1 Norwegian migration and displaced indigenous peoples

Toward an understanding of Nordic whiteness in the land-taking

Betty A. Bergland

Introduction

The migration of European immigrants to North America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the displacement of indigenous people intersect historically and geographically; nevertheless, these two historical phenomena rarely emerge together in the history of immigration. In short, the historiography of migration has essentially neglected or masked these intersections. The European colonization of the Americas begins over five hundred years ago, leading to massive devastation for indigenous peoples. From the fifteenth century in North America, the British, Dutch, French, and Spanish colonizers left behind war and destruction, well before formation of the United States in the late eighteenth century. When representatives of the new "republic" of the US began to spread across the continent, they employed the same policies as the colonizers before them with the same devastating effects (Berkhofer, Jr., 1979; Cronon, 1983; Todorov, 1984). Then, by the end of the nineteenth century when professional historical associations formed, this history emerged in triumphal narratives of Anglo-Saxon superiority. A gradual narrative shift surfaced in the twentieth century as historians focused on social history, also called the people's history, that included immigration history—but also labor, women's, indigenous, and ethnic histories—in short, separate subfields. Thus, the historical profession fragmented, not only within the area of social history, but also generally in the specializations of historical study. Consequently, potential intersections, such as immigration and indigenous studies, tended to remain separate fields. More recently, however, theoretical approaches—including postcolonial studies, feminism, settler colonialism, critical race theory, and whiteness studies—offer frameworks for rethinking this history and the long-term effects. This essay foregrounds the historical intersections of indigenous and immigrant peoples,—emphasizing Norwegians and indigenous peoples in the Upper Midwest,—and draws on whiteness studies to explore the processes of Norwegians identifying as *white*. Securing land remains core to understanding that identification.

The concept of Nordic whiteness emerges in a number of recent books, journal publications, and conferences that begin to study racial thinking in broad contexts (Loftsdottir & Jensen, 2012; Lundstrom & Teitelbaum, 2017). These important

studies demonstrate the regional and global dimensions of this scholarship, as well as its interdisciplinary and transnational nature. However, most work on Nordic whiteness foregrounds the Nordic countries and contemporary conditions, rather than the vast Nordic migration to North America. For example, in *Scandinavian Studies* (Summer, 2017) only two of six articles consider im/migrants in the US but both address contemporary matters: Catrin Lundstrom's rich study on contemporary Swedish migrant women and Lisa Locascio's intriguing study on a twenty-first-century television show (*Hell on Wheels*) exploring Mormon Scandinavian whiteness (Lundstrom & Teitelbaum 2017). Rich and meaningful, both articles illuminate the recent and valuable scholarship on whiteness; however, *historical* perspectives on (Nordic) whiteness and migration emerge less frequently, possibly because of the greater complexity and challenge posed by historical inquiries on racial formations. Nevertheless, historians have a long history of writing about race, many emphasizing race and migration, and so advancing our understanding of racialization processes in American history. Many historians have been at the forefront of this work (Roediger, 1991, 2005; Jacobson, 1998; Lipsitz, 1998). The philosopher Charles W. Mills complements the historical perspectives, I propose, by offering a meaningful theoretical framework for understanding the broad trans-historical dimensions of race and racializing patterns in US history. His work seems especially valuable in exploring the intersections of indigenous and immigrant histories.

In the influential book, *The Racial Contract*, Mills introduces the concept of the racial contract, writing: "The Racial Contract establishes a racial polity, a racial state, and a juridical system, where the status of whites and nonwhites is clearly demarcated, whether by law or by custom" (Mills, 1997, 13-14).[1] The purpose of that racial state, he argues, is "specifically to maintain and reproduce this racial order, securing the privileges and advantages of the full white citizens and maintaining the subordination of nonwhites." In addition, he asserts, the racial order expects whites to give consent, *explicit or tacit*, in exchange for benefits—economic, social, and cultural. This, he argues, "could be called Whiteness." Furthermore, if white citizens fail to live up to the civic and political responsibilities of Whiteness, Mills explains, they would be "in dereliction of their duties as citizens." In effect, he argues, "race" is neither an "afterthought" nor "deviation" from so-called "raceless Western ideals, but rather a central shaping constituent of those ideals" (Mills, 14). The world created in the last five hundred years (following European exploration, conquest, slavery, imperialism, and settler colonialism) is shaped by this racial order, an order that persists to the present in its exploitative forms.

In other words, giving consent must be an ongoing process. According to Mills, the contract makes continuous demands for the privilege of whiteness; that is, beneficiaries must consistently embrace a misinterpretation of the world, what he calls, "an epistemology of ignorance" (Mills, 18).[2] Within the racial contract, white beneficiaries, "[must] learn to see the world wrongly, but with the assurance that the set of mistaken perceptions will be validated by white epistemic authority, whether religious or secular." He continues,

> *Thus, in effect, on matters related to race, the racial contract prescribes for its signatories an inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made.*
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> (Mills, 1997, 18; italics in original)

In other words, whites secure benefits of their whiteness when they accept the terms of the racial contract, including the implied superiority of their whiteness, and avoid questioning the system. This theoretical framework helps us understand not only the neglect of race in the historiography of both US history and migration studies but also how and why Nordics as immigrants in the new world had to learn the meaning of their own *whiteness*. In the contractual foundation Mills describes, the imperial/colonial and state powers shape the contract, but cultural and social institutions inform and enforce the contract—educational, religious, legal, and political bodies—that educate and reinforce the inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance, that secures white privilege for its adherents.

Reasonably, one might argue that most (though not all) European immigrants to North America benefitted from the racial contract, yet those that settled on indigenous land vacated by federal policies became *beneficiaries in great measure*—and for generations—*because of the land*. Scholars have shown that Norwegian migration to North America was *predominantly* a land-seeking and agricultural migration: as historian Odd S. Lovoll writes, Norwegians were the "most rural of any immigrant group in the nineteenth century" (Lovoll, 1998, 14). While Norwegian migration to the United States began in 1825, peaked in 1882, and included industrial and urban migrants, only one-fourth of Norwegian immigrants in 1900 lived in cities of more than 25,000. In other words, most settled in small, rural communities. As late as the 1910 census, most Norwegian im/migrants were still located in small, rural communities of less than 25,000, "the lowest percent of any European immigrant group," writes Lovoll, and were deeply linked to an agricultural economy (Lovoll, 1984, 231).[3] In other words, land—its acquisition and everything associated with possession—is critical to understanding Norwegian migration. This is true, not only for individuals that homesteaded, owned, and farmed land, but also for those who were sustained in the ancillary economies and communities of the agricultural settlements. Central to those communities and families are the federal Indian and land policies that led to dispossession and displacement for the indigenous peoples of these regions—policies that included war, removal, exile, and reservations. Such policies enabled immigrants to claim land and pass it on to subsequent generations.

This essay argues that Norwegian immigrants—generally, but with possible exceptions—consented to the racial contract in a process that occurred gradually over time and space. This also meant that most immigrants and their descendants also consented to a misinterpretation of the world.[4] To explore these developments, historically and geographically, I foreground three periods in the Upper

Midwest that illuminate *both* the convergence of migration and indigenous histories *and* demonstrate the gradual embrace of whiteness by Nordic immigrants: 1) Wisconsin in the period of Indian Removal (1830s to 1850s); 2) Minnesota and South Dakota in the era of Civil and Indian Wars (1860s and 1870s); and 3) early twentieth century "national" centennial celebrations of Norwegian Americans in the Twin Cities (1914 , 1925). These historical moments demonstrate how Norwegian immigrants came to understand their presence in North America, accept American values, and reveal a gradual acceptance of the racial contract. While historical evidence shows a prevailing but gradual embrace of the racial contract, historians must allow for resistance, however small or inadequate. Such resistance may be individual or collective but requires additional systematic study.

Wisconsin in the period of removal and migration (1830s–1850s)

In 1838, Ole Rynning published in Norway his influential guidebook for emigrating Norwegians, entitled *A True Account of America*, two years after Wisconsin became a Territory and one year after the first Norwegians entered that Territory. The first Norwegians in the Midwest (the "Sloopers" from Kendall, New York) came in 1834 to Fox River, Illinois, where Rynning also wintered on the frontier at Beaver Creek (Qualey, 1938, 17–39). Thus, with his university degree, Rynning brought both experiential and intellectual knowledge to his tract for prospective immigrants in which he posed and answered thirteen questions. His tenth question addressed perceived dangers: "Is there considerable danger from disease in America? Is there reason to fear wild animals and the Indians?" This formulation addressed fears of potential immigrants, but it also naturalized demeaning images of Indians for immigrants by categorizing them with animals and disease. He answered simply: "Indians have now been transported away." He added, "these people [the Indians] are very good-natured, and never begin hostilities when they are not affronted" (Rynning, 1926, 91). Thus, he allayed fears of potential immigrants and encouraged migration. Though he speaks well of the Indians here, he failed to provide contexts or explanations for understanding the vacated lands or the meaning of "transported away." Perhaps inadvertently, Rynning fostered a foundation for epistemological ignorance. What is ignored is how Wisconsin became a Territory: that is, through suppressing resistance and war, especially the Black Hawk War of 1832, paving the way for territorial status in 1836 and massive white settlement. One scholar called it "the last war of conquest for Wisconsin" (Robbins, 1992, 91). In 1848, Wisconsin gained statehood, and by 1850 there were 9,467 Norwegians in the state (3% of the total white population); by 1860, 29,557 (3.8%) and by 1870, 59,619 (5.6%). Norwegians outnumbered Swedes and Danes in 1850 by two to one, but in 1870 these combined groups outnumbered Norwegians by a few thousand (Qualey, 1938, 40).

The geographical area of the state of Wisconsin was part of the Old Northwest Territory, contributing to the region's long history. Furthermore, the diverse histories of indigenous peoples shaped by the shifting federal policies pose another layer of complexity and critical element for understanding Nordic immigrants

settling in Wisconsin. Historian Nancy Lurie categorizes Wisconsin tribal histories into four groups: 1) those *removed to Wisconsin* by the federal government from the East (the Oneida in New York); 2) those that *migrated into Wisconsin* from the East because of white incursions on their land (Potawatomi, the Brotherton, and the Stockbridge-Munsee—the latter, a new social formation made from remnants of eastern tribes); 3) those tribes *indigenous to the region that resisted removal* (Menominee, Hochunk, and Ojibwe); and 4) tribes *original to the area but removed* west of the Mississippi (Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo, and Santee Sioux).[5] Resistance by tribes to federal policies complicates this history and took various forms, as Lurie describes:

> Indian people resisted not only by force of arms but also by protracted bargaining and an ineffable talent for obfuscation and delay. Few tribes sold all their land at once but, under pressure, relinquished it a parcel at a time, endeavoring to hold out on reduced land bases in their old territories.
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> (Lurie, 2002, 16)

One effect of this resistance is that despite a federal policy of removal, many Indians, in fact, remained on their ancestral land in Wisconsin. So, although Rynning's claim that they were "transported away" may be technically accurate, Norwegians arriving in Wisconsin in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s *did* meet Indians.

What do we know about these contacts? Scholar Orm Øverland has observed that the America letters from Wisconsin in this era contain few references to Indians; he argues further that the omission represents a general absence (of Indians) in most America letters. He concludes that for the immigrants, "it is as though Indians did not exist" (Øverland, 1995, 96).[6] Other Norwegians, however, did write about Indians from Wisconsin in these decades: the educated classes such as journalists and clergy, for example, journalists Johan Reinert Reiersen and Ole Munch Ræder; and clergymen, such as J.W.C. Dietrichson and Olaus Fredrik Duus. They reported on Norwegian settlements and included encounters with Indians in the 1840s and 1850s. The patterns reported are friendly ones, such as contacts while traveling, or reciprocal exchanges such as sharing food—also found with other ethnic groups (Riley, 2004). However, the stories reported by Duus remain noteworthy for understanding early Norwegian migrants in Wisconsin.

In one story, Indians left a whole deer in a yard for a family that earlier had provided bread and hospitality to Indians. Especially striking is the story Olaus Fredrik Duus conveyed in a letter to his father and family in Kragero in the 1850s concerning his wife: "Sophie's good fortune is being attended by an Indian midwife." Later, he wrote that she is "entirely free from any after-effects of childbirth, praise the Lord" (Duus, 1947, 74). Olaus Fredrik Duus, who spent many years in Wisconsin (1854 to 1859), wrote of the midwife's wisdom and gratitude in this passage and thus confers dignity and humanity on Indians. Generally, he wrote empathetically of Wisconsin tribes. Thus, we might conclude that the educated

class (journalists, clergymen, and their wives) reported not infrequent encounters with the indigenous peoples in mid-nineteenth century Wisconsin and did so mostly with empathy. On the other hand, these same men, in letters and diaries, seemed to support the racial contract: Ræder defended Indian policy as *just*, and Dietrichson rationalized federal policies as *necessary* and *inevitable* due to the Indians' lack of civilization.

Despite the journalists' support of federal Indian policy, how might we understand Duus's empathetic reporting on Indians? In the framework of the racial contract, one could argue that Duus's humane portrayal of Indians suggests rejection—or ignorance—of the racial contract, with its concept of white superiority. Specifically, we might reason that though he himself is identified as a white Nordic, his theological studies led him to reject the racial contract that *would elevate him and his fellow Norwegian immigrants above the Indians*. Or, we could reason, his compassion and humanity kept him from assuming superiority. He appears to be innocent (or clueless) of the layered meanings of the racial contract and its benefits. On the other hand, Dietrichson and Ræder, generally sympathetic to Indians, align themselves with state power and policy by defending Indian policy. Not only do they defend the policy, they educate other Norwegian immigrants on the meaning of whiteness in the new world: that federal Indian policy is just, that settling land brings civilization. For them, "free land" *is* indeed empty land, meaning open for settlement. In short, Ræder and Dietrichson assist naïve/clueless immigrants on the nature of the racial contract—and to see the world wrongly. Reasonably, these writers laid a foundation for immigrating Nordics to embrace an "epistemology of ignorance" and misinterpretation of the world for incoming immigrants. Duus did offer an alternative view, but he returned to Norway. (See also Bergland, 2000, 2005, 2010)

On the broader historical and geographical scale, the deep racial contract is embedded in the land and Indian policies, as Norwegians and other white immigrants (Swedes, Germans, Dutch, Belgians, and other Europeans and Yankees) acquire the best land as *implicit beneficiaries* of the racial contract. The Removal Act of 1830 (requiring the removal of Indians living in eastern regions to areas west of the Mississippi River) and the Pre-emption Act of 1841 (permitting *individuals*, not just land speculators and railroads, to claim land once indigenous peoples had been removed to reservations and the land *emptied*) both made possible the settlement of Wisconsin in the mid-nineteenth century by European immigrants. The so-called "empty land theory" also kept immigrants ignorant of mechanisms by which indigenous peoples lost their lands. In effect, most could and did ignore the complex structural elements of US federal power to extinguish Indian land title across the continent that made their settlements possible. In the next decade in Minnesota, the structural dimensions become more visible and traumatic, as the Dakota resistance explodes in what is called the US-Dakota War.

In his book, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, historian Dominick LaCapra calls for a balance between the *empirical, evidence-based* approach of historians, that gathers evidence and makes truth claims based on that evidence; and the more radical approach that calls into question *the dominant structures that shape*

the core narratives of our past. LaCapra argues against extreme positions of both approaches and affirms evidence-based truth claims as vital to history writing, but he also emphasizes that truth claims must apply equally to structural dimensions of the past—to narratives, ideologies, and discourses that shaped these events and our interpretations and explanations (LaCapra, 2001, 1–2).[7] In other words, as I interpret LaCapra, we must critically examine prevailing structures of the past as judiciously as we critically examine empirical evidence. Drawing on this model, I aim in the next section to employ *both* evidence-based truth claims *and* critical analyses of the structures of land and Indian policy shaping events in Minnesota in 1862 and its aftermath. Such an approach provides frameworks and contexts for understanding white settlement in the Midwest—and the impacts of an enduring racial contract.

Minnesota in the era of wars, exile, and secondary migrations (1860s and 1870s)

In the midst of the US Civil War (1861-1865), the US-Dakota War (1862) broke out in the Minnesota River Valley.[8] During the period of the Minnesota Territory (1849-1858), treaties with the Dakota were prepared in the movement toward statehood *and* white settlement.[9] The long and tragic history of US relations with American Indians is one of repetition and follows the British colonial pattern: imperial domination, protracted wars, flawed treaties, broken promises, displacements, removals, dispossession, and racist assumptions. The patterns repeat, both across time and the continent. Robert F. Berkhofer argues, essentially, the policies *intended* to extinguish land title for the purpose of white settlement (Berkhofer, 1979). What led to the explosion in the summer of 1862 reflects these patterns, as the structural elements also make explicit the dimensions of the racial contract: benefits of the land claims remained with white settlers.

To grasp the racial contract and its effects, it is necessary to examine these historical structures. The primary cause of the war is the sustained assault on the land and tribal ways of the Dakota people, represented especially by two treaties signed in 1851 with the Dakota: on July 23rd, the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux (with the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands of the Dakota); and on August 5th, the Treaty of Mendota (with the Mdwakanton and Wahpekute bands). The treaties created two reservations along the upper and lower Minnesota River, each twenty miles wide and seventy miles long; all together, the Dakota ceded 24 million acres of rich, agricultural land. In return, the Dakota were promised $1,665,000 in cash and annuities (the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux); and $1,410,000 in cash and annuities (the Treaty of Mendota) over a fifty-year period (Carley, 1976, 1-6; Lass, 2011). Yet, many issues surrounding these treaties remained unsettled, especially the coerced signing, the unexplained traders' papers, along with the fact that for Dakota people *private ownership of land and its sale were alien concepts*. Seven years later, in 1858, a treaty signed by only a few Dakota ceded land north of the Minnesota River, nearly another million acres. Of the many consequences of the deeply flawed, treaty-making processes and misleading, deceptive

practices, the most tragic, according to some historians, were divisions among the Dakota. Though a few hundred became farmers, Christians, and supported assimilation, most Dakota remained so-called "blanket Indians" and retained their tribal and cultural ways (Carley, 1976, 4).

In addition to the primary causes, conditions on the plains of southern Minnesota in the summer of 1862 included many triggers that sparked war. Among these are the ongoing encroachment of white settlers; near starvation the preceding winter due to crop failure; the federal government's failure to address the Spirit Lake Massacre (1858 in Iowa); the Civil War that drew young men out of Minnesota; and the late arrival of cash annuity goods, usually in early/mid-June, but not received until August 16th (Folwell, 1961, Vol. II). Thus, by mid-July, the Upper Agency was surrounded by hundreds of hungry Dakota requesting food, and by early August the Dakota at the Lower Agency were refused credit, while the storekeeper, Andrew J. Myrick, reportedly said, "let them eat grass" (Carley, 1976, 14). So, war came on August 17, 1862, near Acton in Meeker County, and lasted until September 23 in a final battle at Woodlake in Yellow Medicine County. This period in the Minnesota River Valley resulted in the deaths of an estimated 800 white settlers and soldiers, and an undetermined, but presumed similar number of Dakota. Now, it is generally known as the US-Dakota War.

Norwegian immigrants also suffered losses. Norwegians entered the Minnesota Territory in the early 1850s, before statehood, and settled in the southeast corner. Many arrived from Iowa and Wisconsin in secondary migrations to claim land in what Swedish author Fredrika Bremer declared in 1853: "What A Glorious New Scandinavia might not Minnesota become!" (Bremer, 1853, cited in Qualey, 1938, 97). Population figures in 1857, just prior to statehood in 1858, show 6,767 persons of Norwegian-stock in the Territory, most Norwegian-born (5,006), but in 1860, the total number rose to 11,893. Thus, in the 1860 decennial census, nearly 12,000 Norwegians resided in the new state of Minnesota, and by the time of the War of 1862 many were moving west onto the frontier. There, on the edge of settlement, most of the fatalities of Norwegian settlers occurred: twenty-three documented deaths of Norwegian immigrants in the 1862 war on the prairie.[10] Possibly the most known Norwegian immigrant settler traumatized by the US-Dakota War was Guri Endresen, who lost her husband and a son. However, she demonstrated heroic feats in her assisting wounded settlers in a wagon journey to safety, actions later commemorated by state, local, and ethnic organizations. While there were no Norwegian presses in Minnesota during this time, Norwegian language newspapers in Wisconsin and Chicago covered the events, and news spread broadly of what was then called a "massacre" and an "uprising." In the next years, immigrant letters of the events began to appear in newspapers (in Norway and the US, in both Norwegian and English-language newspapers). Significantly, Guri Endresen did not find the strength to write to her family in Norway of her losses until 1866. In the meantime, many settlers fled southern Minnesota in the aftermath and returned only years later, following the Civil and Indian Wars, when Dakota people had been driven from the state.

Minnesota Governor Ramsey called for the *extermination* of the Dakota; and hysteria in the state led legislators, journalists, and settlers to pursue vengeance. State structures—namely, the judicial system, including the courts and prisons; congressional and executive branches of government; the military, and the press—explicitly supported a racial contract that enacted vengeful and draconian punishments in the post-1862 period. In the nation's largest mass hanging, 38 Dakota men were hanged in Mankato on December 26, 1862. Retribution continued after the mass hanging: Dakota men (270) were moved from Mankato to Davenport, Iowa and imprisoned for three years; and nearly 2,000 Dakota women, children, and elders—along with so-called "friendlies," neutrals, peacemakers, and families of prisoners—were held at Fort Snelling over the winter of 1862/63, where many died. Subsequently, survivors were exiled to Crow Creek on the Missouri River in Dakota Territory. For the next two years, Generals Henry Sibley and Alfred Sully led military expeditions in pursuit of Dakota peoples fleeing into the Dakota Territory, whether or not they were involved in the war. These military expeditions led to the massacre of innocents, including women and children, actions justified as protecting the frontier for *white settlement*.

Furthermore, in early 1863, the United States Congress passed three bills exposing the racial contract *and* its injustice. First, Congress *abrogated all treaties* with the Dakota and cancelled annuity payments; second, Congress *forced removal* of all Winnebago from the state, though they were not involved in the war; and finally, Congress e*xpelled* ALL Dakota from the state. (The 1863 expulsion law remains on the books to the present.) Consequently, forced to leave their homelands, Dakota people struggled to survive on strange and hostile soil and were treated as outlaws in their own lands. In short, the Minnesota lands were emptied for white settlement. Congress decreed with its laws—and an implicit racial contract—an emptying of its indigenous inhabitants, creating a *terra nullius* [empty land], what Carol Pateman calls, "the settler contract" (Pateman, 2007, 35–78).

As a result of the laws of abrogation, removal, and expulsion, white European immigrants could settle on Dakota lands along the Minnesota River Valley: treaties signed in 1851 and 1858, and abrogated in 1863, lured Nordic settlers into the state. Ironically, Civil War soldiers sent to fight in the Indian Wars in the Dakota Territory traveled through this rich agricultural land, especially Norwegian immigrants in the Wisconsin and Iowa Regiments, who found the land ideal for farming. Later, many returned to claim that land and settle, evident in letters and diaries. Conversely, the Minnesota Dakota forced into exile became aliens in their own land. The policy of forced removal and expulsion led to the formation of reservations in South Dakota for the exiled, Minnesota Dakota: *Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate* (also called Lake Traverse Reservation), formed in 1867; and *Flandreau* (Reservation) in Moody County, on the Minnesota/South Dakota border, formed later. Norwegian immigrants also settled in areas that would become South Dakota, including many second-generation immigrants from mother colonies in Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

In 1888, the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Reservation opened to allotment for the exiled Dakota, and for the next four years the Minnesota exiles filed allotment claims in accord with the 1887 Dawes Act. Also called the Assimilation and Allotment Act, the Act's purpose appears clear: assimilation through allotment, the new Indian policy. The underlying reasoning is that the goal of assimilation would follow land ownership of individual plots (mostly 160 acres) and make indigenous peoples into American farmers: that is, assimilation simply occurs. However, in 1892, at Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, and four years after allotting began, the so-called "excess land" (land left over when all *living* Sisseton or Wahpeton filed allotment claims), was "opened" to white settlement. In other words, *Congress determined it acceptable to provide land to only one generation of Dakota people*. Consequently, the next generations of the Dakota struggled, as fully two-thirds of the original reservation came into non-Indian hands. Historian Roy W. Meyer writes that of the "original 918,770.58 acres, 310,711.06 acres had been allotted, 34,187.26 reserved [for other purposes] … and the remaining 573,872.58 acres were made available for purchase by white settlers" (Meyer, 1993, 216). Land and census records show many Norwegian immigrants also settled on and around the opened reservation land. The central effect is that the draconian response to *ALL Dakota* in Minnesota exposes the deep injustice of state powers, and how the racial contract embedded in federal land and Indian policy served white settlers, including Norwegians, while displaced indigenous peoples were dispossessed. Thus, land in Minnesota was "emptied" for white settlement, but also *land designated for the exiled Dakota*.

Not surprisingly, population figures for Norwegian settlement in Minnesota soared *after* the Civil and Indian Wars. In the next decennial census (1870), the number of Norwegian residents in Minnesota had nearly quadrupled to 49,569; within five more years the state census (1875) reported a Norwegian-born population of 83,856 (Qualey, 1938, 230–234). In this era of the late 1860s (following the Civil War and Dakota Expulsion), Norwegian settlers migrated into the Minnesota River Valley, some from the earlier mother colonies; and many moved northwesterly into central and western Minnesota, into what has been described as the Park Region for its hills, lakes, and prairie landscapes (Lovoll, 2006). Then, by the early and mid-1870s, Norwegians flooded into the rich agricultural land of the Red River Valley (RRV) in northwestern Minnesota, mostly in secondary migrations from southeastern Minnesota. Historians cite the influence of journalist Paul Hjelm-Hansen and his articles published in *Fædrelandet og Emigranten* that described the RRV lands as rich for farming and the "best for Scandinavian immigrants" (Holmquist, 1981, 228). At the same time, migration historians offer scant attention to Indian policy and its efforts to vacate lands, including the formation in 1867 of the White Earth Indian Reservation, intended as a model reservation for Ojbwe in the state[11] (Meyer, M., 1994). In this way, Minnesota drew Norwegian im/migrants into the state, "the glorious new Scandinavia." Even today, the state counts the largest number of residents in the nation with Norwegian ancestry.

Most histories of migration, including Nordic migration history to North America, avoid these dimensions. A recent exception is Karen V. Hansen's

Encounter on the Great Plains, a layered study on the allotment of Spirit Lake Reservation in North Dakota, addressing both indigenous peoples and Norwegian settlers (Hansen, 2013). One might argue that avoiding the painful past preserves an epistemological ignorance serving the racial contract. Inevitably, national and ethnic histories, and the institutions that narrate these (churches, newspapers, schools, colleges, and ethnic societies) tend to reinforce the language and ideology of the US and western/white progress. Examining historical narratives can help us better understand how white benefits are masked and how some groups may misinterpret the world. In other words, we can see how the epistemological ignorance emerges in these narratives and how that ignorance is reproduced. Two early, twentieth-century-centennial celebrations Norwegian Americans marked in the Twin Cities demonstrate how Nordics represented their history. They also posit a willingness to accept the racial contract.

Centennial celebrations (1914 and 1925): narrating whiteness

The Twin Cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul served as the location for two centennial celebrations of Norwegian Americans in the early twentieth century, in the summers of 1914 and 1925. The first marked the hundredth anniversary of the 1814 Norwegian Constitution; the second marked a century since the 1825 voyage of the *Restauration*, a ship carrying 52 Norwegians and considered the beginning of migration to North America. Both events were organized by the *Bygdelags* (lodges founded by Norwegian immigrants linked to their regional homelands) and attracted tens of thousands of Norwegian Americans from around the country to participate.[12] The centennial events, viewed by the organizers as *national* events, demonstrated similarities; however, there were significant differences. The 1914 events celebrated Norway's democratic constitution and made obvious comparisons with the founding documents of the United States. Celebration of the ancestral *and* adopted homes emphasized *the shared values of democracy* of the two countries and a *shared identity* both with the ancestral land and the adopted nation. By contrast, the organizers of the 1925 Norwegian-American centennial, the Council of *Bygdelags*, emphasized *allegiances* to the US (President Coolidge spoke, most events were in English) and *achievements* of Norwegians. Not surprisingly, this centennial emphasized assimilation, ancestral pride, and, in the words of Odd S. Lovoll, "underscored the primacy of adjustment and material progress." In brief, he writes, "[t]he festival was a nostalgic retrospective view" (Lovoll, 1984, 196). This 1925 message may be understood best by considering contexts and impacts of The Great War and its aftermath in the anti-immigrant, anti-foreign wave in Congress from 1914 to 1925.

World War One, along with industrialization and perceived "new" immigration from southern and eastern Europe, led to shifting American attitudes toward immigrants and legislation passed by Congress, namely, the Literacy Act (1917) and quota laws (1921, 1924, 1927) that restricted immigration to the United States. In addition, the "100% American" campaign, led mostly by New England Yankees of Anglo-Saxon background, feeling threatened by immigrants

presumably incapable of assimilation, stoked fears. The prevailing ideological attitude toward immigrants is also evident in the 1916 publication of Madison Grant's book, *The Passing of the Great Race*, where he identified three categories of Europeans: Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterranean. He placed Anglo-Saxons in the Nordic "race," the so-called "Great Race," which he claimed was disappearing while other "races" grew. The so-called "new" immigrants—Alpine and Mediterranean—were identified as inferior and threatened the whole nation, Grant argued in his influential work (Grant, 1916). Such thinking inevitably contributed to the 1925 celebration's dramatization that showed Norwegian immigrants aligned to the presumed superior stock *and* to the American nation. The closing pageant of the centennial celebration captured this *core narrative*. Noteworthy is the relationship portrayed between indigenous peoples and Norwegian settlers.

The 1925 celebration concluded on June 9 at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds in St. Paul, with the *Pageant of the Northmen*, a drama of migration that centered on the life of Colonel Hans Christian Heg, a Civil War hero and martyr. Norwegian-born and emigrating as a young boy, Heg grew up in Wisconsin and served as Commander of the Fifteenth Wisconsin Regiment (mostly Norwegians) in the Civil War, until he was killed at the Battle of Chickamauga in 1863. Foregrounding Heg's blood sacrifice in the war suggested Norwegians deserved a right to citizenship.[13] The overarching narrative of the *Pageant*, however, represents a broader historical narrative on the past century as the "Northmen" (Nordics) replaced Native Americans on the land. Using 100 actors and twenty-four scenes, the *Pageant* sought to legitimize the land-taking two generations after the US-Dakota War, kept alive in newspapers, commemorations, and monuments. The author and director of the *Pageant*, Willard Dillman, was a local writer, notably Anglo-Saxon, and third-generation Scottish immigrant. The *Pageant* dramatizes a prevailing narrative of settlement: of settlers' relationship to the land and to indigenous peoples, a narrative romanticized and mythic.[14] Dillman explains: "The Indians had heard that they were to leave these woods, and they were now holding a final impressive ceremony" (Dillman, "The Story," 1). The Indians then prepared to depart across the stage (West) in single file and disappear, allowing the Norwegians to move onto the stage. Dillman writes: "The Northmen were now left in possession of the forest."[15]

The fanciful drama is meant to declare for its audience that Norwegian immigrants now legitimately occupy the land, *and* that the " disappeared" indigenous peoples recognize the inevitability of this fate and voluntarily depart. Clearly, the vision is rooted in ignorance, absent the structures of dispossession, displacement, and possession: federal policy; flawed treaties; centuries of colonialism; European over-population; recruitment of immigrants by states, railroads, steamship companies; pervasive racial ideologies; the violence, bloodshed, and brutalities of wars; the US-Dakota War and exile. This is the ignorance that Sullivan and Tuana argue is the "ignorance of racism" (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, 2). In short, Dillman evokes the "disappearing Indian" as inevitable and natural for this audience of Norwegian immigrants and Norwegian Americans. The "vanishing Indian," Philip Deloria explains, "went hand in hand with the dispossession and conquest

of actual Indian people." (Deloria, 1998, 182). Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. adds that artists depicted the Indian as noble only after a region had "eliminated its Indian problem" (Berkhofer, 1979, 88). Dillman's narrative is (or was) a prevailing story *but also* a misrepresentation of the world. And it might be important to situate this in the contexts of post-World War One and the decade of the 1920s, encompassing political conservatism, immigration restriction, 100% Americanism, and resurgence of the KKK. Still, the drama gave to the Norwegian Americans a framework for ignoring indigenous people, invisible not only in American history but also in *their* history. In short, the epistemological ignorance of racism is embedded in the *Pageant*. Thus, the narrative illuminates, in the words of Sullivan and Tuana, "the complex processes of the production and maintenance of ignorance" (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, 2).

Still, we must ask, whose narrative is this? Did Norwegian Americans viewing the *Pageant* accept or believe the story? Does it represent all Norwegian immigrants? only a few? the *Bygdelag* Council? A full response to these questions cannot be addressed here but should be asked. The year of the 1925 centennial celebration also saw the founding of the Norwegian-American Historical Association (NAHA). Formed to preserve the history of this migration, it meant professional historians would now employ an empirical approach to history and publish narratives grounded in evidence-based history. Professional standards of historical study emerged with NAHA and its first editor of publications, Theodore C. Blegen, historian and professor at the University of Minnesota. Of course, the work of NAHA centered on documenting the history of *this immigrant group*, an approach that dominated the field of migration studies for the next decades and one that did not encompass indigenous peoples. Consequently, indigenous history was mostly lost to immigration historians until recently.

The question of race resistance persists and deserves exploration, also in the context of Nordic immigration. The racial contract Charles Mills explores allows for what he calls "race resisters" or "race traitors," those that refuse to live by the terms of the contract and reject notions of white racial superiority, and the benefits that accrue from this, such as abolitionists like the Grimke sisters. Might we find counterparts among Norwegian Americans? Or do the collective benefits of whiteness and the land acquisition overshadow any actions of potential resisters like Duus? Such questions require more exploration.

Conclusion

Whiteness, as a construction of the racial contract, provided benefits for those nearly million Norwegians that migrated to North America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both for themselves and their descendants—into the third, fourth, and fifth generations and beyond. Most inhabitants living in these regions today with Nordic ancestry will not see themselves as racists or imagine that they have embraced a racial contract OR a misinterpretation of the world. Nevertheless, in the Nordic settlements of the Upper Midwest, whiteness provided the key to land possession, citizenship, and opportunity. This occurred *because of* US

federal Indian/land policies and its overarching ideologies surrounding colonial settlement of North America. Carole Pateman describes this as “the settler contract” (Pateman, 2007, 35–78).[16] *And because of* these same policies, indigenous peoples faced dispossession and displacement: lost land, removals, expulsions, starvations, and generations of historical trauma. These intersecting histories deserve more attention. The injustices must be identified, named, and described. Historians of migration must challenge themselves to critically study the multiple connections and relationships between migration/settlement and dislocation/dispossession, not just in the abstract but also in specific times and places with concrete and real consequences. The racial contract embedded in the national history and its structures provides a theoretical framework for such studies. Only when we delineate these causal connections can we begin to narrate a genuinely truthful history of Nordic migration to North America.

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Notes

1 Mills emphasizes he writes not of an actual contract but a tacit understanding on the nature of the world—a global contract—among ruling classes. The vast literature on race, racism, and racial formations is represented in Omi & Winant, 2015.

2 The “epistemology of ignorance” seems to complement George Lipsitz’s concept of “the possessive investment in whiteness.” Both speak to the vast racial inequality in our social order, exposing the underlying economic benefits of whiteness and the problems of avoiding it. For more exploration see Sullivan & Tuana eds., 2007.

3 Odd S. Lovoll, *The Promise of America* (1984), 231. See also Jon Gjerde, *From Peasants to Farmers* (1985), that examines the rural economy and culture.

4 I hope to develop more fully in future projects how descendants of immigrants consent or resist the racial contract and the significance of misinterpreting the world.

5 In 1995, the federally recognized tribes in Wisconsin represented a population of nearly 50,000 enrolled members: Oneida, Menominee, Hochunk (Winnebago); Ojibwe (six separate autonomous bands—Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, Red Cliff,

Lac Du Flambeau, St. Croix, Mole Lake Sokaogon); Potawatomi, and Stockbridge-Munsee. See Wisconsin Cartographers' Guild *Wisconsin's Past and Present* (1998), 15. Currently, more reservations exist in Wisconsin than in any other state east of the Mississippi.

6 In the same paragraph, Øverland asks, "Can it be that the Indians were a people that it was best not to think about too much and perhaps not even notice at all in case one wanted to live with a clear conscience in their [the Indians'] former land?" (author's translation.) The relative absence—or presence—of Indians in America letters, and what it means, might be debated. Other possible explanations for the absence include: 1) the geographic separation, linked to reservations; 2) immigrants not having a "template" *to see* Indians; 3) choosing to remain silent—to save time, paper, or worried families; and 4) the "epistemology of ignorance."

7 The first chapter explores his thinking and cautions against taking extreme positions with either approach: the "extreme empiricism" that would reject oral history, testimony, non-archival materials; and the "extreme constructivism," shaped by the linguistic turn in scholarship, that questions the ability of language to reference a "reality" and so views all assertions, including truth claims "constructed" by language.

8 In 1849, the Territory of Minnesota was created out of portions of the Iowa and Wisconsin Territories.

9 Under the Articles of Confederation in the 1780s, Congress laid out the Northwest Territories. In 1784, the Act on the "Government for the Western Territory" identified principles for extending national authority in the West. Subsequently, this Congress passed the Land Ordinance (1785) providing for a systematic survey of "public lands," dividing land into townships of 36 sections; and the Northwest Ordinance (1787) establishing requirements and procedures for a region to form a territorial government, then a state. Minimum populations of *white settlers* are core to these requirements.

10 One might argue this number is a small percentage of the estimated 800 white casualties; however, the figure reflects the Norwegian proportion of the state's population.

11 The Nelson Act (1889) attempted to bring all Minnesota Ojibwe to this reservation and receive individual allotments. The Act is named after Senator Knut Nelson, Norwegian-born, who also served on the Senate Indian Affairs Committee.

12 Andrew Veblen, founder of the first (Valdres) *Bygdelag* in 1899, initiated the events in 1914 and gathered representatives of other *Bygelags* for planning. In 1925, the *Bygdelag* Council took the initiative. For a comprehensive study of the *Bygdelag* movement, see Odd Sverre Lovoll, *A Folk Epic* (1975).

13 Heg, who left Norway in 1840 at the age of 11 with his parents, led the Fifteenth Wisconsin Regiment (called the "Norwegian" Regiment), and died at Chickamauga on September 19, 1863. His soldiering and martyrdom seemed to confer citizenship upon the group and legitimize its claim to the land, as the pageant moves from Heg's youth in Norway to the final scene unveiling a statute of the heroic Heg.

14 In Scene 6, Dillman describes the stage: "Indians are shown in possession of an American forest, which is destined to become the home of the Norse settlement." Then, a story of ill-fated lovers offers a pretext to portray Indian savagery and white redemption: a hostile tribe prepares to burn a young maiden's lover, who is rescued by a missionary, and "by reason of the awe he inspired was not harmed by the Indians." In the next scene, a group of Norwegians arrive in this same forest at the end of the day; and when the Norwegians awake the next morning, they face Indians.

15 For an extended discussion of the 1925 event, see Schultz, 1994, esp. 84–91.

16 This chapter, "The Settler Contract," focuses on the legal concept of contracts in political theory and the law of nations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that argued if land was *terra nullius* (empty land) it may then be rightfully occupied.

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