting to do more than enrich their own holdings. Given the opportunity to retreat to his comfortable tract and leave the Kansa to the protection of U.S. officials, White Plume attempted to remain an active leader. Yet, despite his continued involvement and efforts to improve their situation, the Kansa splintered away from White Plume, leaving him only with the mixed-blood faction he identified with. To the rest of the Kansa, White Plume had better represented white American interests than their own, and for that reason purity of his intentions, and even the purity of his Kansa lineage, seemed questionable.

The anger was justified, for regardless of his intentions, White Plume's negotiations enriched his family while impoverishing his people to the point of starvation. The Kansa were

not saved from encroachment, but only moved far enough west to await its approach again while competing for sparse resources with most of the other eastern Indian nations who were relocated to the same area. The racial evolution had progressed to fully isolate the mixed-blood Indians of the Lower Missouri. No longer consistently valuable as go-betweens to American officials, who could dictate, rather than negotiate, with destitute full-blood communities, mixed-blood Native Americans became irretrievably Indian. At the same time, the land cessions negotiated by a generation of mixed-blood chiefs such as White Plume taught full-blood communities to jealously guard their dwindling assets against white American intervention of even the slightest variety. The bitterness engendered by those cessions caused mixed-blood Indians to be held in suspicion by the communities they once represented. The isolation of mixed-blood individuals was therefore not tied directly to the economic opportunities of the fur trade or to the advent of government-mandated removal. The nations of the Lower Missouri River Basin demonstrate this. Mixed-blood individuals retained many accepted opportunities in the frontier world even after the economic aspect of their activities began to decline in importance to American policymaking. Significantly, any consistent place for them disappeared already by the late 1820s, nearly 40 years before government-mandated removal actually relocated the Lower Missouri nations to Indian Territory in modern-day Oklahoma. The hardened identity and racial perception of mixed-blood Indians was tied, rather, to the disappearance of viable full-blood communities.

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