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Determining Reliability in Indian Captivity Narratives, 1754-1763

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Department of History

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Master of Science

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Several narratives exist that describe the experiences of white captives living (sometimes by force) with Indian tribes during the French and Indian War (1754-1763). These writings show that English captives in Indian societies often found themselves in similar situations during the war—situations which captives and narrative authors have described in various ways. The captives described their experiences with Indian captivity differently and with various degrees of specificity. Apart from delicately matching events in the narratives to known events in history, historians can search for the similarities and differences throughout the accounts as indicators of reliability. Reliable sources must simultaneously be consistent with historical traditions and distinguish themselves by pointing out particulars. By examining the specificity (or lack thereof) contained within these narratives, one can determine the accounts' reliability as evidentiary sources of Indian traditions.
Henry Grace lived as a prisoner of war with the Micmacs and the St. John’s Indians from around 1759 to 1762. Though neither nation ever adopted him, he ran the gauntlet multiple times, wore Indian clothing, and lived with a specific Indian family for the duration of his captivity. During his approximately three years as a prisoner, he encountered several Indians other than the Micmacs and those from St. John, including Abenaki, a nation of Iroquois (the specific nation is unclear), Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Cherokees. Most of these nations made him run the gauntlet. Grace took note of these Indian nations’ differences in the captivity narrative that he published in 1764. The “Chactaws,” he said, would not give him food after forcing him to run the gauntlet and were “of the same Colour with those of St. John, but more blood-thirsty than any I had yet been with.” Grace noted that the “Chickesaws” were known for their split ears and the way they decorated them with large brass rings and feathers; they also had “Bodies pricked with Thorns” in the shapes of animals. The Cherokees gave Grace food and clothing when other nations would not. Nevertheless, Grace believed that “all of the Indians are of the same cruel Temper” and “are insensible of Compassion to their poor Prisoners.”

Henry Grace’s narrative is valuable for the way that it describes various Indian nations in the mid-eighteenth century. Grace successfully points out characteristics and qualities to distinguish the nations with which he came into contact, commenting on physical features (such as skin color), dress (“brass rings and feathers,” for instance), and

hospitality (such as giving food and clothing). The details that Grace gives make the narrative a relatively reliable evidentiary source concerning Indian culture and traditions. The descriptions are evidence of how Grace himself characterized and qualified his surroundings. Grace was not alone in recording his experiences with imprisonment during the French and Indian War in a captivity narrative. Several narratives exist that describe the experiences of white captives living (sometimes by force) with Indian tribes during this momentous conflict. These writings show that English captives in Indian societies often found themselves in similar situations during the war—situations which captives and narrative authors have described in various ways.

The captives described their experiences with Indian captivity differently and with various degrees of specificity. Descriptions, like those found in Grace’s narrative, are the key to discovering whether the narratives themselves are trustworthy depictions of events. Apart from delicately matching events in the narratives to known events in history, historians can search for the similarities and differences throughout the accounts as indicators of reliability.\(^2\) The narratives should at least mention some traditional Indian customs (such as running the gauntlet) while also specifying details. In other words, reliable sources must simultaneously be consistent with historical traditions and distinguish themselves by pointing out particulars. Grace, for example, described what he found unique about each Indian nation while also showing that almost all of them made him run the gauntlet.

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\(^2\) For an analysis which matches historical events to the events of a narrative, see Timothy J. Shannon, “King of the Indians: The Hard Fate and Curious Career of Peter Williamson,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 66, no. 1 (January 2009), 3-44.
Historians can use three categories of analysis—running the gauntlet, washing out the white, and replacing family members—to compare the specifics of the narratives and thereafter determine the narratives' validity as evidentiary sources. These three phenomena are significant because most English captives during the French and Indian War experienced at least one of them. By comparing various depictions of these common events, the degrees of specificity in the narratives become clear. Some authors provide a wealth of details of these events that illustrate unique experiences during common occurrences; other authors provide a lack of details, indicating personal unfamiliarity with the actual events they claimed to experience. An analysis of various descriptions of these three common events points toward the reliability (or lack thereof) of specific captivity narratives.

The general treatment of captivity narratives is mixed in scholarly literature. Some historians take the narratives as fiction. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, for instance, sees eighteenth-century captivity narratives as representative of two clear contemporary messages: that Native Americans are “Others” and that white Americans must move them to the west to successfully form a republic. Other historians, such as James Axtell, seem to take them all as fact, ignoring their contexts and treating them all in similar ways. Yet others take a middle ground and approach the captivity narratives with caution and care.

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3 Only one captive, James Smith, experienced all of these incidents. James Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith... During his Captivity with the Indians, in the Years 1755, '56, '57, '58, & '59...* (Lexington: Printed by John Bradford, on Main Street, 1799), PDF version

4 Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire: The Birth of an American National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 227-229. Smith-Rosenberg also incorrectly remarks that the majority of captivity narratives focus on women and children (230).

Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier, for example, believe that historians can trust some of the narratives, such as those from James Smith and Mary Jemison, but not all. These authors believe that “obtaining a realistic image of Indians from the captivity narratives is extremely difficult” and that “the reader of captivity narratives must be extremely cautious when delving into these materials for historical or ethnohistorical data”; knowing the background of each narrative, they say, is essential for forming conclusions.

A relatively large pool of narratives exists from this period; they describe various aspects of captivity, including, but not limited to, running the gauntlet, washing out the white, and replacing family members. An exhaustive list of solid and substantial English captivity narratives from the French and Indian War concern the following people: Richard and Catharine Poe Bard, Thomas Brown, Robert Eastburn, William and Elizabeth Fleming, Thomas Gist, Henry Grace, Alexander Henry, William Henry, Isaac Hollister, Mary Jemison, James Johnson, Titus King, Jean Lowry, John McCullough, Charles Saunders, James Smith, Charles Stuart, and Peter Williamson. Each of these men and women was either captured or released between the years 1754 and 1763. Each narrative is unique—the focus is at times on culture, warfare, “savage cruelty,” or the constant desire to return to white society. Yet the narratives also have common themes,

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7 Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, *Indian Captivity Narrative*, 85 and 73.
8 Non-English captivity narratives are excluded from this study. This includes, for instance, Marie LeRoy (French, captured in 1755) and Regina and Barbara Leninger (German, also captured in 1755). Marie Le Roy, et al., *The Narrative of Marie Le Roy and Barbary Leninger, for Three Years Captives among the Indians* (Philadelphia, 1905).
such as adoption and degrees of assimilation; running the gauntlet, washing out the white, and replacing family members make appearances throughout.

Though each source has distinctive qualities, the array of evidence has limitations. Of the twenty captives, only four were females (only one of which wrote her own narrative) and two were children. One person, Mary Jemison, was both a child and a female. The lack of female voices is regrettable; this is hard to avoid due to the literacy rates of the period. Furthermore, children who were adopted at a very young age sometimes stayed with their new Indian families for life; their absence of voices in the sources is also our loss. The data is clearly skewed toward adult and teenage men.

Further limitation comes from the publication dates and authors of the narratives. While some captives—such as Charles Saunders (1763) and Henry Grace (1764)—published their experiences directly after returning to white society, others allowed their memories to be filtered through the test of time (such as James Smith, who avoided publication until 1809 because he believed that the eighteenth-century public was not ready for his story). Other captives did not write their own narratives, thus their stories have been filtered through other voices. For instance, James E. Seaver wrote the narrative of Mary Jemison (who lived with her Indian family until her death in 1833) and Archibald Bard wrote the narrative of his parents Richard and Catharine Poe in 1839 based on his father’s papers.\(^9\) Derounian-Stodola and Levernier state that “more often

than not the individual captivity narrative constitutes an amalgamation of voices and input, each with its own agenda and design.” For this reason, they insist that “any investigation of the captivity narratives must, therefore, be text- and culture-based, not author-based, because authorship is so problematical.” This study follows their suggestion.

The narratives mention captivity with various Indian nations: Delaware, Wyandot, “St. John’s Indians,” Chippewa, Seneca, “St. Francis Indians,” Shawnee, and Caughnawaga. The captives also occasionally mention other Indian nations with which they came into contact, such as the Ottawa and Cherokee. Some of the narratives (such as that of Thomas Brown) do not mention the names of Indian nations, further limiting evaluation. In addition, the narratives mention a wide array of capture locations and Indian settlement locations. Capture locations were as far northeast as Chignecto Bay in Canada, as far west as Fort Michilimackinac, and as far south as Pennsylvania, with numerous places in between. Settlement locations included the Appalachian Mountains, Montreal, Fort Duquesne, New Brunswick, and the Ohio Country, among others. The variety of locations and Indian nations, combined with the common themes of the narratives, show that diverse Indian nations held common traditions despite who they were and where they were located.

The captivity narratives in this study are reliable as evidentiary sources in various degrees. Many of them are trustworthy and provide a window into Indian culture and traditions. There are, however, exceptions; historians should not rely on some of them as

accounts of life with Native Americans. By examining different ways that captivity narrative authors describe (or do not describe) running the gauntlet, washing out the white, and replacing family members, one will be able to more accurately distinguish between the true tales and the fabrications.
Cast of Characters

It is impossible to know the exact number of English men, women, and children who were taken captive by Indians during the French and Indian War. Fortunately, they left behind a substantial pool of narratives that describes various aspects of captivity, such as treatment, assimilation, and, occasionally, adoption. However, many white captives did not write or dictate narratives about their experiences. Some captives were simply illiterate; some were so young when adopted that they never left their new Indian families and thereby forgot the English language.

This study examines eighteen distinct and substantial captivity narratives, which specifically describe the experiences of twenty captives and mention occasional others. The narratives concern Richard and Catharine Poe Bard, Thomas Brown, Robert Eastburn, William and Elizabeth Fleming, Thomas Gist, Henry Grace, Alexander Henry, William Henry, Isaac Hollister, Mary Jemison, James Johnson, Titus King, Jean Lowry, John McCullough, Charles Saunders, James Smith, Charles Stuart, and Peter Williamson. Each is unique, though all have common themes. Some describe aspects of Indian culture, some focus on warfare; others concentrate on “savage cruelty” while others describe the constant desire to return to white society. Some captives wrote about their experiences to inform the public about Indian ways of life, while others wrote merely for money; others did not write their own narrative. Some authors published their narratives immediately and solely for profit, while others waited decades to publish because their narratives were considered too tame for public interest.

Most of the captives either escaped or were exchanged, though one (Henry Grace) was bought by the French, one (Alexander Henry) was permitted by his new family to
leave, and one (Mary Jemison) stayed voluntarily. Of the twenty captives described below, only four were females and two were children (Mary Jemison was both a female and a child). This skewed data in favor of adult males makes comparisons difficult but is hard to avoid. The Indian nations that the captives mention are various; they include the Delaware, Wyandot, Micmac, St. John’s Indians, Chippewa, Seneca, St. Francis Indians, Shawnee, and Caughnawaga. Some narratives do not mention Indian nations, causing further difficulties in evaluation. Detroit, Montreal, and Fort Duquesne are the most commonly mentioned locations throughout the narratives, though other towns (such as Logstown and Sandusky) arise. The locations of capture vary, from as far northeast as Chignecto Bay in Canada, as far west as Fort Michilimackinac, and as far south as Pennsylvania.

Figure 1: Approximate Capture Location of Adopted Captives
It is necessary to view an overview of these narratives before diving into an analysis. Each of the following people was an English captive among the Indians during the French and Indian War, and each of their narratives provides something useful to the analysis. They are represented here in order of their publication, starting with the earliest.

First, however, one must examine how other historians have analyzed the context of these narratives. In their 1993 book, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900*, Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier focus on the context of Indian captivity narratives. They categorize English and American accounts based on the date of publication. These authors argue that by the mid-eighteenth century, captivity narratives were a means of propaganda against any nation that prohibited Anglo-

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11 This data is derived only from captivity narratives and does not represent captives who did not write a captivity narrative. As indicative through these maps, the capture location appears to have had little, if any, influence on whether a captive was adopted into an Indian nation.
American westerly settlement; English narratives of this period therefore tend to
discriminate against Indians and the French. Narratives published during the French and
Indian War, they argue, appeared religious in nature but actually intended “to evoke anti-
French sentiment” by being anti-Catholic. Michelle Burnham takes this argument a step
further by noting that these eighteenth-century narratives were extremely popular because
they were produced during a time of crisis in national coherence. The first set of
narratives, which were published either during or immediately after the French and
Indian War, are representative of these arguments.

Thomas Gist’s narrative is the first example in this study of mid-eighteenth-
century propaganda. Gist was adopted into a Wyandot family in September 1758, likely
at the age of twenty four. He lived with his new Indian family for one year, escaping in
September 1759. Gist seemed relatively satisfied throughout his stay with his new family;
his decision to escape appears to have occurred suddenly. Gist and two other men (John
and William McCrary) traveled through the woods for more than three weeks from Fort
Duquesne to Fort Niagara, finally returning to his father’s home in Western Pennsylvania
in October. Though the memoir was not written in Gist’s handwriting, it is likely that the
memoir was at least based on Gist’s own notes, or perhaps even his dictation. The events
throughout the memoir match certain dates in military history, indicating its general
reliability. The original memoir ends abruptly on September 30, 1759, right before Gist
reached Fort Niagara. On the whole, the narrative provides a unique view of the way that

12 Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier, The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-
13 Michelle Burnham, Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861
(Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), 60.
14 He was likely captured somewhere in Pennsylvania, though his account is unclear on this issue.
Indians treated their captives; though many of the incidents that Gist mentions are typical of other male captivity narratives from the period, he appears to have received slightly better treatment than the average captive.\footnote{Howard H. Peckham, “Thomas Gist’s Indian Captivity, 1758-1759,” \textit{The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography}, 80, no. 3 (July 1956), 285-311.}

William and Elizabeth Fleming, of western Pennsylvania, were captured in November 1755. William wrote the narrative but includes a section at the end that supposedly comes from his (pregnant) wife’s own words.\footnote{The narrative initially appeared in serial form in several newspapers, such as the \textit{New York Mercury}. In the \textit{Mercury} the narrative appeared in two consecutive issues; the first showed William’s account and the second showed Elizabeth’s. David A. Copeland and Carol Sue Humphrey, eds., \textit{The Greenwood Library of American War Reporting, Volume 1: The French and Indian War & the Revolutionary War} (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 2005): 102.} Their motive for publication was money. The Flemings portray their captors as friendly Indians simply following the orders of the French. Yet the account is vague. William does not mention the name of the Indian nation that captured him and his wife (yet William does refer to an Indian named “Captain Jacob,” who was in charge of the expedition; furthermore, research indicates that Captain Jacob was a Delaware). Furthermore, the date and location of the capture are only discernable through context clues. William and Elizabeth escaped before reaching an Indian camp, thus their narrative is only vaguely relevant in this study. Neither husband nor wife ran the gauntlet or were adopted because they were not with the Indians long enough to have possibly done so.\footnote{Copeland and Humphrey, \textit{Greenwood Library of American War Reporting}; [William Fleming], \textit{A Narrative of the Sufferings and Surprising Deliverances of William and Elizabeth Fleming}... (Boston: Printed and Sold by Green & Russell, at their Printing-Office near the Custom-House, and next to the Writing-School in Queen-Street, 1756).}

James Johnson was captured in 1754 in Charleston, New Hampshire (present-day Vermont). The narrative first appeared in print in 1902 but was likely written in 1757.
Johnson was captured by an unnamed Indian nation while guarding an Indian route to Canada; his wife, his three children, his sister-in-law, and two other men accompanied him; on the second day of capture, his wife gave birth to a girl. Johnson was never adopted and did not experience most of the torturous rituals that others in his position endured. Upon reaching Montreal, the Indians allowed him to solicit aid to pay for his release, which initially failed. He therefore stayed in prison for three years before he was released.\textsuperscript{18} The lack of detail in Johnson's narrative makes it hard to work with and even harder to interpret.

Peter Williamson exploited the details of his supposed 1754 capture for profits. He published six different editions of his captivity story between 1757 and 1766. The narrative did not appear in America until 1764, and then only as an abridged version under the incorrect name of “Peter Wilkinson.” Each version of Williamson’s captivity

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20 In 1761, The Travels and Surprising Adventures of John Thomson appeared, though it was never published. The story is surprisingly similar to Peter Williamson’s previous editions. The course of events is the same, and many lines are directly copied from Williamson’s narratives. Could this perhaps have been another attempt by Williamson to exploit his story for profits? John Thomson, The Travels and Surprising Adventures of John Thomson, Who Was Taken, and Carried to America, and Sold for a Slave There: – How
story is slightly different; he gradually corrected spelling, added footnotes, and created
new exaggerated stories. Each version is demonstrative of what Williamson considered
“savage cruelty,” depicted through the way that Indians murdered their elderly and
tortured prisoners. In the preface to the first version, Williamson directly states that his
goal is profit. The subtitle of his first two editions indicates his selling point: “A
particular Account of the Manners, Customs, and Dress, of the SAVAGES; of their
scalping, burning, and other Barbarities, committed on the English, in North-America,
during the Residence among them.” Williamson was born in northern Scotland and
claims to have come to America at a young age after a group of merchants captured him.
He also claims to have been captured by Delaware Indians years later in Berks County,
Pennsylvania, and taken to the “Blue-Hills” (or Blue Mountains, part of the Appalachian
Mountains), where he stayed for three months. He eventually escaped to return to his
family in Scotland. Most of his story is a fabrication. Historian Timothy J. Shannon tears
apart each detail of Williamson’s narrative in his 2009 article, “King of the Indians: The
Hard Fate and Curious Career of Peter Williamson.” Shannon places the narrative in the
context of popular literature of the time, categorizing it within the “unfortunates genre” of
eighteenth-century British fiction. Shannon investigates each event that Williamson
mentions throughout his narrative and discovers that a majority of it is not supported by

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He Was Taken Captive by the Savages — With an Account of His Happy Delivery, After Four Months
Slavery, and His Return to Scotland, in The Garland Library of Narratives of North American Indian
21 “The following short Tract is humbly off’d to the Public, in Hopes of gaining by their generous
Contribution in the Sale thereof, a small Matter, to enable me to settle in some Industrious Way, and
provide in my Old Age against the Malevolence of Fortune” (Williamson 1754, iiiiv) (see citation below).

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fact, he concludes that it “is not to be trusted as an account of Indian captivity.” Consequently, this analysis rejects much of Williamson’s account as truth.\textsuperscript{22}

Robert Eastburn was captured by French soldiers and a nation of Iroquois Indians in 1756 at the Oneida Carry, situated in New York between the Mohawk River and Wood Creek. The Iroquois adopted him at Oswegotchy, where he stayed for almost two years. They gave him many liberties, allowing him to work for whomever he pleased in Cohnewago and Montreal; during this time he was even permitted to live with an English woman. Eastburn broke his adopted family’s trust by escaping, eventually arriving in Philadelphia in November 1757 to meet his white family, “to the great joy of all my friends, and particularly of my poor afflicted wife and family, who thought they should never see me again.” Richard VanDerBeets, editor of \textit{Held Captive by Indians}, considers Eastburn’s tale extremely valuable in the context of the French and Indian War because of its undoubted originality. Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, on the other hand, remark on the way that Eastburn “reveals inconsistencies in his attitudes toward his captors.”\textsuperscript{23}


\textsuperscript{23} Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, \textit{Indian Captivity Narrative}; Robert Eastburn, \textit{A Faithful Narrative of the many Dangers and Sufferings, as well as wonderful Deliverances of Robert Eastburn, during his late Captivity among the Indians…} (Philadelphia: William Dunlap, 1758), available online,
Thomas Brown also spent several years with the Indians, though, like Johnson, he never mentioned the name of the nation in his narrative. He was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts, in 1740 and enlisted with Major Robert Rogers’s Rangers in 1756. Brown had been captured by Indians twice near Montreal: once in 1757 and then again in 1759, each time making an escape. Though the Indians never adopted him, Brown stayed with a “mother” squaw on the Mississippi River for several months; she trusted him enough to allow him to hunt. He later worked for a French merchant who, according to Brown, treated him like a slave. He was finally able to return to his father in January 1760 “after having been absent 3 Years and almost 8 Months.”24 Brown’s captivity narrative was first printed in Boston during the year of his return and was an immediate best seller.25 The narrative provides a glimpse of the relationship between the Indians, French, and English during the war and the treatment of white non-adopted captives in Indian society.
Jean Lowry’s narrative is different from the others in this study because it was apparently written by a woman. She was captured by Delaware Indians on April 1, 1756, at her home in Rocky Springs, Pennsylvania (near present-day Edenville, Franklin County). The Indians killed Lowry’s husband, John, leaving her (pregnant and with five children) undefended in the hands of her captors. At its most basic level the 1760 narrative, which was supposedly Lowry’s “journal,” is the story of a damsel in distress. She frequently criticizes the Indian and French ways of life and laments that the French and Indians took her children to raise them as “Pagans.” After six weeks with the Indians, they sold her to the French at Fort Machault; for almost three years afterward she acted as a servant to the French in Fort Machault, Montreal, and Quebec. A general finally permitted her to leave. She arrived in Philadelphia in April 1759, three years after her capture. Lowry is very specific with dates and locations throughout her account, though she never mentions the name of a single Indian nation (further research shows she was captured by Delawares). She ran the gauntlet during her captivity, though her depiction of it is bland and nondescript in comparison to many other parts of her narrative.

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26 According to Helen Westra (see full citation below), on August 1, 1759, John Cuthbertson wrote in his Register the following words: “rode 9 miles home—wrote out J. Lowry’s Journal” (Westra, 51). What does this mean? There are several possibilities. Perhaps Cuthbertson transcribed Lowry’s journal, fully wrote it, rewrote it to make it legible or more stylish, revised or enlarged it, or copied it merely to have a copy of it. Unfortunately, there is no clear evidence to support or deny any of these claims.

27 Very few details exist about the production and distribution of this publication, including how it was received, how many copies were sold, where it was written, for whom it was written, and whether Lowry penned the entire manuscript. According to Helen Westra, no original manuscript has ever been found and only two known copies of the original pamphlet exist today (49, see full citation below).

28 [Jean Lowry], A Journal of the Captivity of Jean Lowry and Her Children, Giving an Account of Her Being Taken by the Indians, the 1st of April 1756, from William McCord’s, In Rocky-Spring Settlement in Pennsylvania... (Philadelphia: Printed by William Bradford, at the Corner of First and Market-Streets, 1760); Helen Westra, “‘As I Can Remember’: Jean McCord Lowry’s French and Indian War Captivity Narrative,” in [Jean Lowry], A Journal of the Captivity of Jean Lowry and Her Children, Giving an Account of Her Being Taken by the Indians, the 1st of April 1756, from William McCord’s, in Rocky-Spring...
Charles Saunders was born in Carlisle, Pennsylvania; he was captured by Shawnee Indians in 1763 and traveled with them through the woods toward Fort Duquesne (though he never made it there). Saunders was never adopted because armed

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*Settlement in Pennsylvania...* (Mercersburg, PA: The Conococheague Institute, 2008), facsimile of the first edition (Philadelphia: Printed by William Bradford, at the Corner of First and Market-Streets, 1760), 35-63. Westra believes that the narrative is reliable; the “self-confidence discourse” throughout suggests “a person who knew her own mind and theology and one not likely to be forced, manipulated, or ventriloquized. Lowry’s 31-page pamphlet-sized text, unpolished and hastily proofread, was obviously not intended as a refined literary work” (52).
provincials rescued him before he had the chance to possibly be adopted. His narrative shows Indians as barbarous, for he describes the torture of captives and depicts Indians fighting among each other. Saunders claims to relate the facts in his narrative “with the utmost candour,” though he admits that he hopes the public will have pity and donate money to him: “‘tis humbly hoped the indulgent Publick will commiserate the unhappy Fate of the Author, and contribute their endeavours to enable to go to Sea again [sic].” His account is a strong example of propaganda against Native Americans.²⁹

A JOURNAL
Of the Captivity of
JEAN LOWRY
AND HER
CHILDREN,
Giving an ACCOUNT of her being taken by the
INDIANS, the 1st of APRIL 1756, from
WILLIAM McCORD'S,
In Rocky-Spring Settlement in
PENNSYLVANIA,
With an ACCOUNT of the hardships she suffered, & c.

PHILADELPHIA:
Printed by WILLIAM BRADFORD, at
the Corner of Front and Market Streets, 1760.
THE
HISTORY
OF THE
LIFE and SUFFERINGS
OF
HENRY GRACE,
OF
BASINGSTOKE in the County of Southampton,

Being a NARRATIVE
Of the Hardships he underwent during several Years
Captivity among the SAVAGES in NORTH
AMERICA, and of the Cruelties they practice to
their unhappy Prisoners.

In which is introduced
An Account of the several Customs and Manners of the
different Nations of INDIANS; as well as a compendious
Description of the Soil, Produce and various Animals of
trade Parts.

Written by HIMSELF.

Printed for the AUTHOR:
And sold at his House in Basingstoke, and at the Priests-
Office in Reading. M DCC LXIV.
[Price One Shilling.]

Figures 5 and 6: Cover pages for the Jean Lowry and Henry Grace narratives

Henry Grace was captured by Micmac Indians near the start of the French and
Indian War and later sold to St. John’s Indians. He was born in Basingstoke, England,
likely in 1730, and captured near Chignecto Bay in Canada while guarding men who
were mowing wheat. Grace was never adopted, but he experienced many of the same
ordeal as those who had been adopted; he ran the gauntlet, wore Indian clothing, and
lived with a specific Indian family. He was treated much like a slave. Grace wrote his
narrative in 1764, one year after he was bought by the French. The narrative is useful
because it provides a window into different aspects of Indian culture (such as marriage
and Chiefdom) and describes various material objects (such as tomahawks and wigwams).\textsuperscript{30}

Isaac Hollister was captured in 1763 while working with his father on the banks of the Susquehanna River. He travelled with the Seneca Indians to various locations along the Susquehanna and Ohio Rivers and was likely not adopted. He escaped with a Dutch man without a solid plan in place, which resulted in the Dutch man’s death due to starvation and the cold; Hollister then ate the corpse. A group of Indians eventually recaptured Hollister, taking him back to the Senecas from which he came. This time around, he lived somewhere along the Ohio River with a Seneca family (a mother and a father) that treated him well. He stayed with them for about one year before they exchanged him at Fort Duquesne following a prisoner exchange ordered by Sir William Johnson. Hollister stayed at Fort Duquesne as a prisoner for approximately eleven months; he finally returned to his family in April 1767. He wrote and published his narrative the same year. His main motivation for publication was money, and he takes the opportunity at the beginning of his narrative “to return my unfeigned thanks to all those gentlemen and ladies who were so generous as to contribute a considerable sum of money on my behalf.”\textsuperscript{31}

William Henry was captured and adopted in 1755 by Seneca Indians in an unnamed location. He stayed with the Senecas until 1761 (during which time they


referred to him as Coseagon), but the reason that he left is unknown. Henry appears to have not completely detested his time with the Senecas, for he took delight in learning their language and utilizing his time mending gun locks. He published an account of his experiences in *The London Chronicle* in 1768; the newspaper article does not include the beginning of the narrative. The lack of information provided throughout the narrative suggests its overall unreliability.  

Indian removal affected another stage of captivity narratives, occurring in America in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Derounian-Stodola and Levernier argue that narratives published in this period continued to have a "predominantly negative view of Indians" that degenerated into "pulp fiction for propaganda and sensation." Few narrative authors wrote positively about Indians because general readers expected a negative image during this time of American western expansion. Nonetheless, the nineteenth century saw a wave of local and national interest in collecting and preserving Indian captivity narratives as sources of history. This includes Joseph Pritts's *Incidents of Border Life*, an 1839 compilation that reproduced some captivity narratives and introduced others. His book included dozens of narratives, including those by James Smith, John McCullough, Richard and Catharine Poe Bard, and Peter Williamson. VanDerBeets remarks that narratives published during this period went through three stages: they first "became stylized and romanticized for literary effect,"

34 Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, *Indian Captivity Narrative*, 74.
then “overtly sensational and melodramatic though still grounded largely in fact,” and
finally became “highly fictionalized.” Michelle Burnham similarly states that many
captivity narratives by the late eighteenth century “are virtually indistinguishable from
sentimental novels.” The following narratives were released during the late eighteenth
and early nineteenth centuries and therefore were influenced by literary romanticism and
Indian removal in the United States.

A popular account of this period is that of James Smith, who at the age of
eighteen was captured by a group of Indians in Bedford, Pennsylvania, in 1755 while
working on a road-building expedition for General Edward Braddock. Smith became a
prisoner at Fort Duquesne and then spent most of the rest of his captivity with the
Caughnawagas in Ohio. Many historians have used Smith’s narrative when writing
about captivity, for his descriptive account provides detailed information on captive
culture. Smith wrote his memoirs almost forty years after his escape in 1758, which he
based on the journal that he kept while he was a captive. He claims to have waited such a
long time to publish the story of his experiences because of the American public’s
reluctance to accept his story as fact; his narrative focuses on their kind treatment more
than the atrocities they committed, and Smith believed that his narrative would be
rejected immediately after the war. Smith alleges that he writes an unembellished
account, with “occurrences truly and plainly stated, as they happened” in order to make

36 VanDerBeets, The Indian Captivity Narrative.
37 Burnham, Captivity and Sentiment, 49.
38 The Caughnawagas, or Kahnawakes, made up a group of Mohawks that was friendly to the French
during the war.
39 Smith confronted resistance from editors and the public. His account was initially not very profitable and
was not considered credible because it did not conform “to the distorted perceptions of white audiences
who wanted to view Indians negatively and whose negative assumptions had been amply reinforced by a
multitude of propaganda narratives” (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, Indian Captivity Narrative, 74-75).
history "better understood, and most entertaining." Smith's purpose in writing and publishing this memoir was to offer observations on Indian warfare and to promote the adoption of their methods; he was later able to put this military knowledge to use as a lieutenant near the end of the Seven Years' War. In his preface, Smith claims to accurately imitate the Indians' style and ideas. Though the narrative is distanced from the time the events occurred, Smith thoroughly describes the adoption and assimilation processes, and, perhaps most importantly, the trust that the Indians placed in him. He also discusses several factors of Caughnawaga culture that are useful to historians, such as language, marriage, and politics. Though he hardly expresses interest in leaving the Caughnawagas throughout his memoir, he abruptly escaped near Montreal after almost five years of living closely with them. He then lived in a French prison in Montreal until he was exchanged at Crown Point in November 1759. Smith finally returned to his family in early 1760. According to his narrative, the whites in his hometown "received me with great joy, but were surprized [sic] to see me so much like an Indian, both in my gait and gesture." He died around 1814.40

Alexander Henry (1739-1824) was captured near the end of the French and Indian War. He lived with his adopted Chippewa family from 1763 to 1764 around Fort Michilimackinac, replacing an Indian man named Musinigon.41 Oddly, Henry's narrative does not describe a formal adoption ceremony; it does, however, go into detail about his physical transformation from white to Indian. He attributes his rapid transition to the fact

40 Drimmer, Captured by the Indians; June Namias, White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 53; James Smith, An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith... During his Captivity with the Indians, in the Years 1755, '56, '57, '58, & '59... (Lexington: Printed by John Bradford, on Main Street, 1799), PDF version, quotes from pages 4 and 59.
41 It is not unlikely that Musinigon was killed in battle. See the section on replacing family members.
that other Indians wanted to take revenge on the English; his new family thus wanted to protect him. Throughout the narrative, Henry seems indifferent to his captivity. He left voluntarily to return to his fur trading ventures in Canada but was apparently sad to leave his family, likewise, his family wanted him to stay but did not prevent him from leaving. Henry wrote his narrative at the age of seventy in a book titled *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories Between the Years 1760 and 1776* (1809). The narrative is significant due to its description of the massacre at Fort Michilimackinac in 1763, which Henry amazingly survived.

One of the most popular Indian captivity narratives of the time comes from Mary Jemison, who was captured in 1758 around the age of 12. James E. Seaver wrote her narrative, supposedly from Jemison’s own words. Unfortunately for posterity’s sake, Seaver elaborated and deleted, morphing her story to suit a public audience; though the narrative is in the first person, it is more often a reflection of Seaver than of Jemison. At the time of the narrative’s publication in 1824, Jemison was around eighty years old and still living with Indians in central New York. A Shawnee tribe captured her as a young

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42 Drimmer, *Captured by the Indians*.
43 Jemison believed that she had been captured in 1755, but, as Robert W. G. Vail’s efforts show, she was actually captured in 1758.
44 Derounian-Stodola and Levernier go far enough to say that “Seaver seems almost bored with what Jemison (whose Indian name was Dehgewanus) told him about herself and certainly somewhat disappointed about not having found more to legitimately sensationalize about her life” (*Indian Captivity Narrative*, 74). VanDerBeets states that Seaver was one of “the worst offender[s]” of “stylistic embellishment” (*The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 26) and says that he took much of his information from John Knight’s 1783 narrative (which Seaver denied) (34).
45 In her 1992 introduction to Jemison’s *Narrative* (see citation below), June Namias discusses the publication of the account. It “was published in Canandaigua, a small town in the Finger Lakes region of New York. Over the next 105 years it underwent twenty-seven printings and twenty-three editions ranging from 32 to 483 pages. First published as an oddity of local history, known to those in western and central New York, the books and booklets moved rapidly from rural New York to second and third printings in
girl near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; soon afterwards, a Seneca tribe adopted her, using her to replace a young male who had been killed in the war. She later married (twice, both times to Indian chiefs) and bore children. When Henry Bouquet issued a prisoner exchange at the end of the Seven Years’ War, Jemison refused to leave her new home; according to “her” narrative, she stayed for her children. She died in 1833, around the age of ninety; at this time, she represented a mélange of cultures through her clothing, demeanor, and speech. Jemison’s narrative is extremely significant not only because of its popularity but also because it comes from a woman (despite Seaver’s filtration). Furthermore, it shows Indians in a positive light, which other captivity narratives of the period tend to avoid.

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46 Derounian-Stodola and Levernier state that “from 1675 to 1763, far more women than men were statistically likely to stay with their French or Indian captors” (Indian Captivity Narrative, 159).

Figure 7: Title page of Mary Jemison's narrative, facsimile of 1840 edition

Richard and Catharine Poe Bard (husband and wife) were captured together in York (now Adams) County, Pennsylvania, by Delaware Indians in 1758; their son Archibald wrote their narrative based on his father’s papers. When the Bards reached Stony Creek with the Delawares, Catharine helped her husband escape. Catharine then continued with the Indians to Fort Duquesne, “Cususkey,” and the Susquehanna River; she was eventually adopted.48 In 1760, her husband bought her from the Indians at Fort

48 “Cususkey” is probably Kususki, a Delaware in present-day New Castle, Pennsylvania.
Pitt (next to the former Fort Duquesne). This narrative is significant because it describes the plight of a female captive. Unfortunately, it is filtered twice: once through her husband and again through her son. Nevertheless, the treatment of this female captive is worth further consideration.49

The narrative of John McCullough, who was adopted in Cumberland (now Franklin) County, Pennsylvania, by Delaware Indians in 1756, is valuable not only because of its intense details but because it comes from a child; McCullough was approximately eight years old when he was captured. The Delaware Indians put him through the ritual of washing out his whiteness. Because he was a child, however, he avoided the torture that many of his adult counterparts endured and received protection from the Delaware Chief even before his adoption ceremony. He traveled to many places in Pennsylvania and the Ohio Country, including, but not limited to, Fort Duquesne, Beaver Creek, Mahoning County, the Cuyahoga River, and the Muskingum River. His biological father eventually bought him from his new Indian family. McCullough was reluctant to leave, however, and hardly remembered the English language; his father had to tie him to a horse when taking him away. McCullough escaped back to his Indian family that night; when his father came to look for him, the Indians denied that they had seen him. McCullough finally returned to white society in 1764 after the prisoner exchange at Fort Pitt that Colonel Henry Bouquet instituted. McCullough’s goal in writing his narrative was “to illustrate facts as they occurred, carefully avoiding to exaggerate any thing” and “to make it intelligible to the meanest capacity.”50 This is the only account available for this study that was personally written by a former child

49 Pritts, *Incidents of Border Life*.
captive. Though one cannot assume that it is representative of all child prisoners, it is extremely valuable in analyzing the treatment of prisoners based on age.

Other narratives were not published until the twentieth century, long after the authors were deceased. These were typically published by historians for the purpose of using them as primary sources. This study includes only two narratives from the period. The first, that of Charles Stuart, was published in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* in 1926; its origins remain unclear. The second, Titus King’s, was published as a small book in 1938; it was originally King’s journal. The intention of the original authors is hard to discern, and several questions remain unanswered. Who was the intended audience? Did the authors attempt to publish their works? Did anyone read the narratives at the time they were written, and, if so, how were the narratives received?

Charles Stuart was captured with his wife by Delaware, Mingo, and Shawnee Indians in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, in October 1755. He traveled with the Indians to Fort Duquesne (where the Indians gave him and his wife to the Wyandots as a gift), Sandusky, and Detroit. It was from Detroit that the Wyandots sold him and his wife to French priests in 1756. They worked for the priests until they were put on a ship to be released. Thence, like King, he was taken to Montreal, England, and New York, after which he finally returned to his family. Unfortunately, the origins of the narrative are unclear; Stuart himself presumably wrote, or at least dictated, the content wherein, but when he did so is unknown. His captivity narrative describes the way that the Indians
treated captives who were not adopted; furthermore, the narrative provides a window into the complex political relations between the Indians and the French.51

Titus King, born in 1729 in Northampton, Massachusetts, was captured by a group of Indians in 1755 while working as a military guard in Charlemont (near Northampton).52 Throughout his three-year captivity, King went unwillingly to Crown Point, St. John, St. Francis, and Montreal. The narrative, which was originally King’s journal and was finally published in 1938, is extremely useful for historians studying captivity. King dutifully recorded his experiences with Indians (though he unfortunately never mentioned specific Indian nations), dating all of his entries and taking careful note of the way they treated him and other captives. The Indians adopted King and used him to replace a deceased family member, but assimilation was a struggle for him and he never fully felt at home with his new family. The Indians finally sold him to the French (the reason for this remains unclear), from whom he bought his freedom. Still a war

52 Albert C. Bates, foreword to Narrative of Titus King of Northampton, Mass.: A Prisoner of the Indians in Canada, 1755-1758, (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1938), 3-4. Albert C. Bates, the editor of the Connecticut Historical Society who wrote the foreword to Titus King’s narrative in 1938, described the physical condition of the document before publication: “The Narrative now consists of twelve leaves six by seven and one half inches in size and written on both sides. Evidently the commencement of the Narrative is missing as it now begins in the midst of a sentence. The last two leaves are of a different paper and the writing has a different appearance from that on the preceding pages, although the whole is undoubtedly the work of the same hand. The leaves had originally been folded across midway of their length and are more or less broken at the fold and on the edges” (4). Bates claimed in 1938 that a resident of Hartford owned the manuscript, though it is difficult to discern the location of it today.
prisoner, however, he went to London and New York before finally returning to his white family in June 1758. King died in 1791 at the age of 63.53

Each of the people listed above shared a common experience of captivity among the Indians during the French and Indian War. Yet they also all had unique experiences and focused on different aspects of their captivity in their narratives. They were captured by different Indian nations and were taken to different locations in North America. They chose various times to publish their narratives (if in fact they published at all). Now that the reader understands these captives and the contexts in which they were captured, the analysis of running the gauntlet, washing out the white, and replacing family members during the French and Indian War can begin.

53 [Titus King], Narrative of Titus King o f Northampton, Mass: A Prisoner o f the Indians in Canada, 1755-1758 (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1938).
"It Was Like How Do You Do": Descriptions of Running the Gauntlet

The narrative of Henry Grace provides historians with many examples of running the gauntlet; captured near Chignecto Bay in Canada by Micmac Indians around 1759, Grace ran the gauntlet at least six times. The reason for the multitude of runs, he says, is that each nation required it; it follows that "the Captives are never forced to run the Gantlope [gauntlet] in the same Nation twice, though they pass through several different Villages of it." He therefore ran for the Micmacs, the Abenaki in St. Francis, a nation of Iroquois (the exact nation is unclear) along the St. Lawrence River, the Choctaws, the Chickasaws, and the Cherokees. He mentions no gauntlet run with the St. John’s Indians, with whom he lived for several months. Grace’s description of his first time running the gauntlet is typical; he ran through two rows of Indians, who beat him with sticks, their hands, or other objects, until he reached the chief’s wigwam at the end of the rows. The first time, Grace “was ignorant of what these Barbarians were going to do,” though he soon learned the ropes.

Grace gives a brief description about the ways that different Indian nations treated the runners. As stated above, the Micmac Indians used sticks, their bodies, and “any Thing they could lay their Hands on” to hurt him as he ran. The Abenaki made him run the gauntlet but did not hurt him during it; instead, they reserved their torture for afterward, where Grace states that they forced him to "kneel down whilst they danced.

around me for their Pleasure, till Morning." He gives no description of the way the nation of Iroquois treated him. The Choctaws, on the other hand, treated Grace cruelly during the gauntlet run; they beat him so badly that his “Body was black and blue with the Blows they gave.” Grace remarks that the Choctaws were the most bloodthirsty group he had yet encountered. Yet he then moved on to the Chickasaw Nation, where he “was treated as cruelly as ever before.” Finally, Grace describes the gauntlet treatment from the Cherokee Nation. This experience was painful, though Grace does not appear to believe that the Cherokees were crueler than the Choctaws or Chickasaws: “they flung Sticks and Stones at me: One Stick flung in my Back, and they almost beat one of my Eyes out, so that I could not see out of it for above a Month, yet they never applied any Thing to it, but they did put a little Gum upon my Back, where the Stick wounded me.”

Although Grace depicts a typical experience that many captives faced, an experience which historians do not doubt took place, Grace’s narrative stands out from others like it because its specificity points out the differences between Indian nations. These differences were important to him, which is why he focused on them and wrote about them. For Grace’s narrative, the variation yet consistency with other narratives indicate to historians that the account is generally trustworthy as evidence of Indian culture and traditions; the traditional occurrence is the gauntlet (a typical practice for captives at the time) while the differences are the detailed descriptions of the various Indian nations that made Grace run the gauntlet. By examining the details that different narratives offer when referring to a similar event, historians can take one step closer to determining narrative reliability. One can focus on the details contained in three common

events—running the gauntlet, washing out the white, and replacing family members—in order to ascertain trustworthiness; the less vague the narrative, the more trustworthy it is.

Put simply, the similarities yet differences throughout these narratives point to the reliability of some stories and the unreliability of others. Consistency in some aspects of the accounts is important, for it shows the traditionalism of the gauntlet run in Indian cultures. At the same time, slight differences in each story are just as important; they are reliable evidence that the captive truly experienced the gauntlet.

Various historians treat the gauntlet differently. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier remark that captivity writers were “trapped by their biases” and thus “frequently misunderstood the intention behind their captors’ behavior, often perceiving malign motives when in fact what might appear to the writer as cruelty was in reality intended as a kindness or at least an act of justice.”58 James Axtell remarks that captives interpreted the gauntlet as torture when it was actually a ritual which signified revenge for those who had been slain. He states that the gauntlet was therefore “a purgative ceremony by which the bereaved Indians could exorcise their anger and anguish, and the captives could begin their cultural transformation.”59 According to Axtell, the Indians acted so violently toward their prisoners “as if to beat the whiteness out of them.”60 This perspective assumes incorrectly that all captives who ran the gauntlet were thereafter adopted. Michelle Burnham genders her analysis by remarking that for women, the gauntlet “frequently triggered fears of rape, since the captives were

60 Axtell, “White Indians of Colonial America,” 70.
sometimes (or at least imagined that they would be) forced to disrobe and run naked."\(^{61}\) Regardless of historians’ various perspectives on this event, most recognize the gauntlet’s importance in captivity.

Numerous captives have described their experiences of running the gauntlet in their captivity narratives. On the whole, these descriptions scarcely differ. Regardless of location, capture date, or the nation of the captors, the gauntlet was a typical (though not essential) part of captivity. Like Grace, many other non-adopted captives recorded similar experiences about running the gauntlet, though not all of them were forced to endure it as many times. Isaac Hollister, for example, experienced it twice; unfortunately, he is not specific about which Indian nations accompanied him. Before living with Senecas somewhere along the Susquehanna and Ohio Rivers, Hollister ran the gauntlet in a town he called *Wethoucounque* along the Susquehanna. His experience was similar to Grace’s, with subtle differences; upon arriving at the town, the Indians tied a rope around his neck and made him run a quarter of a mile, during which time they beat him with their fists. After he finished the race, they tied him to a pole in one of the huts and left him there all night.\(^{62}\) Hollister then made an escape attempt with a Dutch prisoner, and, after several weeks of traveling and starving (and eating his dead companion), he was caught by Indians and forced to return to the village from which he had escaped. The day after his return, Hollister noted that he was "strip'd stark naked, and ordered to run; while the Indians, who were ranged in a row, at certain distances, in a most cruel and barbarous


manner, belaboured me with their whips,—by which they sometimes lad me level with the ground, by their blows.” Near the end of the run, he “received a prodigious blow,” which knocked him to the ground. Afterward, a female Indian helped him into her hut and cared for him. The similarity of his stories in comparison with stories from other non-adopted captives shows the universality of the gauntlet run across different Indian cultures. At the same time, the details that Hollister provides sets his narrative apart from others.

Other narratives from non-adopted captives follow similar overall representations yet lack specificity. Thomas Brown, captured near Montreal by an unnamed Indian nation in 1757, simply said that “the Men and Women came out to meet us [the captives], and stripp’d me naked; after which they pointed to a Wigwam and told me to run to it, pursuing me all the Way with Sticks and Stones.” His lack of details may be the key to his narrative’s unreliability. Jean Lowry’s narrative was similarly nondescript; several Indian women “fell upon” her “with their fists” while she ran “about 30 Perches or more.” When she finally reached the wigwam at the end of the run, she was “almost bereft of [her] senses.” Brown and Lowry’s narratives provide readers with no information that could not be gleaned from other accounts of gauntlet runs.

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63 Hollister, A Brief Narration, 2-7. Quotes from page 7.
65 [Jean Lowry], A Journal of the Captivity of Jean Lowry and Her Children, Giving an Account of Her Being Taken by the Indians, the 1st of April 1756, from William McCord’s, In Rocky-Spring Settlement in Pennsylvania... Philadelphia: Printed by William Bradford, at the Corner of First and Market-Streets, 1760.
Charles Stuart provided a better description of his experience in his narrative. Stuart was captured by Wyandot Indians in 1755 and ran the gauntlet in Kittanning, Pennsylvania; the village was home to Delaware and Shawnee Indians and rested along the Allegheny River. His detailed portrayal suggests the typical nature of the Delaware and Shawnee gauntlet:

it was my Lott to Be Carried to Kittanning with other Prisoners, and on Entring into the Town we were obliged to Pass Between Two Rows of Indians Containing abt 100 on Each Side who were armd with various kind of Weapons such as Axes Tomhawks Cutlasses Hoop Poles, Peices of Wood &c, But they did not strike wth the Axes, and only Used the Heads and Handles of their Tomhawks, But used the Blades of the Cutlasses tho' not with so much Severity as To Kill, I had however the Misfortune to receive a Blow on the Side of my Forehead wth one of them wch Cut me To the Bone & a Billet of Wood Strikeing on the Head abt the Same time Between Both I was Knockd down to the Ground…

Stuart further observed differences in treatment due to sex and age; he writes that the “more elderly People,” whether male or female, were required to run the gauntlet and children of either age escaped the ordeal. This is slightly inconsistent with the experiences of Mary Jemison and Catharine Poe Bard, who, according to their narratives, did not run the gauntlet. It is perhaps coincidence, however, that these two women did not have to experience the run; after all, not all men were required to do it either. Indeed, Jean Lowry (see above) claimed to have run the gauntlet. Stuart’s remark is, however,

67 Beverly W. Bond Jr., “The Captivity of Charles Stuart”.
consistent with the experience of John McCullough, an eight-year-old child who the
Indians spared from running the gauntlet (see below). 69

Adopted captives did not fare much differently than non-adopted captives, raising
the question of whether there was a correlation between adoption and the gauntlet. The
gauntlet may have had no connection to a captive’s fate in Indian societies. 70 Some
gauntlet runners were adopted and some were not; likewise, some who never ran the
gauntlet were adopted, while others were not.

James Smith’s extensive (and popular) narrative describes a typical gauntlet run at
Fort Duquesne. Smith notes that several Indians, naked “excepting breech-clouts,” ran
toward him when he arrived at the fort. As other captives have described, Smith states
that they formed two long lines. He then remarks: “I was told by an Indian that could
speak English, that I must run betwixt the ranks, and that they would flog me all the way,
as I ran, and if I ran quick, it would be so much the better, as they would quit when I got
to the end of the ranks.” He followed these instructions and remarked in his narrative that
he “found that it was as I had been told, for I was flogged the whole way.” His worst
experience came toward the end of the race:

When I had got near the end of the lines, I was struck with something that
appeared to me to be a stick, or the handle of a tomahawk, which caused
me to fall to the ground. On my recovering my senses, I endeavored to
renew my race; but as I arose, some one cast sand in my eyes, which
blinded me so, that I could not see where to run. They continued beating
me most intolerable, until I was at length insensible; but before I lost my

69 Derounian-Stodola and Levernier state that women and children were very rarely brutalized in the
gauntlet (Indian Captivity Narrative, 89).
70 This is contrary to Axtell’s assumptions that captives who ran the gauntlet were thereafter adopted
(“White Indians of Colonial America,” especially 71).
senses, I remember my wishing them to strike the fatal blow, for I thought they intended killing me, but apprehended they were too long about it.  

That night, a French doctor cared for Smith; when he was finally able to talk, several Indians interrogated him about the situation of the English army. Smith took note of a conversation he had later with an English-speaking Delaware Indian. Smith found the Indian “to be a man of considerable understanding” and thus asked him if he had done anything wrong to cause the Indians to treat him so cruelly as to make him run the gauntlet. “He said no, it was only an old custom the Indians had, and it was like how do you do.”  

Soon after this, Caughnawaga Indians (a group of Mohawks) adopted Smith at Tullihas (a town of Mohicans, Caughnawagas, and Delawares), located along the Muskingum River in the Ohio Country. Smith later lived with his adopted family in Sundunyeand, a Wyandot town along the Sandusky River where the villagers spoke both the Caughnawaga and Wyandot languages. When the Indians brought other prisoners to this town, Smith gave them instructions on how to run the gauntlet. Smith describes that after telling one man in his forties what to do, he “fell into one of the ranks with the Indians, shouting and yelling like them.” He then says that the Indians were not too severe on the man, and that “as he passed me, I hit him with a piece of pumpkin—which pleased the Indians much, but hurt my feelings.” His involvement in the other prisoners’ runs implies his eagerness to fit in with the Caughnawaga Indians. Smith’s

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71 James Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith... During his Captivity with the Indians, in the Years 1755, '56, '57, '58, & '59....* (Lexington: Printed by John Bradford, on Main Street, 1799), PDF version, 6-7.


narrative portrays running the gauntlet as a rite of passage for Indian captives, regardless of whether they were to be adopted.

Like Hollister, Robert Eastburn ran the gauntlet twice. The first time was at Conasadauga, an Iroquois mission town in Montreal. His narrative shows a slight variation on the ritual. Eastburn wrote that upon arriving at Conasadauga

a large body of Indians came and encompassed us round, and ordered the prisoners to dance and sing the prisoner’s song...at the conclusion of which the Indians gave a shout, opened the ring to let us run, and then fell on us with their fists, and knocked several down; in the mean time one ran before to direct us to an Indian house, which was open, and as soon as we got in, we were beat no more; my head was sore with beating, and pained me several days.74

The largest difference here compared to other narratives is that the Indians formed a circle around the prisoners, rather than two straight lines. Eastburn was later sent to “Cohnewago” (likely Kahnawake, a Mohawk town near Montreal). As soon as he arrived on shore, the Mohawk Indians gathered in a circle around him and again demanded that he dance and sing. “I only stamped to prepare for my race,” he says, surrounded by what he believed to be five hundred Indians. They “at last gave a shout, and opened the circle,” and about one hundred and fifty “young lads” prepared to pelt him “with dirt and gravel stones.” He did not suffer much until near the end, when he was hit in the eye by a small stone and could scarcely see where he was going due to the dirt covering his face. He briefly found solace in a nearby Indian house, but “from this retreat” he was “soon hauled

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to be pelted more.” Finally, several Indian women intervened and took him into a house to wash and feed him.75

Titus King, adopted by St. Francis Indians in 1755 in Charlemont, Massachusetts, narrowly escaped running the gauntlet. His story is intriguing due to the fact that the son of the Indian chief prevented his gauntlet run. As King came to the shore at St. Francis, he saw “about 200 Indians to receve us,” and the “young Indians had Sticks to whip us.” As King set foot on the shore, the young Indians “Run Very Furously & took hold” of him. An Indian gave him instructions, saying that he had “to run about 30 Rod up a considrabel hill on which the town Stands to git to the main body of Indians.” Yet the Chief’s son intervened and dispersed the young Indians, for which King “thanked him after we got up the hill.” After this, the Indians forced King to sing; they adopted him the next day.76

Some captives did not describe the gauntlet, or anything like it, in their narratives. This includes Thomas Gist (adopted into the Wyandot nation), Alexander Henry (adopted into the Chippewa nation), William Henry (adopted by Seneca Indians), James Johnson (captured by an unnamed nation in present-day Vermont), and John McCullough (a child adopted by the Delaware nation). This list also includes Peter Williamson, who likely fabricated his entire story.77 Charles Saunders (captured by the Shawnee), Richard Bard (captured by the Delaware), and William and Elizabeth Fleming (who did not mention

75 Robert Eastburn, A Faithful Narrative, 207-208.
76 [Titus King], Narrative of Titus King of Northampton, Mass: A Prisoner of the Indians in Canada, 1755-1758 (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1938), 11-12, all quotes are [sic]. Forced singing and dancing was not unusual before adoption.
77 For more on the unreliability of the Williamson narrative, see Timothy J. Shannon, “King of the Indians: The Hard Fate and Curious Career of Peter Williamson,” The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series, 66, no. 1 (January 2009), 3-44.
the nation of their captors) also did not run the gauntlet, however, they escaped before reaching any villages and therefore did not have the chance to experience the ritual. One should be skeptical about including them in the category of non-runners because of their circumstances.

McCullough, adopted at the age of eight, described a situation that was not too far from what the other captives described as running the gauntlet; nonetheless, it is not similar enough to be considered the same. Upon his arrival at a Delaware town that he referred to as Kee-ak-kshee-man-nit-toos (likely Kiskiminetas River in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania), several Indians ran out to meet McCullough and the other captives.78 The captives went to the hut of one of the chiefs, and the chief put a belt of wampum around McCullough's neck. McCullough then describes that as they walked together to the fort, "a great number of Indians of both sexes were paraded on each side of the path to see us as we went along; some of them were shoving in little fellows to strike us, and others advising me to strike them, but we seemed to be both afraid of each other."79 Though McCullough's story hints toward potential physical abuse, he was not struck as adult captives were; furthermore, he was accompanied with the protection of the Indian chief.

How trustworthy are these narratives? The majority of their descriptions of running the gauntlet are reliable. Yet one cannot immediately assume that any narrative mentioning this Indian ritual is dependable; after all, it is not unlikely that readers would have expected to find a gauntlet story, prompting authors to include it. The answer lies in 

79 Pritts, Incidents of Border Life, 90.
the details and slight variations of gauntlet accounts: Henry Grace describes the differences of each Indian nation’s gauntlet, Isaac Hollister mentions the rope that the Indians tied around his neck, Charles Stuart states that the Indians beat him with cutlasses and pieces of wood, James Smith had sand cast in his eyes, Robert Eastburn’s gauntlet began as a circle of Indians (as opposed to two lines), Titus King was told to run up a hill, and John McCullough was simply shoved by other children. The reliability of narratives like that of Thomas Brown and Jean Lowry, which simply appear to be mélanges of other captives’ experiences, is questionable. The details contained within some of the narratives set them apart from others; the accounts without details, on the other hand, imply that the author did not actually endure the gauntlet run.
“Every Drop of White Blood”: Descriptions of Washing out the White

In 1755, James Smith was captured by Caughnawaga Indians in Bedford, Pennsylvania. After forcing him to run the gauntlet at Fort Duquesne, the Indians adopted Smith at the Indian village of Tullihas (in the Ohio Country). In Smith’s narrative, he describes the way that a number of Indians first altered his appearance by pulling hairs out of his head, putting beads and brooches in his remaining hair, piercing his ears and nose, painting his body, and giving him a belt, breech-clout, and silver bands to wear. Smith claims to have known nothing about the upcoming ceremony and was therefore convinced that the Indians were preparing to kill him. After a long speech from the Caughnawaga chief, three young Indian women led him into the river until the water reached his waist.

The squaws then made signs to me to plunge myself into the water, but I did not understand them; I thought that the result of the council was that I should be drowned, and that these young ladies were to be the executioners. They all three laid violent hold of me, and I for some time opposed them with all my might, which occasioned loud laughter by the multitude that were on the bank of the river. At length one of the squaws made out to speak a little English (for I believe they began to be afraid of me) and said, no hurt you; on this I gave myself up to their ladyships, who were as good as their word; for though they plunged me under water, and washed and rubbed me severely, yet I could not say they hurt me much.80

Upon returning to the council house, the tribe greeted him with gifts and clothing. The chief then made a speech, which was in turn translated to Smith. He recorded the speech

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as he remembered it: "My son, you are now flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone. By the ceremony which was performed this day, every drop of white blood was washed out of your veins; you are taken unto the Caughnawago nation."81

Figure 8: A drawing of James Smith’s washing ceremony82

Four captives in this study described a ceremony in which the white was metaphorically washed out of them: Thomas Gist, James Smith, John McCullough, and Mary Jemison. Each of these captives was adopted; this ceremony of being (in the words of James Axtell) "symbolically purged of their whiteness by their Indian baptism"

81 Smith, An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences, 11.
preceded their adoption. The other five adopted captives in this study—Alexander Henry, Titus King, William Henry, Catharine Poe Bard, and Robert Eastburn—described nothing of the sort. The washing ceremonies in the Gist, Smith, McCullough, and Jemison narratives have similarities and differences. The details they give of the ritual point toward these documents’ general reliability as evidentiary sources. They reveal not a typical or universal experience that readers might expect to see in captivity narratives, but rather an infrequent and changing event that demonstrates the usefulness of these primary documents as a window into Native American traditions.

Thomas Gist’s washing ceremony with the Wyandots was both similar to and different from Smith’s. “For my part,” writes Gist, “I was led into the house where I was to live, there strip’d by a female relation, and then led to the river. There she wash’d me from head to foot, leavin[g] none of the paint itself on me.” When he returned to the house with his new family member, all of his new relations (“from brother to seventh cousins,” he says) greeted him and gave him clothing. The consistency between his account and Smith’s comes from the actual act of washing; both men were washed in a river. Gists’s narrative differs, however, in the number of women involved (he mentioned one woman, while Smith mentioned three), the intensity of the act (his appears to have been less violent than Smith’s), and when he received his clothes (after the washing, as opposed to before). Though both men described a similar type of event, they varied considerably on the types of details they provided, indicating that the captives actually experienced the washing ceremony.

84 Howard H. Peckham, “Thomas Gist’s Indian Captivity, 1758-1759,” The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 80, no. 3 (July 1956), 299.
John McCullough, a child, was washed by men instead of women. The two male Indians initially washed him from a canoe, a few dozen yards away from the shore. "When they laid down their paddles," says McCullough, they "laid hold of my by the wrists, and plunged me over head and ears under the water, holding me down till I was almost strangled, then drew me up to get breath. This they repeated several times." Like Smith, McCullough believed that they intended to kill him until one of the Indians said in broken English that they intended to do no such thing. McCullough therefore "plead[ed] with them to let me into shallow water, and I would wash myself"; they obliged.

I then began to rub myself; they signified to me to dive; I dipped my face into the water and raised it up as quick as I could; one of them stepped out of the canoe and laid hold of me on the back of my neck, and held me down to the bottom, till I was almost smothered before he let me go. I then waded out; they put a new ruffled shirt on me, telling me that I was then an Indian....

McCullough’s encounter varied only slightly from that of Gist and Smith. The main differences are that he was washed by Indian men (instead of women) and that this initially occurred several yards into the river (as opposed to near the shore). Again, the details in the narrative set it apart from the others and indicate its reliability.

Female Indians washed Mary Jemison from a canoe on the shore. James E. Seaver, her biographer, states that the women stripped Jemison and threw her clothes—which were "torn in pieces" by this point—into the river. The women "then washed me clean and dressed me in the new suit they had just brought, in complete Indian style." The lack of detail and clarity in this narrative may point toward its unreliability. How

85 Pritts, Incidents of Border Life, 91.
many women were in the canoe? Why were they in a canoe if they were on the shore? Furthermore, the story’s hint of eroticism (i.e. Jemison being stripped roughly and washed by Indian women) raises a red flag. A possible explanation for the lack of detail and clarity about this ceremony is that Seaver pulled pieces of this story from other narratives. Another possible explanation is simply the amount of years that had passed from the time the event occurred to the time that Jemison “dictated” it to Seaver. Due to its vagueness, Jemison’s narrative is one of questionable reliability.

On the whole, the descriptions of the pre-adoption washing ceremonies of Thomas Gist, James Smith, and John McCullough are reliable. Each story has a similar structure yet varies in the details (the gender and number of the washers and the location in the river, for instance). Mary Jemison’s story, however, is problematic. Its vagueness and semi-erotic nature raise questions about Seaver’s depiction of Jemison’s experiences. That five other adoption stories do not include a washing ceremony indicates that writing about it was not a requirement of gaining public interest in the narratives. Due to their descriptions and specificity, historians can consider the Gist, Smith, and McCullough narratives as trustworthy primary evidence of Native American rituals during the French and Indian War; the Jemison narrative, on the other hand, is questionable because of its lack of detail and clarity.
“In the...Place of a Great Man”: Descriptions of Replacing Family Members

John McCullough was adopted by Delawares in 1756. After enduring the washing ceremony, a Delaware chief made a speech about McCullough’s admittance into the tribe. Then an Indian spoke to McCullough, “telling me that I was his brother, that the people had killed a brother of his about a year before, and that these good men (meaning the warriors who took us) had gone and brought me to replace his deceased brother.” Thereafter he was presented to his new family: “they...shook me by the hand, in token that they considered me to stand in the same relationship to them as the one in whose stead I was placed.” McCullough lived with his new uncle for the next year, and then with his new mother.

Many adopted captives mention in their narratives that they replaced specific Indian people. They found themselves incorporated into new families that saw them as someone they never were but had (willingly or not) metaphorically become. The specificity of many of these narratives suggests their reliability as primary sources concerning Indian culture. Like McCullough, who mentions that he replaced his new relatives’ deceased brother, most captives point out their predecessors in their accounts. As with running the gauntlet and washing out the white, descriptions of replacing family members can be considered reliable if they are simultaneously consistent with each other (they must mention this traditional Indian occurrence) and different from each other (they must provide details that set them apart). By examining the specificity (or lack thereof)

88 Pritts, Incidents of Border Life, 94.
contained within these narratives, one can determine the accounts' reliability as evidentiary sources of Indian traditions.

That Indians adopted captives to replace specific family members was not unusual, especially during times of war. The late family member may have died at home or during battle, and replacing him or her was a method of repopulating the tribe. The replacement kin typically began as a captive and could be white, Indian, or any other race.\(^8\)\(^9\) No matter the race of the newly adopted family member, he or she inherited all of the rights and obligations of the deceased, including his or her name, honors, and material possessions.\(^9\)\(^0\)

When it comes to replacing family members, other captives describe situations very similar to McCullough’s; at the same time, however, they distinguish themselves by providing variations in their stories. Thomas Gist, for example, describes the way that the Wyandots distributed a group of prisoners to respective families during a large ceremony. Each prisoner was called in individually to stand in the “presents” of the Indian chief; thereafter the captive’s new relations would claim him and thank the chief and council “for their great care in keeping up the number of the family by adapting [sic] prisoners in the stead of those that had died at home or been kill’d at war.”\(^9\)\(^1\) Gist’s story varies from McCullough’s yet describes an event that was practically the same. Both Gist and McCullough replaced deceased family members, though both described the occurrence

\(^{8}\) Howard H. Peckham, “Thomas Gist’s Indian Captivity, 1758-1759,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 80, no. 3 (July 1956), 299.


\(^{9}\) Peckham, “Thomas Gist’s Indian Captivity,” 299.
differently—differences include group adoption versus individual adoption and the role of the Indian chief in the process.

James Smith describes his kin conversion through the supposed words of the Caughnawaga chief. According to Smith, the chief remarked that Smith entered the tribe “in the room and place of a great man,” which was supported “by an old strong law and custom.” He does not say, however, who he specifically replaced. The chief stated that the members of the tribe, including those in Smith’s new family, were “under the same obligations to love, support and defend” him as they did the rest of the tribe members. “From that day,” writes Smith, “I never knew them to make any distinction between me and themselves in any respect whatever until I left them.”92 Smith’s account again differs from Gist’s and McCullough’s, though it portrays a similar event.

Catharine Poe Bard’s story is also similar to yet different from the others. Her son (her biographer) describes that after a meeting in the council house, “a chief took my mother by the hand, and delivered her to two Indian men, to be in the place of a deceased sister.” For the next two years and five months, her new family treated her “with much kindness; even more than she had reason to expect.”93 Along the same lines, Robert Eastburn noted that he was “delivered to three young men, who said I was their brother.” Later, he met his new father and mother: “my mother began to cry, and continued crying aloud for some time; she then dried up her tears, and received me for her son.” Afterward, Eastburn’s new parents took him “to several of their old acquaintances, who

92 James Smith, An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith... During his Captivity with the Indians, in the Years 1755, ’56, ’57, ’58, & ’59.... (Lexington: Printed by John Bradford, on Main Street, 1799), PDF version, 11.
93 Pritts, Incidents of Border Life, 117-118.
were French, to shew [sic] them their lately adopted son.” Alexander Henry’s tale follows along the same lines; he replaced a man named Musinigon, the deceased brother of Wenniway. Though each of these accounts vary slightly (who they replaced and how the ceremony proceeded), they each focus on the replacement of a deceased Indian family member.

The replacement was not always exact and sometimes yielded interesting results. Mary Jemison, for example replaced a man; the twenty-six-year-old Titus King replaced a grandfather. Jemison appeased two sisters that had lost their brother in battle the previous year. They gave her a female name—Dickewamis, which “signifie[d] a pretty girl.” According to Jemison (or James E. Seaver), those who lost a relative were allowed either a prisoner or the scalp of an enemy; if they chose a prisoner, they had the choice of either adoption or torture. “It was my happy lot to be accepted for adoption,” Seaver writes as Jemison, “and I was ever considered and treated by them as a real sister, the same as though I had been born of their mother.” Titus King, on the other hand, “became brother to the old Indian & Squaw being in the Place of an indian that was Killd [in the] Last War.” He therefore “became a Grandfather”; his new grandchildren remarked that their “grandfather was come to Life again.” The family gave King the

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deceased man’s wigwams and treated him as if he were their relative. King, on the other hand, viewed this situation as one of “humility”; to him, “things indeed Looked as Dark as midnight.” Both Jemison and King replaced unlikely people, yet both described the Indian tradition of putting their newly adopted captives into someone else’s stead.

Even non-adopted captives tended to live with specific families. Many captives in this study mention becoming part of a family but not replacing a specific deceased person. Thomas Brown, for example, lived somewhere along the Mississippi River “with a Squaw, who was to be my Mother.” Henry Grace referred to the Indians he lived with as “the same Family as myself”; he stayed with the same people for fourteen months as a non-adopted captive. Isaac Hollister’s experience was similar; he mentions his “indian father and mother,” who treated him kindly. These narratives have questionable reliability; the captives are vague with their descriptions and therefore may or may not have actually experienced what they depict.

Some captives (though not many) fail to mention Indian families. This includes William Henry, who was adopted but does not mention his new family or whether he

replaced a specific person; his story is inconsistent with those of other adopted captives. Charles Stuart, James Johnson, Jean Lowry, and Peter Williamson, neither of whom was adopted, do not discuss families at all. Their stories lean more toward their ill-treatment by the Indians and their feelings of not belonging. This is, perhaps, the key to unreliability when it comes to living with Indian families. As Peter Williamson’s narrative has already been proven false, it would not be a stretch to place the narratives of Stuart, Johnson, and Lowry in the same category. These outliers are questionable with their lack of detail and specificity.

The stories about specific family members that the captives replaced are good indicators of the reliability of the rest of the narratives. McCullough, Gist, Smith, Bard, Eastburn, Henry, Jemison, and King provide detailed accounts of their experiences with their new Indian families; their narratives can be considered reliable because of their consistency (i.e. replacing a specific person who had died) and variations (i.e. the ceremony and the name, gender, or age of the person they replaced). Many captives who were not adopted have questionable trustworthiness; Brown, Grace, and Hollister, for instance, mention their new situation as part of a family structure but are vague with the specifics. As with the running the gauntlet and washing out the white, descriptions of replacing family members are the key to determining reliability in French and Indian War captivity narratives.

101 The narratives concerning Richard Bard, William and Elizabeth Fleming, and Charles Saunders also do not mention families; however, they escaped before reaching an Indian camp, making their narratives invalid for the criteria of the study.

102 For an article explaining why Peter Williamson’s narrative is unreliable, see Timothy J. Shannon, “King of the Indians: The Hard Fate and Curious Career of Peter Williamson,” The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series, 66, no. 1 (January 2009), 3-44.
Conclusion

The reliability of these narratives is varied based on their details and inclusion of traditional Indian customs. Historians can depend on ten narratives from this study as reliable primary sources: those of Richard and Catharine Poe Bard, Robert Eastburn, Thomas Gist, Henry Grace, Alexander Henry, Isaac Hollister, Titus King, John McCullough, and James Smith. Their narratives are consistent with historical events and provide overwhelming details about running the gauntlet, washing out the white, and replacing family members.

Two captives have narratives with questionable reliability as evidentiary sources: Mary Jemison and Charles Stuart. Their accounts have positive aspects yet flaws. Mary Jemison’s narrative, for example, was greatly influenced by James E. Seaver and was in fact a reflection of Seaver’s perspective; on the other hand, it provided some details (albeit sometimes vaguely) and uniquely depicted Indians in a positive light. The account of Charles Stuart provided great gauntlet details yet lacked family details.

There are five narratives that one can generally consider unreliable: the narratives of Thomas Brown, William Henry, James Johnson, Jean Lowry, and Peter Williamson. These captives provide their audiences with little details and a lack of information. They are at times inconsistent not only within themselves but with Indian traditions. Finally, the narratives of William and Elizabeth Fleming and Charles Saunders do not provide enough information to attest to their reliability as primary sources. Saunders and the
Flemings escaped from their captors before even having the chance to run the gauntlet; the reliability of their accounts remains in question.\textsuperscript{103}

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Each of the captivity narratives in this study is unique and interesting in its own way. Each is also valuable. Even the unreliable narratives are important in that they are representative of popular eighteenth-century American literature. All of the narratives, whether reliable or unreliable, provide commentary on contemporary views of, for instance, religion, warfare, and "Others." The historically reliable narratives provide for historians a glimpse into several aspects of history, including Native American culture, native-white relations, the French and Indian War, the treatment of prisoners, societal adaptation, and more.

\textsuperscript{103} Richard Bard also escaped before having the opportunity to experience any of the criteria that this study examines. However, one can place his narrative in the reliable category because the stories about him and his wife were published together.
The categories which this study uses are not rigid. They are meant to be only a
guideline for how to use the captivity narratives. In other words, this is only a starting
point. Historians can use these categories of analysis as loose rules when conducting their
own research. The author hopes that historians will find the conclusions presented herein
as a useful measure of the reliability of French and Indian War captivity narratives.
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