DISCOURSE, CULTURAL POLICY, AND OTHER MECHANISMS OF POWER:
The Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian

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by
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ABSTRACT

This project explores the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) on the National Mall in Washington D.C. through a critical/cultural lens using a variety of qualitative methodological approaches including Foucauldian discourse analysis, surveys/interviews, archival work, and participant observation. It takes an interdisciplinary approach to inform the study of culture, media/communications, museums, cultural policy, and American Indian issues. The study situates the NMAI in terms of the emergence of ethnic museums starting in the latter half of the twentieth century and engages the shift in the museological self-understanding from static transmission of knowledge to dialogic, democratic participation in the midst of neo-liberal funding pressures. The museum positions itself as a reaction to the iconographic noble and ignoble savage constructs prevalent in the popular media and museums and understands itself as a communications technology, using a variety of media and high-technology devices to enter into public discourse about American Indian identity, emphasizing collaboration with American Indian people in the process of “giving voice.” Its position within the national museum complex as a site of power and policy prescribing the repatriation of human remains and other forms of cultural patrimony suggest the new participants have been taken seriously. However, this project argues the NMAI, while acting as a technology of the self for both American Indian people and its mostly non-Native audience, has been shaped by its socio/economic/historical circumstances and stakeholders, from its American Indian constituency to non-Native tourists, benefactors, and partnering corporations. The museum has been charged with avoiding polemical issues in its attempt to meet expectations. I argue the construction of the pan-Indian within the museum still acts as a
generalized identity discourse and is productive for the overarching goal of nation-building. The project explores the intersection between the national museum’s new dialogic self-understanding and neo-liberal formation.

The following chapters introduce the project and lay out the theoretical and methodological approaches taken (Chapters I and II). They then describe the construction of American Indian identity in popular consciousness and its role in nation building (Chapter III), the museum’s situatedness within cultural policy debates (Chapter IV), the various stakeholders with vested interest in the museum (Chapter V), and the use of media/technology devices, architecture, and semiotics to create “a Native Place” (Chapter VI). Finally, Chapter VII suggests Michel Foucault’s governmentality is an appropriate analytic of power for understanding the museum and its complexities.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION
The National Museum of the American Indian: A Cultural Phenomenon

The Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), opened in September, 2004 on the National Mall in Washington D.C., is a site in and around which issues of culture, politics, identity, representation, governance, and mediation come to a head. The NMAI purportedly subverts the traditional majority museum paradigm by assuming a collaborative model through which Native people of the Western Hemisphere work with NMAI curators to self-represent, giving voice to their own versions of history and experiences (Phillips, 2005). The NMAI uses a variety of interactive and multi-sensory communications devices in order to (re)present Indian Country within the nation’s capital. In addition, the museum’s use of space, landscaping, and architecture works semiotically to articulate a kind of pan-Indian identity. As will be described, the museum has been received in a variety of ways. Some critics object to the ways in which it breaks from conventional museum form (Rothstein, 2004), while others argue it does not do enough to trouble dominant Western, museological paradigms (Lonetree, 2006b; Atalay, 2006). Controversy and differing expectations have followed the museum from its inception, taking on a variety of shapes and forms.

Perhaps one of the most vocal and visible critics of the NMAI in the general press is *New York Times* museum critic, Edward Rothstein. His comments in a 2005 *NPR* interview reflect one line of argumentation rejecting the museum’s emphasis on American Indian voice rather than Western history. Rothstein remarks:

> I would wager that there are any number of scholars of American Indian history who

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1 The term “majority museum” is borrowed from Clifford (1991) to describe large-scale museum projects as will be described in the next section.
know far more about these tribes than the elders of the tribe. The point isn’t that a museum should allow American Indian tribes to tell their own story. The point is that the museum should be able to give a complete portrait of the tribes and their history so that you actually know something of the truth (“Profile: The mixed reviews… NPR, 17 August 2005).

The opposite predominant critique of the museum is that it is not critical enough of the history of colonization or Western paradigms. Critics also point out the omission of controversial information like efforts to de-accession human remains and funerary and sacred object from collections to culturally affiliated groups via the National Museum of the American Indian Act (1989), the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990), and other policies prompted with the passage of these acts at federal institutions like the Smithsonian. For example, Sonja Atalay (2006) commented:

At the NMAI it is not only historical struggles that are benign, absent, or difficult for viewers to access due to lengthy text panels but also more contemporary issues of confrontation such as present-day battles and victories to repatriate our ancestors and the sacred objects lost during colonization. Highlighting this topic would have brought the struggle for spiritual sovereignty into the twenty-first century through an exhibit focused on the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (p. 607).

While the Smithsonian Institution adopted repatriation policies for human remains and sacred and funerary objects from the large collection at the National Museum of Natural History, NAGPRA (1990) specifically states that the legislation pertains to all other federal agencies but the Smithsonian Institution (Section 2.D.4). The NMAI Act (1990) affected the nationalized George Gustav Heye Museum of the American Indian collections. However, Heye’s
The critiques wielded by Rothstein and Atalay indicate the Janus-faced and unsettled concern over the NMAI. While one suggests the museum is too great a radical departure from the traditional museum form, the other suggests it has been rendered apolitical and is not radical enough. While Rothstein is clearly not concerned about the possibility that capital “T” Truth is culturally constructed or contextual, Atalay brings to light the problematic of the museum form itself as an imperialist throwback.

As the comments above suggest, the museum has meant drastically different things to different NMAI “stakeholders,” or those with a vested interest in the museum. The following passages will provide further orientation to the National Museum of the American Indian. This chapter will explain what “kind” of museum the NMAI is, using Clifford’s (1991) typology distinguishing between the imperatives and audiences of the tribal versus the majority museum. This chapter will then describe the ways in which the study at hand will approach this complicated cultural phenomenon and its situatedness between a variety disciplinary and theoretical concerns.

The Majority vs. the Tribal Museum

As Atalay (2006) observed, despite the fact that the NMAI is a departure from the traditional museum, in many ways, it continues to reflect the dominant paradigm. One way to understand the potential of alternative museums is to use James Clifford’s (1991) typology describing the characteristics of the majority museum by juxtaposing it with the more Native community-oriented tribal museum. One of the major points, he suggests, is that Native communities cannot enjoy the benefits of their own tribal objects when they are on display for a general collections did not contain a large number of human remains.
audience or stored in a giant warehouse somewhere far away (like in the nation’s capital). In other terms, the tribal museum is not just of, but for Native people or audiences, unlike the majority museum. He suggests the “general characteristics” of majority museums, like those museums within the national museum complex, are as follows:

1.) the search for the ‘best’ art or most ‘authentic’ cultural forms; 2.) the interest in exemplary or representative objects; 3.) the sense of owning a collection that is a treasure for the city; and 4.) the tendency to separate (fine) art from (ethnographic) culture (p. 225).

Conversely, Clifford suggests the characteristics of tribal museums are frequently as follows:

1.) its stance is to some degree oppositional, with exhibits reflecting excluded experiences, colonial pasts, and current struggles; 2.) the art/culture distinction is often irrelevant, or positively subverted; 3.) the notion of a unified or linear History (whether of the nation, of humanity, or of art) is challenged by local, community histories, and 4.) the collections do not aspire to be included in the patrimony (of the nation, of great art, etc.) but to be inscribed within different traditions and practices, free of national, cosmopolitan patrimonies (p. 226).

The NMAI disputes history with a capital “H” and reflects the various imperatives of tribal museums. Some of the points of departure from the traditional museum are those some critics most vehemently rail against, including the following:

1.) The NMAI does not offer “Truth,” and openly suggests the museum can only provide
contingent versions of history. For example, a video in “Our Peoples” invites visitors to “argue with it” and to “take what is seen with skepticism.” Tour guides, are referred to as “cultural interpreters,” and they provide visitors with their own individualized commentary on what it means to be Native to the Western Hemisphere. (Cultural interpreters generally self-identify with or are members of a Native tribe or nation).

The NMAI does not merely act as a static conveyer of information, but fashions itself as a site of “dialogic,” multicultural communication. According to its self-understanding, the museum does not claim ultimate authority on knowledge or expert opinions and questions those dominant paradigms that do. However, as will be argued, the museum “authenticates” itself in a variety of different ways.

2.) The museum does not follow a typical chronological ordering system in which indigenous people are placed as the least progressed and Western civilization, the most. For the most-part cultural areas dedicated to particular tribes depict traditional life blended with modern-day life. Items are ordered according to important indigenous themes (animals, beadwork, containers, projectile points, peace medals, etc.) rather than in a chronology.

3.) The NMAI is not merely a repository for cultural objects. To some degree, it also acts as a cultural center where people who identify as American Indian come to perform and engage in social networking. The museum employs several outreach programs toward this end deemed part of the “Fourth Museum,” the virtual and physical network efforts augmenting the museum’s three physical structures.

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3 NMAI Director Richard West, in fact, uses this very term to emphasize the museum’s dialogic capacity in a speech he gave to the National Press Club just weeks before the NMAI opening.
4.) It conflates the ethnographic and the art museum. Although they will never be used, objects with “use” value (like containers, baskets, shoes, and clothes) are also exhibited as art forms. Both “art” and “artifact” are displayed interchangeably throughout the museum.

Conversely, the museum falls short in terms of its radical and tribal museum potential. Below are listed some of the reasons we may still consider the NMAI a majority museum as described by Clifford.

1.) It questions neither the cultural commodification nor the display of Indian people and culture for mostly non-Native audiences. As Bennett (1995) points out, we need only look at who is behind the glass and who is doing the gazing to establish who is on the side of power. The majority of NMAI visitors are non-Native and White.

2.) The overall mission of the NMAI is not to return objects to culturally affiliated groups (with some exceptions), but rather, to preserve them within high-technology storage facilities. As Coffey and Tsosie (2001) suggest, the process of repatriation is still a difficult one in which the burden of proof lies on the culturally affiliated group. In other terms, the NMAI remains not just the “pride of the city” as Clifford suggests, but of the Nation as it maintains the largest collection of American Indian objects in the world.

3.) For the most part, the museum does not benefit American Indian communities directly. *The Way of the People* NMAI planning document cites a comment from an unnamed focus-group participant: “Programs that reach Indian communities are more important
than buildings” (*The Way of the People*, 1991, p. 17). Clearly this participant’s comment was not taken seriously. Rather than investing the more than $100 million dollars it took to construct the NMAI mall museum in community outreach programs benefiting American Indian people, the Smithsonian created a giant monument, attracting a largely non-Native audience. Moreover, large contributions have also come from American Indian nations themselves, directing money from Indian Country into the capital.

4.) The museum does not make strange technological determinism and the ways in which technologies can be damaging to traditional indigenous lifestyles. The museum itself utilizes a variety of high-technology communications devices, reflecting a broader trend in majority museums. In addition, the NMAI has invested further valuable resources digitizing museum collections, in part so that American Indian people who cannot physically visit the museum can view them.

5.) In attempting to articulate a pan-Indian identity and to bolster nationhood, the NMAI has projected American notions of race and nationalism onto groups from other nations (DeLugan, 2006; Miller & Yudice, 2002).

6.) The museum reduces complex structural issues to grand narratives. For example, rather than explaining some of the economic reasons that accompany the phenomenon of disproportionate American Indian serve in the armed forces, the museum articulates such actions merely as essentialized patriotism. The museum could explore the ways in which class and race are inextricably linked, but uses such images in the process of nation building.
7.) The museum (while resisting chronological temporality) constitutes itself with a discourse of progressive relations between the federal government and American Indian people. It fashions itself as a highly visible form of progressive retribution.

8.) While as Clifford suggests, tribal museums often engage with opposition, critics of the NMAI have suggested the museum has avoided several important, polemical issues. They include the omission of in-depth, critical discussion of American Indian genocide, the goals of the American Indian Movement (AIM), a group challenging the “acceptable boundaries of resistance,”4 and repatriation policy. Repatriation is one of the most central issues to cultural sovereignty, according to some critics (Atalay, 2006).

The museum is far from monolithic, and assumes some of the same characteristics as its predecessors while claiming to break with museum convention. It is neither strictly a tribal or a majority museum by Clifford’s typology, making it a target of critique from binary perspectives. As I will explain, we can also understand the rise of the NMAI in terms of the trend toward increasingly more ethnically or culturally specific museums (Ruffins, 1997/1998). Other patterns over the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth have been an increase in the prolific use of media within majority museums and greater neo-liberal pressures to generate large portions of museum funding through private sources, as will be discussed throughout this project. Moreover, museums like the NMAI have taken on corporate-like systems, partnering with other large private interests and synergizing branding efforts in order to generate funds. Such efforts are personified by the appearance of more CEO-types rather than academics in “educational” public institutions like the Smithsonian. (Lawrence Small, the ex-Smithsonian Secretary who oversaw the opening of the NMAI, is a prime example, as will

4 I borrow this term from Gitlin (1980).
be discussed). While the NMAI reflects and constitutes itself with some of the idiosyncratic characteristics of a tribal museum, it can very much be understood as a grand-scale, national endeavor situated within the national museum complex.

As explained, the NMAI is a complicated site that has been the subject of quite a bit of debate, and it is productive in a number of ways. Studying such a complex cultural phenomenon requires a variety of multi-theoretical, disciplinary, and methodological approaches. While this section has provided orientation to the museum, the following sections will describe the approaches taken by the study at hand in order to better understand the ambivalent and contentious NMAI.

**Theoretical, Methodological, and Disciplinary Orientation**

This project employs a critical cultural study of the NMAI, a manifestation of cultural policy both revered and criticized by Native American Indian people, non-Natives, cultural critics, academics and museum goers alike. The museum and its associated discourses are non-monolithic and conflicted, and this study proposes we embrace the ambivalent nature of the NMAI and the ambiguities and contradictions within. It offers explanations for their appearance at this particular historical conjuncture as part of a set of specific socio-historical circumstances. The museum, while particular and idiosyncratic, reveals a broader understanding of changes in social conceptions of culture and identity. This study has employed several different approaches to the study of the museum as a complex phenomenon in order to avoid an over-determinist perspective. It explores the ambivalent messages of power and resistance in an effort to inform contemporary academic and public debates.
concerned with issues of cultural policy.

Although there are a number of orientations within cultural policy debates (as described in Chapter II), they are generally concerned with the relationship between culture and governance. Specifically, the approach taken within this project is a Foucauldian concern with the discourse/power/knowledge triad. It looks to the museum and the cultural policy prescribing it as manifestations of particular discourses and as mechanisms working to reproduce discursive orders. As I will argue, various discourses constitute the NMAI, including: 1.) nationhood and progressive, modern American Indian/government relations; 2.) the function of the museum as a dialogic/democratic site enabled by communications technologies; 3.) pan-Indian identity authenticated by the revised “expert” discourse, or the incorporation of American Indian “voice”; 4.) and modernism signified by multicultural awareness and a shift in relative object/museum status.

This project is largely an interdisciplinary study of culture and provides a critical/cultural studies approach to a series of discourses that constitute the National Museum of the American Indian. As mentioned, it specifically works to inform ongoing dialogue in cultural policy studies. It most comfortably considers critical/cultural studies its home because of its similar interdisciplinary orientation and concern with the intersection of power relations and culture. However, as will be made explicit as the chapters unfold, particular areas of the project deal more specifically with the concerns of various disciplines including media/communication studies, museum studies, and American Indian studies.

For example, chapters III and VI most explicitly inform the discipline of media studies, addressing concerns of identity construction in the popular media and the proliferation and use
of communications technologies within the NMAI and its “Fourth Museum” efforts. Similarly, Chapter V also deals with some of the concerns of critical communications scholars as it makes the connection between the NMAI and large media conglomerates and popular media texts. A description of the importance of public relations and the popular media in maintaining relationships with various constituents is provided along with a description of reception in the popular print press in chapter V. Chapter IV similarly speaks to the democratic concerns in media/communication studies about platforms for entrance into public discourse and the notion that public institutions are utilities for doing so.

Broadly construed, the entire project works to inform museum studies as it provides a specific case study of a contemporary, national, highly mediated ethnic museum addressing American Indian culture and people as part of the national museum complex. It is situated within a neo-liberal formation (as described in Chapter IV with more specific examples in Chapters V-VII) and reflects the trends of emerging ethnic and mediated museums. The museum’s alternative grouping, lack of labeling, and use of media to (re)place or augment objects should be of interest to scholars in museum studies, and this project attempts to understand this against the backdrop of shifting paradigms. Moreover, the NMAI’s position within the Smithsonian Institution also makes it an important mechanism for nation-building, a topic that should also interest museum studies and is addressed in chapters IV-VII.

Finally, the project works to inform American Indian studies. The NMAI not only stores and exhibits objects associated with American Indian cultures, it works to articulate a particular understanding of pan-Indian identity, as discussed in Chapters III-VI. To some degree, it acts as a cultural center, hosting various events and sponsoring traveling exhibits for
other museums (sometimes those considered tribal). It also provides a space in which American Indian people can display their art and culture. Moreover, it acts as a sign system within the capitol city, suggesting American Indian people are present there. Many American Indian people take pride in the work the museum does semiotically (as described in Chapters V and VI). Many scholars in American Indian studies have found the museum of interest, and this project aims to further inform the work that has already been done in this discipline.

The methods employed in this project include Foucauldian discourse analysis augmented by ethnomethodology (including participant observation), surveys/interviews, and archival research. As described in the next chapter, while Foucauldian discourse analysis and archival research were useful for understanding the discourses with which the museum constitutes itself and the ways in which such discourses are physically manifest, ethnomethodology helped to inform the project of the ways in which such spaces are lived by visitors and staff. Interviews/surveys allowed a better understanding of reception by visitors. Relying too heavily on just one method would have left gaps in the findings, as described further in Chapter II. In addition to studying the ways in which the museum is productive, this project considered omissions, or silences, and potentialities never realized.5

Project Roadmap

Chapter I has provided an orientation to the project at hand, the National Museum of the American Indian, its various complexities and inter-weavings, and larger related, conceptual themes. In addition, it has overviewed the various disciplinary homes between which this project sits and the methodological approaches that will be taken. Finally, the remaining

5 The term “silences” is borrowed from Carabine (2001).
sections will provide a roadmap of the chapters that will follow and the various objectives of each.

Chapter II will provide greater description of some of the relevant literature reviewed and methodological approaches taken in this project. Although not a comprehensive summary of all the various important literatures relevant to this project, the chapter will focus on situating the project within debates over cultural policy and Foucault’s notion of governmentality. It will help orient the reader to the theoretical underpinnings of the project, its multi-disciplinary nature, and the multi-methodological approaches taken in order to understand the discourses constituting the NMAI, its lived practices, and the ways in which it has been received.

Chapter III describes the construction of American Indian identity in popular cultural texts. It provides a general review of studies on texts including American Indian iconography, such as those in advertising, movies, television, and popular print press. It helps orient readers to the self-articulated goals of the museum to dispel the stereotypes solidified by the images in the popular media by allowing American Indian people the opportunity to “self” represent.

Chapter IV describes the cultural policy prescribing the material manifestation of the NMAI and the particular political discourses shaping that policy. It situates cultural policy like NAGPRA and the NMAI Act against the long backdrop of legislation on American Indian affairs. The chapter suggests new approaches in order to address the problematic ways in which current, Western policy reacts to indigenous issues. It also questions the notion of the public utility model as applied to public institutions like the national museum complex,
especially considering their past relationships with American Indian people and the current
determining factors (economic and otherwise) currently shaping the complex. I argue that
while many lament the disappearance of “the public sphere,” the national museum complex has
never been a site of unfettered democratic potential.

Chapter V describes the public relations and fundraising efforts of the NMAI during
its initial campaigns in the 1990s and then describes inaugural reception of the museum.
Explaining the economic/political/historical climate shaping the museum, the chapter identifies
various NMAI stakeholders (including visitors, contributors, partnering corporations,
journalists covering the museum, and American Indian people). From fundraising to reception,
the chapter described the ways in which the drive toward sponsorship constituted the museum
from the time of its inception and the importance of positive relations with various stakeholders
in the process. It further provides some cursory explanation as to why the museum worked
especially hard to court and meet the expectations of some stakeholders, while others were left
disappointed. It describes the ways in which the museum responded to economic pressures by
partnering with or accepting contributions from organizations perpetuating some of the very
stereotypes the museum purportedly works to dispel, some of which are described in Chapter
III. Finally, the chapter reviews samples of responses to the museum from the general print
press, academic journals dedicated to the museum, and museum interviews/surveys conducted
with visitors.

Chapter VI provides analysis of the actual physical manifestation of the NMAI itself,
investigating the ways in which space, media, architecture, and texts are utilized and relate to
the philosophies articulated by the museum. The chapter especially focuses on the use of
communications technologies in the museum, including high-technology “interactives” and multi-sensory presentations, and the ways in which they are used to (re)present Indian Country and other spaces in which Native people of the Western Hemisphere live. It argues and points to examples of the ways in which the museum and the biases of specific technologies used within act as parergon (McTavish, 2006), or framing devices shaping the construction of American Indian identity as did the popular communications technologies described in Chapter III such as the telegraph.  

Finally, Chapter VII addresses expectations of the museum and the ways in which the analytics of governmentality and a better understanding of cultural sovereignty help to further inform our understanding of the NMAI. It describes typical theoretical approaches to social institutions, including expectations of revolution, resistance, and reform. It suggests such approaches lead to a tendency to overlook power relations and the ways in which the museum constitutes itself. It provides a brief summary of the project, its limitations, and suggests areas for further investigation.

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CHAPTER II: CULTURAL POLICY, CULTURAL METHODS

The study of the National Museum of the American Indian and the intersection of media, museums, cultural policy, and pan-Indian identity construction required a survey of literature in many interdisciplinary fields and multiple methodological approaches. This project was informed by debates over cultural policy and governance; the construction of American Indian identity in popular culture; various notions of resistance, reform, and revolution and their intersection with cultural institutions and policy; museum studies literature, especially as it pertains to American Indian people and culture; and methods for examining the museum. Because of the polyvocality and intertextuality involved in this project, several research methods were employed, including Foucauldian discourse analysis, participant observation, interviews/surveys, and archival research.

In the following passages, Part I provides a summary of some of the literature reviewed for this project, especially focusing on the intersection of cultural policy and the Foucauldian notion of governmentality. While the review of literature in this chapter is designed to provide an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of this project, following chapters will include a more comprehensive review of other important, relevant literature. Part II will describe the methodological approaches employed in order to uncover the discourses constituting the National Museum of the American Indian, its material manifestation, the “lived” practices taking place therein, and its reception among various stakeholders.
Part I: The Study of Cultural Policy

Critical/cultural policy studies seek to understand the relationship between culture and governance (Bennett, 1992, 1998a; Miller, 1998) or the ways in which culture is “managed” and “administered” (Miller & Yudice, 2002).7 The broad scope of concerns incorporated in the study of cultural policy include a variety of forms from high culture to the production of popular cultural texts. Also of concern are the institutions emerging from the implementation of cultural policy. Cultural institutions are the physical manifestations of policy, such as public museums, libraries, media and other sites of public education and memory. Researchers better understand the relationship between power and culture by studying how discourses help to shape such sites, or the “materiality” of discourse (Toby Miller cited in Bratich, Packer, & McCarthy, 2004, p. 28). For example, the physical structure of the museum, its semiotics, architecture, and use of space might be read as a discourse.

Related issues in cultural policy studies include the government’s relationship with culture, how culture is regulated and funded by the government, used as a means of governing citizens, and the ways in which certain forms are privileged over others. Cultural policy scholars seek to understand the reasons why certain forms of culture are considered appropriate for government sponsorship through programs like the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the kinds of discourses naturalized or omitted in the process. For example, Miller and Yudice (2002) point out the most recent discourse emphasizing the pragmatic nature of art providing alternative outlets for at risk youth. They suggest this emphasis means a turn away

7 In most cultural policy studies discussions, including Bennett’s (1992), culture is understood according to William’s (1983) genealogy of the term as 1.) in the anthropological sense, as a whole way of life; 2.) as great and inspirational works as in “high” culture; and 3.) in terms of governance. Cultural policy studies looks at the ways in which culture is used in all three senses, but specifically how the first two are dealt with through the third.
from the value of art for its aesthetic or critical capacity. Such observations raise questions about the role of the government and institutions in determining what constitutes art.

Other points of critique concern international funding organizations like the World Bank, NGOs or non-profit organizations, corporate philanthropy, and international agencies concerned with cultural policy including the United Nations (U.N.), its Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and UNESCO, which is charged with monitoring cultural policy for the U.N. A major point of concern for cultural policy scholars is the political and economic pressure placed on national and transnational organizations involved in policy and funding. Cultural policy makers and workers determine which groups are worthy of recognition. There have been many struggles, even between disenfranchised groups with similar goals, to gain access to limited platforms for recognition and the resources such entities offer.8

Not only are cultural “stewards” or “practitioners” involved in the identity construction of particular groups, they also articulate nationalist discourses by claiming certain objects and heritage as cultural patrimony. Cultural policies and institutions may be productive in a variety of ways, including bolstering international relations and national identity. If the primary function of cultural institutions is to build nation, there are implications when these institutions partner with traditionally marginalized groups like American Indian people. The ways in which identity construction takes place within these particular institutions and is linked to nation are areas ripe for analysis in light of the many national, culturally specific museums emerging in recent years. Important questions arise including who gets to participate in such institutions and who the audience is comprised of.

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8 For example, as Miller and Yudice (2002) point out, leaders in both African American and American Indian communities sought the “last space” on the National Mall on which the NMAI was eventually constructed.
Another point of concern is the role of private interest in influencing cultural policy. Increasingly, corporations play a larger role in funding cultural institutions in the United States as federal funding has decreased. Many theorists flesh out the relationships between the state, corporations, and citizenship and the role institutions play in determining what constitutes art and culture (Miller & Yudice). Economic logic also guides the ways in which cultural institutions function. For example, some have questioned whether cultural institutions primarily function as sites of “fun” to attract tourism and to raise money (Bruce, 2006). A major concern is with how economic logic reaches into discourses about civic duty, helping to develop what Miller and Yudice (2002) term the “consumer-citizen” (p. 105). They seek to determine the relationship between the government, corporations, and the formation of the citizen. They ask who is excluded as the “consumer-citizen” dyad is privileged.

In addition to understanding the ways in which citizens are signified, cultural policy also concerns itself with the process of object signification. It asks why some objects are considered cultural patrimony, art, or artifact when placed in different contexts, and why some imported cultural materials are classified in particular ways. Scholars ask how cultural goods and texts are regulated, classified, produced, imported, and exported and what kinds of understandings are naturalized in the process.

Cultural policy studies also interrogates issues of international power relations and cultural conservation in light of the domination of the United States and other Western countries in the production of cultural texts like film and television content. Many countries and groups are concerned with the preservation of non-Western language, traditions, cultural sovereignty, and the ability to keep out consumerism in the face of globalization and

9 For example, the Justice Department is charged with classifying foreign films as propaganda
“development” as they attempt to promote local versus trans-national corporate products and interests. However, past experience has shown the United States’ refusal to participate in programs that aid in such preservation like the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) and the ways in which Western political and corporate pressures can also persuade international organizations like UNESCO to waver in their support (Miller & Yudice, 2002). The study of cultural policy helps us to identify such contradictions and the ways in which the formation of the cultural citizen is effected as a result.

**Governmentality and Cultural Policy Studies**

In light of the questions and concerns outlined above, many intellectuals studying cultural policy are interested in the efficacy of such policies and the more pragmatic role scholars might play in informing them. Tony Bennett (1992) in his seminal piece “Putting Policy into Cultural Studies” is particularly concerned with the ways in which intellectuals can help to inform agents of culture. He asks how culture and its administration may be better informed by critical scholarship in the formation of citizens and what “cultural policy studies” can do to help encourage such a course. Using the analytic of governmentality, he wants to understand the ways in which culture is both the “object” and “instrument” of government, and more specifically, the ways in which the “thought and conduct” of the populace become the objects of reform and cultivation by such instruments (p. 26). Rather than asking whether a particular cultural policy or text has revolutionary potential, he wants to ask how they stand within “a particular cultural technology” (p. 29). Bennett (1992), wishing to distance the study of cultural policy in cultural studies from a more Gramscian tradition, suggests Michel Foucault’s

if they question U.S. policy (Miller & Yudice, 2002).
(1991) notion of governmentality offers an approach less fettered by a sense of hopelessness about Institutional State Apparatuses (ISAs).

Governmentality is an extremely efficient and historically specific modality of power, following sovereign and disciplinary power and rising during the liberal reform movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Hannah, 2000). Rather than through physical force, power relations and social order are maintained as citizens learn to self-govern according to normalized modes of conduct (Rose, 1999). They learn about behavioral norms through mechanisms that are shaped by and reproduce power/knowledge formations like discourses. As mentioned, such mechanisms take physical shape like museums (Bennett, 1995). The national museum is an example of such a mechanism described by Foucault (1994) through which the liberal state (broadly construed) governs “at a distance” as a program to modify behavior in a particular way by encouraging citizens to engage with culture. Through the emergence of ethnic museums in the latter half of the twentieth century (Ruffins, 1997, 1998), public and private engagement with multiculturalism is prescribed as a normative and self-improving mode of behavior.¹⁰ As Bennett and Savage (2004) suggest, these institutions provide citizens with the appropriate cultural capital to signify that they have engaged with prescribed discourses. In addition, opportunities for “self-presentation” for traditionally marginalized groups are frequently made available through contemporary ethnic museums. Therefore, the museum is productive in a variety of ways for different people.

Several cultural studies intellectuals influenced by Foucault work to better explain the

¹⁰ According to Coombes (2004), multiculturalism is now prescribed in public education for the same reasons it was prescribed by British rule in the beginning of the twentieth century: in order to provide education to “the people” of all races as well as to further naturalize Western values. Coombes suggests that the rise of multiculturalism further reinforced the notion that people of all races were self-governing, while instilling the normalized curriculum of Empire.
ways in which power, culture, and governance operate. Foucauldians would suggest that power is diffuse, working differently at each particular site (Bennett, 1995). While Foucault (1979) suggested institutions like the prison work as mechanisms that maintain power relationships, he also emphasized the fact that power is not necessarily always merely repressive. In other terms, we should concern ourselves with the ways in which power is productive according to the specificities of each site or cultural phenomenon (Bennett, 1998a). Foucault’s notion of governmentality helps us to understand the ways in which cultural resources have been organized to act on the social not only through what is made apparent but through those things that are omitted or silenced. As will be discussed in a later section, Foucault’s discourse analysis helps cultural policy theorists to unravel those discourses underlying such social practices and the silences in between.11

**Critical vs. Technical Intellectuals**

There are different approaches to critical/cultural policy studies. As mentioned, while some theorists are concerned with praxis, making it their goal to inform cultural policy through direct involvement (Bennett, 2001), others wish to stand outside of bureaucracy, maintaining their relative autonomy as much as possible. They suggest the confines and structures of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) and the constitutive nature of policy will influence their critical judgment and ability to critique the relationship between culture, power, and social institutions (Said, 1994). Such debates might also be situated within a larger discomfort felt by cultural studies theorists with the Habermassian tendency to separate various activities into different realms or spheres. (The division of practical engagement and intellectual work is one

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11 The term “silences” is borrowed from Carabine (2001).
example). The debate over more “pragmatic” approaches to cultural studies is especially significant for the NMAI and other identity-based museums because they are often informed by discussions in the academy and frequently contain a self-reflexive component reflecting broader discussions over the most appropriate ways of presenting history. Although the role of the scholar and the cultural worker is often blurred in such contexts, the application of academic discussions is often contingent upon whether and how they become part of policies dictating museum practices.

Bennett (1998, 2001) promotes the idea of developing further “pragmatics” for cultural studies. He challenges Said’s (1994) notion of the “true intellectual” opposed to the bureaucratic thinker, strengthened by independence from bureaucracy, and the implicit academic universal moralism assumed through such a notion. However, despite Bennett’s desire to bridge the gap between the practical and critical intellectual and critique and praxis, he doubts the possibility of accomplishing such a task while various realms are imagined as divided according to Habermas’ (1991) conception of the bourgeois public sphere. He suggests there are some benefits to the moral codes of the bureaucrat in dedication to the institution and in creating efficient procedures and that these attributes might be coupled with the critical capacities of academics. In some circumstances, Bennett argues, bureaucratic “cultural workers” are attempting to create policy that shields or minimizes the influences of the dominant national culture, for example, British or American influence on other cultures via globalization.

Bennett suggests that not only are state institutions capable of being critical of the government, it is because of their place within the government that they are able to implement
policy that regulates government behavior. Conversely, as Rose (1999) argues, the rise of neoliberalism has created many new economic pressures for social institutions, resulting in “educational” mechanisms that are more like commercial enterprises that tend to privilege and reproduce their economic logic.

**Cultural Policy and the Study of Museums**

The museum is especially ripe for policy analysis because as Miller & Yudice point out, it is “the institution that is most often connected with cultural policy” (p. 147). Public museums are explicitly positioned and accepted as pedagogical sites (Bennett, 1995). However, the public museum, as any other social institution, is productive in many ways. In the first half of the twentieth century, museums dealing with American Indian history and culture privileged Western rationality, the expert, and scientific discourses of anthropology and archaeology. Bennett (1995), Clifford (1989), and Coombes (2004) argue that through the museological exhibitionary norms inspired by scientific ordering and anthropology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, museums worked to “Other” American Indians and other colonized groups by portraying them as savages, either extinct or living non-modern lives destined to extinction, while at the same time, such exhibits validated Western lives, technologies, and arts as progressive and civilized. Miller (1993) links the spread of industrialization and the “social scientific gazes” to the “classification of normalcy” through observation (p. 20). Through the study and display of human remains and the “collection of culture”, Western collectors removed cultural objects from their context and placed an arbitrary Western value on such items as art, artifact, or fetish, depending on where such items were
displayed (Fisher, P., 2004). Museums of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries worked to reinforce the West’s superiority by containing and displaying “exotic” cultures (Fisher, P., 2004) and by placing them as the least advanced along the “evolutionary series” (Bennett, 1995, p. 79). The museum purportedly acted as an encyclopedic institution, preserving cultures destined for extinction (Findlen, 2004).

More recently, “ethnic” museums (Ruffins, 1997, 1998) have troubled past museological assumptions, salvage ethnographies, ordering, and expert voice (Ruffins, 1997, 1998). A plurality of world-views now influences United States policy along with a plethora of other determining factors. However, as scholars of museum studies and cultural policy have suggested, one of the most important functions of the national museum is nation building (Coffey, 2004). For example, the NMAI, as will be discussed, articulates a particular discourse of nationalism and optimistic, progressive relations with American Indians (again, broadly construed). At the same time, contradictory political impulses and discourses manifest themselves within the same location.

In the following passages, I will explain the methods used for understanding the discourses constituting the NMAI, including: 1.) nationhood and progressive American Indian/government relations; 2,) the function of the museum as a dialogic/democratic site utilizing communications technologies; 3.) pan-Indian identity authenticated by the revised “expert” discourse, or the incorporation of American Indian “voice”; 4.) and modernism signified by multicultural awareness and a shift in relative object status. The study of such contradictions in institutions and discourses call for a multi-methodological approach.
Part II: Research Methods

This project employed a multi-methodological approach, including methods loosely defined as qualitative. The research is situated at the intersection of many theoretical and methodological concerns in the study of culture, cultural policy, museums, exhibition, and the media. In particular, methodological approaches of this project included discourse analysis, partially open-ended interviews/surveys, archival work, and participant observation.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

A pragmatic approach to cultural policy as described above is no doubt reflected in the National Museum of the American Indian’s goal of “giving voice” to traditionally marginalized groups through collaborative efforts. It is a goal informed by post-colonial conversations in academia in addition to American Indian activists and scholars. The museum’s self-understanding as a dialogic space breaks with the traditional natural history and ethnographic museum paradigm and resists the dominant “art”/”artifact” classification. The discourses articulated by the museum are similar to those identified by other cultural policy discussions because they are so closely tied with nationalism within the national museum complex and because they trouble traditional museological practice and reflect a more collaborative approach informed by scholars and alternative world-views. However, the work they do in terms of nation-building and in articulating a pan-Indian identity is extremely productive. In addition, the multi-cultural “consumer-citizen” is still alive and well within the museum’s commodified spaces and in the various partnerships into which the museum entered in order to meet funding goals.
The concerns expressed by cultural policy studies and Foucault’s governmentality analytic illuminate four dominant discourses (listed above) and two broad trends shaping the NMAI: 1.) The neo-liberal economic formation and 2.) A shift in museums as object-oriented repositories to sites of subjective enforcement, voice/dialogue, and participation conveyed through a discourse of empowerment. These concerns align closely with those of other theorists employing governmentality in order to understand the relationship between nation-building, traditionally marginalized groups, and corporate sponsorship. As will be explained further, the Foucauldian approach is augmented with ethnomethodology and surveys/interviews to better understand the process of reception as reflected upon by visitors and as observed. Archival research is conducted to get a better understanding of the museum’s self-understanding throughout the planning process and its relationship with corporations in the fund-raising process. This latter concern is similar for many cultural policy scholars in light of the pressures placed on cultural institutions in recent years as public funding has decreased.

Governmentality and Foucauldian discourse analysis are well-suited to studying museum cultural policy because they help us understand how power/knowledge formations are constituted through discursive formations. This project explored the discourses through which the NMAI constitutes itself, its physical manifestation, and its role in managing the conduct of citizens (Miller & Yudice, 2002). It further examined the ways in which citizenship rights were linked up with that policy.

Discourse analysis is a method that seeks to uncover or denaturalize a particular system of knowledge. However, while such an approach sounds simple, it can be quite complicated because discourses are intertextual, or connected within a series of other systems of knowledge.
In addition, they are generally naturalized, and researchers often experience great difficulty stepping outside of them long enough to analyze them. It is through discourses that various potentialities are “prohibited”/“excluded” or made possible (Bennett, 2003; Rose, 1999), and as Miller (2003) suggests, they often “hide” their own productivity (p. 44). The process of denaturalizing the productivity of discourses is indeed one of the greatest challenges of employing the method.

A popular, interdisciplinary approach taken by critical scholars called critical discourse analysis (CDA) concerns itself primarily with issues of power and social change (van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 2001). Of interest to scholars who use CDA is the dialectical relationship between social practices and discourse (Chiapello and Fairclough, 2002). They explore the various discourses associated with “social practice” and suggest the dialectic (highly connected) elements of human practices are networked together to create a social order (Chiapello and Fairclough, 2002).

Although most scholars employing discourse analysis are concerned with issues of power, Fairclough makes some distinctions between CDA and Foucauldian discourse analysis. In particular, he emphasizes the tension between the Marxist foundational philosophy of CDA and Foucault. Foucauldians are not as concerned with “false” ideology or the reproduction of hegemony, but rather focus on the productivity of power, including power relations and “systems of knowledge” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 233).

Foucault (1977) emphasized the ways in which discursive formations took shape in social institutions of pedagogical orientation (Bennett, 2003). He sought to denaturalize those discourses considered commonsensical that helped to shape such sites (Frow & Morris,
2000). It is from Foucault’s approach, considering even physical structures as intersubjective manifestations of discourses, that many critical/cultural studies theorists take their cue (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). Because of the inter-textual nature of discourses and the difficulty of uncovering them, many scholars take a multi-method approach, differing according to each object of study as did Foucault’s methods from archaeology to genealogy.

Foucauldian approaches typically concern themselves with institutions, or “social locations” (like the museum) and the ways in which architecture and design of social institutions reveal their “social logic” (Gabrium and Holstein, 2000, p. 494). In addition, Foucauldians are interested in the ways in which specialized, disciplinary, or expert authoritative narratives (often implicit in institutions) might be explored. Foucault worked “…to render apparent the polymorphous interweaving of correlations” and “micro-powers” that brought about transformations (Hajer, 1995, p. 47). Such transformations happened according to “definable rules” or their “discursive order”. In other terms, discourses create their own logics, legitimizing only some people, making it difficult to question their social positions and the discourses with which they constitute themselves (Hajer, 1995, pp. 48-49).

Key ideas for Foucauldians include the notion that discourse/power/knowledge are an “interconnected triad” and that discourse is productive, or actually helps to constitute that which it describes, helping to construct what is normative or “real” (Carabine, 2001). Foucauldian analysis does not generally work to uncover what is “true” or “false,” but the ways in which discourse is productive and the ways in which it “hooks” into what is already considered “commonsensical” (Fairclough, 2001, 2002; Carabine). Power, as reflected in dominant discourse, works through normalizing values. In is helpful to see the ways in which
knowledge systems are historically contingent, changing over time what a “logical” response is in a given context (Carabine, p. 275).

Carabine provides additional “key” concepts for researchers employing Foucauldian genealogical discourse analysis:

- The idea of power as operating and circulating at every level of a society.
- Normalization as one method of deploying power.
- The notion that power /knowledge/discourse are intricately intermeshed: ‘it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together’ (Foucault, 1990: 100.)
- The need to account for social context and relations so as to situate the power/knowledge realm.
- Discourses are constitutive.
- Discourses have a normalizing role and regulatory outcomes.
- The idea of discourse as uneven, contradictory and contested.
- The idea that knowledge, truth and discourse are all socially constructed and historically specific (Carabine, p. 280).

While discourses need not be coherent, some types of discourses, like those found in government policy documents, tend to be more so, regardless of context. Such consistency, Hajer contends, makes such documents especially ripe for analysis. Such banal “everyday, physical mechanisms” including policy documents and outlines of institutional procedure can tell us a great deal about the intersection of the civic and the social and the ways in which the state constitutes itself (Hajer, pp. 47-48). While Foucault emphasized the fact that power is
diffuse and “the state” is not easily defined or centrally located, the category of “the state” and its discursive formations nevertheless proves useful for understanding the ways in which power operates (Hannah, 2000).

Equally important in the process of analyzing discourses are those “silences” or possibilities not made apparent or available through particular systems of knowledge. While discourses routinize modes of thought and behavior and legitimize certain people, they are equally productive through their exclusion of alternative behavior, ideas, and people. Museums of the past featuring American Indian culture provide a useful example. While expert discourses of anthropology and archaeology were generally privileged in such spaces, actual American Indian people were not considered legitimate experts of their own culture. In this particular example, museums of the past have been problematized for their exclusion of American Indian “voice.” As I will argue, this is a kind of revision of the expert discourse.

Individual Agency, Foucauldian Approaches, and Limitations

According to Foucauldians, nothing is outside of power. Therefore, critics sometimes raise doubt about the potential individual efficacy or agency available through Foucauldian theory (Witcomb, 2003). However, others suggest Foucauldian approaches allow for agency because the “unwittingly active subject” helps in the process of shaping discourses that “enable and constrain action” (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000; Hajer, 1995, p. 50). Foucault held that “…institutions are only powerful in so far as they are constituted as authorities vis a vis other actors through discourse” (Hajer, p. 51). However, Foucauldian thinking does not emphasize independent subject positions or “a priori thinking subjects” (Hajer, 1995). Even resistance or

12 Other thinkers, including Witcomb (2003), vehemently disagree, suggesting Foucauldians
non-conformity is defined by the discursive order itself, according to Foucauldians. This latter point is a major point of critique for Marxists.

Another point of critique is the fact that Foucault never operationalized his changing methods (Gubrium and Holstein; Hajer). There is no “how-to” for observing lived practices and material effects and connecting them with discourses. Gubrium and Holstein (2000) suggest an approach based on ethnomethodology helps to fill in the gaps left by Foucault. They explain this as a “juggling” between the understanding of everyday practice by analyzing empirically the “what” and “how,” or the discursive practices, and the ways in which they “constitute social structure” (p. 499).

“Operationalization” of Technique

There are no “hard and fast” rules for conducting Foucauldian discourse analysis or other Foucauldian (1972, 1990, & 1991) methods like genealogy (Carabine, 2001). A Foucauldian perspective provides more of a “lens” for proceeding than a strict regime of methods. It can therefore be difficult to describe procedurally how one would go about conducting such research, and it varies according to project. However, below is some description of how this approach may be used.

Discourse analysis may be done by observing and then describing the “material effects,” silences, and semiosis of discourse (including non-verbal communication, visual, and verbal images) (Carabine; Fairclough, 2001). For example, social policy can be understood through an examination of policy documents, and a national museum can be better understood through description of its physical structure, exhibits, and planning documents. Thick position subjects as “pawns” (Marstine, 2001, citing Witcomb, p. 22).
description of “…the procedures, practices, apparatuses and institutions” help researchers to understand the discourse/power/knowledge triad (Carabine, p. 276). Carabine recommends the following steps:

1. Select your topic.
2. Know your data.
3. Identify themes, categories and objects of discourse.
4. Look for evidence of an inter-relationship between discourses.
5. Identify the discursive strategies and techniques that are employed.
6. Look for absences and silences.
7. Look for resistances and counter-discourses.
8. Identify the effects of the discourse.
9. Content 1- outline the background to the issue.
10. Content 2- contextualize the material in the power/knowledge networks of the period.
11. Be aware of the limitations of the research, your data and sources (Carabine, p. 281).

Approaching the National Museum of the American Indian

This project analyzed the discourses constituting the National Museum of the American Indian and related cultural policy. It explored the situatedness of various discourses relating to the NMAI within the social order and dialectic relationships with social practice. It provided a topology of discourses as described throughout the remaining chapters based on common
themes or overarching domains emerging from the text reviewed and material evidence and “lived” practices.

Texts Analyzed

In addition to surveys of academic literature, the following texts were reviewed to inform this project:

1.) Legislation:

2.) Nationally circulating and local press coverage of the museum’s reception were reviewed. Publications such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, and Indian Country Today included coverage of the opening of the museum itself and related events. Articles were analyzed. In addition, academic debates concerning the National Museum of the American Indian in two special issues of American Indian Quarterly and one issue of The Public Historian, dedicated entirely to the museum were reviewed. The publications articulated some of the most in-depth theoretical questions raised by the museum to date. Both the general print press and academic articles provided a comprehensive list of relevant and important arguments about the museum and its social function.

3.) C-SPAN coverage of important events including:
b. Director Richard West’s speech to the National Press Club two weeks prior to the museum’s opening.

4.) Archival research included a review of the several volumes comprising the NMAI’s primary planning document, *The Way of the People* and associated planning documents. Also reviewed were available Smithsonian Institution accessions from the Office of External Affairs and Development and the Office of Public Affairs. Archival research took place during the summers of 2006 at the Suitland, Maryland Cultural Resources Center (CRC) and the summer of 2007 at the CRC and the Smithsonian Institution Archives in Washington, D.C.

5.) Transcripts from interviews conducted with 50 museum visitors during the summer of 2006 were analyzed.

6.) Through a series of visits to the museum from 2005-2007, the researcher acted as a participant observer, and engaged with interactive devices, took part in NMAI tours, and observed public behavior. More systematic observations took place during the summer of 2006 with approval from the IRB and the NMAI. Extensive field notes were compiled and analyzed.

7.) Textual analysis of exhibit information (written, aural, and pictorial materials in exhibits and verbiage used by cultural interpreters, etc.) was conducted. The researcher then situated these texts within a broader review surrounding and within the museum. Pictorial images and audio recordings were taken within the museum. The researcher especially focused attention on spaces in which interactive devices, televisions, and other forms of electronic media were in use.
8.) NMAI exhibits and architecture were read as texts and oral and written messages were compared to other existing discourses regarding American Indian identity (including those described in Chapter III). A lose review of semiosis, or sign systems, signifiers, signified, and observable responses (Fairclough, 2001) was also conducted.

**Interviews/Surveys**

Whereas documents and observations may not always give researchers a sense of reception, interviews provide opportunities to better understand actual attitudes held by “ordinary” people (Carabine, 2001). Although all interviews have somewhat of a structure, more loosely based interviews allow the interviewer to guide the direction of interviews and to follow up on new, emerging themes (Ely et al., 1991).

The surveys/interviews conducted in this project were loosely structured around pre-written questions, and the interviewer (myself), engaged participants in brief conversations prompted by questions about the museum. In some cases, the questions were open-ended, while others merely warranted a “yes” or “no” response. The responses collected were studied in order to get a sense of museum reception and the ways in which the museum is being positioned by its creators.

Semi-structured interviews/surveys were conducted with 50 NMAI visitors to the museum 18 years of age and older with approval from Pennsylvania State University’s Institutional Review Board and NMAI Public Affairs Specialist Leonda Levchuk. Interviews took place on a Saturday, Sunday, and Tuesday in July, 2006 between the hours of 11:00am-6:00pm. More than half of the interviews took place outside the museum’s front exit doors.
The others took place on a walkway outside the museum where there is a clear view of the museum exit and heavy foot traffic. Once participants said that they were interested in taking part, I read from the recruitment script approved by the Pennsylvania State University Office of Research Protections’ Institutional Review Board and made print copies available to participants. In just a few cases, I recorded the interviews via digital recorder for transcription with the permission of participants.

There were several limitations to the study. It was extremely hot and humid outside (at least 90 degrees F), and after a little more than half of the interviews had been conducted on the second day, the head of security advised me that I would have to stand beyond the museum boundaries, as he said that any kind of “solicitation” on museum grounds was prohibited. He insisted that I move despite the permission I had gotten to conduct the interviews by NMAI Public Affairs Specialist, Leonda Levchuk and the documentation I had on site indicating her permission (a print out of a personal e-mail from her). Because it was a Sunday, and Ms. Levchuk was not available, the head of security proceeded to direct me off official museum grounds. The area where I would have to stand in order to be close enough to approach people exiting the museum but actually outside the boundaries of the museum happens to be in the direct sun during most summer days. Interviewees in many cases seemed uncomfortable in such conditions. I also feel that standing so far from the entrance de-legitimized my appearance as a researcher as it likely appeared as though the museum did not condone my research there.

Although small groups or couples were often together, I attempted to either interview one person at a time or separate the answers. However, in some cases, it seemed as though
people in a couple or small group agreed with one another, just adding comments here and there, and therefore I recorded just one answer. The fact that respondents were with other people with which they may not have been able to share their most honest responses may have been another limitation. In addition, my own approach in attempting to apprehend visitors as they exited and their own schedules may have been limitations to the acquisition of more complete answers. In addition, the survey was only conducted in English, and in several instances, I was unable to recruit potential participants because of a language barrier.

The interview/surveys were conducted based around the following series of open-ended questions:

1.) When did you visit the museum? (Approximate month, day, & year).

2.) What did you do or see in the museum?

   a.) Permanent exhibits:

      a. “Our Peoples”

      b. “Our Universes”

      c. “Our Lives”

   b) Moving exhibit:

      a. “Native Modernism”

      b. “Listening to Our Ancestors”

   c) Multimedia presentation: “Who We Are”

   d) Received a guided tour

   e) Saw a performance or demonstration

   f.) Ate at the Mitsitam Native Foods Café: If so, do you remember what you had?
g.) Other Activities such as:

   a. “A Thousand Roads”
   b. “Welcome Home”
   c. Video projected outside of the Listening to our Ancestors entrances
   d. “Window on Collections”
   e. Gift shop

3.) What was your reaction to the museum?

4.) Were you disappointed by the museum in any way? If so, how?

5.) In your view, what were the goals of the museum?

6.) Have you visited other museums in the past that have been dedicated to or included exhibits on Native, aboriginal, or indigenous people? (Such as the Plains Indian Museum in Wyoming, tribal/community or roadside museums, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Te Papa Museum in New Zealand, or the National Museum of Australia). If so, which ones? In your view, how do those other museums compare to this museum?

7.) Did you use any of the media technologies in the museum? (For example interactive touch screens or did you see one of the films or multimedia presentations?) If so, which did you use or see? Did you find them useful?

8.) What does the museum say about what it means to be indigenous or “Native to the western hemisphere”?

9.) Would you characterize yourself as belonging to any particular racial or ethnic group? If so, which one(s)? Do you think that the histories of your racial or ethnic group are
adequately represented by museums in America?

Survey results and analysis will be described more thoroughly in Chapter V and throughout remaining chapters along with other information on reception of the museum including a review of academic and general press articles.

**Participant Observation and Ethnomethodology**

Initial observations by the researcher and reviews of the museum suggest the museum provides alternative modes of exhibition as compared to other “traditional” museums featuring American Indian culture (Rothstein, 21 Sept. 2004; Fisher, M., 21 Sept. 2004; Richard, 21 Sept. 2004). One of the goals of this project is to describe the ways in which this particular site works as a medium and the ways in which the media within help to accomplish specific and totalizing experiences. Discourse for Foucauldians is not merely language, but also ways of “designing” things (Carabine, 2001). However, the museum is not a monolithic site, and as expected, there are a plentitude of different messages being communicated and interpreted within. One objective has been to gain a first hand account of this process through a series of participant observations from 2005-2007, most of which took place during the summer of 2006.

Employed were a series of ethnographic methods and tools used to understand the NMAI and various media technologies within. Spatial analysis was used to understand how this museum works to “educate” museum-goers with a careful eye to how they actually move through space and the ways in which they appeared to be responding to the visual and aural cues serving to guide their behaviors. The project also depended on the lived experiences of
the researcher. In other terms, the researcher attempted to observe the ways in which certain spaces were naturally conducive to particular movement by moving through them. The researcher’s (my) voice is present and identifiable throughout various aspects of the research and resultant writing as my own experience was situational. Studies on the topic of “media in space”, or “place-based media” were used as models for approaching “mediaspace”, including Spigel (1992; 2001), McCarthy (2001), and Couldry & McCarthy (2004), and others describing mediaspaces and inequitable power differentials as related to issues of race, class and gender such as Massey (1994), Davis (1992), and Parks (2004; 2005).

The study utilized ethnomethodology in order to observe and record “…the norms, understandings, and assumptions that are taken for granted by people in a setting because they are so deeply understood that people don’t even think about why they do what they do” (Patton, 2002, p. 111). Part of the goal of this project was to uncover the kinds of disruptions that people experienced while visiting the NMAI as a site of alternative forms of exhibition as well as what visitors take for granted in a social institution like a museum. Because museum visitors generally have expectations about the ways in which they should engage with a museum and what they will find there, the spatial design, interactive devices, and presentation of information generally follow certain standards, such as temporal layout or progression. Observing NMAI visitors provided an example of what Patton describes as “naturally occurring experiments where people are thrust into new or unexpected situations that require them to make sense of what is happening” (p. 111). In seeing the ways in which people react to the NMAI, I was able to observe the kinds of expectations and “tacit knowledge” museum-goers had upon entering the site.
I spent many hours observing areas within the museum that incorporate interactive devices. I created written records of such observations while watching visitors interacting with the devices, making a note of some demographic information such as approximate age, time of use, and whether the user spent time looking at the actual object and/or virtual image of the object presented on monitors. I also recorded visible reactions to the technologies, including verbal and non-verbal indicators. I attempted to get a view of the ways in which the information provided by the technologies was being navigated, although this attempt was sometimes unsuccessful as I had to stand far enough away while observing so as not to disrupt the actual phenomenon of interaction. My focus was more on recording the approximate age of the user, whether they were accompanied by other visitors or appeared to be alone, the approximate time they spent with the particular device, and whether they looked up or approached the glass to get a better look at the actual object.

While the employment of ethnographic methods to this particular project provided the benefit of observing “lived experience,” one of the limitations of ethnographic methods like participant observation, of course, was my own subject position. I am an outsider in that I do not identify as American Indian, but an insider because I am a museum-goer like anyone else (although admittedly, I do not always “fit in” attempting to balance my camera bag, digital recorder, note pad, and pens as I feverishly take notes). I do not share the same experiences as many of the group members represented within the museum, and in many cases, I do not have the same background as a Caucasian, middle-class female academic. Some of the participants with which I interacted were understandably suspicious of my interest, and gaining entrance took a certain amount of fineness. My experience is not surprising in light of the past
knowledge American Indian people have of “anthropologists and other friends” (Deloria, 1969). In particular, gaining permission to interview museum visitors was highly contingent on my interpersonal interactions with the “gatekeeper,” a Public Affairs Specialist who wrote in an e-mail that the only reason she was granting me access was because she earned her undergraduate degree from the same university I currently attend. The only option that I had while conducting the research was to attempt cultural sensitivity and be aware of cultural concerns while maintaining my balance as a critical researcher. There are limitations inherently built into any research method, and the best we can do is to be conscious and sensitive to our own situatedness and that of our methods. My findings were contingent on my interpretation of the material and my own “selectivity,” or where I determined it was appropriate to draw the line in terms of discourses analyzed (Carabine).

The kind of participant observation involved in this study did not require me to establish, to a large extent, a “membership” or “collaborative” role in contemporary ethnographic work (Angrosino and Mays de Perez, 2000). The norm of contemporary ethnography is to gain permissions from participants and to assume a more “collaborative” and “participatory” model. Complete observation is no longer the par excellence in ethnographic work because consent is now required for the safety of human subjects (Angrosino and Mays de Perez). However, the nature of this project varied a bit because it was oriented to a large extent around the observation of public behavior. Although it required Institutional Review Board approval, it did not require the consent of each individual observed (with the exception of survey/interview participants). In other terms, because the researcher was observing public behavior and a museum created for the public, there was no need to spend time building ethos.

13 Personal communication, Leonda Levchuk, NMAI Public Affairs Specialist, July 2006.
with the participants as museum goers varied from one moment to the next and the exhibits and even tour talks were prepared for the general public. While the researcher’s appearance may have varied slightly from the general public due to constant documentation (photography and note taking), I assumed the same role as most museum-goers (acting as an “insider”), moving in and out of exhibits like other visitors. There were times, however, in which I observed certain locations within the museum for several hours at a time, including the “Window on Collections” virtual kiosks. In such cases, it is my hope that I was discrete enough observing visitors in their “natural” environment, so as not to disrupt “normal” behavior.

**Archival Research**

Archival research in this project included a review of the several volumes comprising the NMAI’s primary planning document, *The Way of the People* and associated documents at the NMAI’s Cultural Resources Center (CRC) in Suitland, MD during the summers of 2006 and 2007. Also reviewed during the summer of 2007 were Smithsonian Institution file accessions from the Office of External Affairs and Development and the Office of Public Affairs housed at the Smithsonian Institution Archives in Washington D.C. Many early NMAI documents are now available through the Smithsonian Institution Archives. However, some documents, including “high-level” files from Director West’s office and “other offices that produce records of a sensitive nature” are restricted for at least 15 years in some cases.  

While museum archives provide valuable, original resources for many researchers, many archives are not centrally gathered or organized (Fink, 2006). My experience at the National Museum of the American Indian Cultural Resources Center (CRC) was no exception.

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14 Personal communication with Jennifer Wright, Smithsonian Institution Archives
The planning documents had not yet been organized within the Smithsonian’s central files, and the archivist could not tell me exactly what was in the CRC collection. There were no written descriptions or even records of the locations of particular documents, whether they were at the CRC or other Smithsonian Offices.

I visited the CRC in Suitland, Maryland four times during the months of July and August, 2006 and once in May of 2007. I scheduled the visits in advance as the CRC is not readily available to the public, as was my experience there and as I was reminded while on a tour of the collections. With great difficulty, I scheduled appointments with the CRC archivist in order to look at the museum’s planning documents, including “The Way of the People.” I spent several hours in the Archives reading room and in the CRC’s Library and was able to spend five full days with the archives in order to review *The Way of the People* and associated NMAI planning documents included in the CRC archives. I took extensive hand-written notes and photos and recorded the wording of some of the documents on an audio recorder. I also received a guided tour of the collections and some of the grounds and facilities by Collections Manager, Dr. Patricia Neitfeld.

During the summer of 2007, I also visited the Smithsonian Institution archives in order to review some of the files from the Smithsonian’s Office of External Affairs and Development and the Office of Public Affairs. The documents included inter/intra-departmental memoranda, press releases and other press materials, press reports (with press clippings), and correspondence between NMAI planners regarding public relations and fundraising efforts throughout the NMAI’s first two fundraising campaigns. Although document dates ranged, the

Management Team Leader, 18 December, 2006.

15 The dates were Thursday, July 20, Monday, July 24, Thursday, July 27, and Tuesday, August 1, 2006 and Thursday, May 17, 2007.
bulk were from the 1990s. They proved valuable in unveiling the ways in which planners wished to position the museum and their responses to various “crisis” situations in which relations with stakeholders including press, museum trustees, potential benefactors, or “ordinary” citizens became shaky. Findings from the documents are described more thoroughly in Chapter V.

Part III: Conclusion

The preceding sections have provided an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the project and a by no means comprehensive review of relevant literature pertaining to cultural policy. It also provided a description of the methods employed in this study, the ways in which they were administered, and their potential limitations. The following chapter will provide an overview of the ways in which American Indian identity has been constructed in the popular media and will explain the ways in which the National Museum of the American Indian is a response to such identity construction. The contentious, ambivalent relationship between American Indians and the media will be explored, and the chapter will allude to the ways in which the NMAI appropriates the discourse of subversion or “survivance” as it represents American Indian people through the same mechanisms. Finally, the chapter will begin to describe the ways in which social institutions like the media and museums are increasingly looked to as sites for entrance into public discourse. Chapter IV will describe the implications of thinking of such sites as dialogic and egalitarian according to democratic, constitutional discourse. It will suggest the ways in which the dialogic/democratic museum discourse has worked to shape public policy and the museum itself without reflecting the other determining factors shaping the museum.
CHAPTER III: AMERICAN INDIANS IN POPULAR CONSCIOUSNESS
Nationalism and Pan-Indigenous Identity

“...we have indirectly constituted ourselves through the exclusion of some others” (Foucault, 1994, p. 146).

“Savage Indians served Americans as oppositional figures against whom one might imagine a civilized national self” (Deloria, 1998, p. 3 taking from Lawrence, 1924).

“And while disparate, most of these sources share this: They were not created by Native Americans. Not the paintings, not the photos, not the movies, not the exhibits and collections, and especially not the histories” (Virtual Host in the NMAI, Our Peoples Exhibit).

Introduction: Imagining Indians

Throughout United States history, despite the multiplicity of tribes and cultures, “the” American Indian has had many faces in popular media, from imminent threat to national security, peaceful child of nature, wise and mystical creature, symbol of national freedom, to extinct species of the past. At times, such popular constructs even co-existed. Icons of “the” American Indian transformed along with notions of nationalism, not as static phenomena, but as contingent on socio-political-economic-historical circumstances. Our exposure to identity constructs through the media enable us to imagine what communities are (including national), how it is we fit into our imagined communities, and the ways in which we might use cultural signifiers to indicate our relationship with them (albeit frequently indirect). Subjects have imagined themselves through constructs and have defined their nationality and imagined co-patriots based on their perceived nation. We can suggest that such abstract values as “freedom”
and “civilization,” frequently at the core of nationalism, have been constructed in binary terms to a “savage” other in the United States and European history. By pointing out an example of what freedom and democracy are not, we can position ourselves as a nation in juxtaposition to the counter-examples.

Deloria (1998) similarly argues that United States ethos was very much constructed around those thought to be savage and saddled by nature. But, at the same time, dominant culture conveyed ambivalence about the loss of “savage freedom” as industrialization threatened the innocence of man (p. 3). There is more than an oppositional relationship between national identity and “the” American Indian or conflation of Indianness with Americanness. The binary of conflict versus conflation is frequently critiqued, but these are two extremes of a continuum, and there are complex issues of identity and nationalism in between.

The discourse of pan-Indian identity was first a product of colonization as Berkhofer (1978) explains, and later served the purposes of collective action. The later variation was taken up by social movements in the 1960s and 1970s and was used as a tool to “unite” various groups of people of Native ancestry for the sake of social advocacy. Once a colonial mechanism of power, the blanket identity “Indian” was eventually used to define policies pertaining to Native people (and therefore became part of the language of legislation and activism) and eventually aided in the legislation proscribing the construction of a portion of the national museum complex, the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian. The museum is positioned in part as acknowledgement of past social injustices and inequities. Such

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16 It is useful to look to works by Hall (1997) and Said (1978) to conceptualize the other, although Said is speaking about another particular historical moment and peoples when he speaks of Orientalism. Stuart Hall makes similarly useful points in several places including a
an institution and the discourses that have literally helped to shape its physical manifestations are worthy of examination as counter responses to dominant discourses. While in one sense, the concept of “Indian” lumps disparate people together without considering the diversity of particular groups, it has also been subverted positively or trans-coded (Hall, 1997) for its potential to mobilize collective action. The NMAI can in many ways be considered a response to what were seen as inaccurate and insensitive depictions of American Indian people historically. These representations persist in popular culture today. But, the politics of identity is complicated. The discourse of pan-indigenous identity works to “other” groups of people as “non-European” as it similarly works to challenge power relations and associated perceptions of race and nationality.

The following passages seek to explain current manifestations of nationalism/American Indian identity like the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian by placing their efforts and rhetorical decisions/dilemmas in a larger cultural context. This context has changed as policies have changed and traumatic events occurred, but has strong symbolic themes that are remarkably consistent in the history of modern U.S. media and popular culture.

The Politics of Defining “the” American Indian

Many works address American nationalism/identity as an oppositional construct. As Deloria suggests, “We construct identity by finding ourselves in relation to an array of people and objects who are not ourselves. Every person and thing is Other to us” (p. 21). I focus on the dominant discourses of nationalism easily discernable and their relationship with American

1997 Media Education Foundation video, “Race the Floating Signifier” directed by Sut Jhally.
Indian people during particular historical moments. In the process of examining texts, we can consider the historical circumstances of which they are a product. The “Indian as a general category and conception” was the topic of Berkhofer’s (1978) seminal work. This is important for its identification of what I would like to call a particular discourse of “pan-indigenous” or “pan-Indian” identity and its relationship with nationalism (p. 23).17

Berkhofer (1978) starts with Columbus’ contact, working his way through the centuries to the 1970s. His work explains that throughout the process of colonization, those “discovered” in the New World were thought of by their colonizers as uncivilized. Even as European nations staked new claims on behalf of their countries, they defined their own nations in terms of what they were not (ie: they were not the “Indios” from the Americas). The term “Indios” or “Indians” in reference to the indigenous people of the New World originated and became popular among Spaniards.18 It was later widely used by other Europeans, including the British, and French19 to refer to many groups of people considered part of the New World. Diverse groups from India to the Philippines and eventually all the way from South America to the Arctic Ocean were referred to as “Indians,” emphasizing the fact that they were all non-European (Berkhofer, 1978). As Berkhofer writes, “Whether evaluated as noble or ignoble, whether seen as exotic or degraded, the Indian as an image was always alien to the White” (p. xv). He argues that despite the fact that from first contact Europeans were aware of the many distinctions between individual groups of Indians, disparate peoples were lumped together in a way that made the British and other Europeans comfortable. As Berkhofer writes,

17 The terms “pan-indigenous” and “pan-Indian” are used interchangeably here.
18 Of course, Columbus had been looking for a shorter route to India when he happened upon the Americas.
19 Berkhofer explains the French began using this term widely later, more frequently using the term “sauvage” at first, roughly meaning “wild man.”
“…exploration and expansion overseas resulted from and reinforced nationalism at the same
time that it promoted an overall collective vision of a Europe in contradistinction to the rest of
the world” (p. 23). He continues:

Nations, races, and cultures were all basically seen as one interchangeable category for
the understanding of peoples, and individuals were usually judged as members of their
collectivity rather than as different, separate human beings. Therefore, general terms
embracing stereotyped characteristics made sense to Whites and could exist alongside
knowledge of specific societies with individual characteristics or of individuals with
varying qualities (p. 25).

The tradition of constructing nationality in terms of binary opposition did not end with
European colonization. Coward (1999) and Berkhofer agree American nationalism was in part
constructed in juxtapositions between “us” (those of European descent) and “them” (indigenous
people), including those who were “civilized” in contradistinction to those who were
“savage.” While the notion of nationality has transformed from homogenous “kinds” of
people to geographic regions demarcated by borders, binary identity constructs continue to
dwell in our language and imagery and remain linked in many ways to American nationalism.

Nationalism was often articulated in terms of conflation or contradiction with
indigenous identity discourses, whether indigenous identity was used to express patriotism or it
suggested a direct threat to it. Pan-indigenous identity constructs have cropped up throughout
history (in fact, the term “Indian” is a pan-indigenous construct in itself). While these
overarching identity categories were sometimes used to demonize groups of non-Europeans,

\[20\] As Berkhofer argues, the concept of barbarism did not originate in European contact with the
they were also used in idealized and romanticized ways. Deloria (1998) suggests there were moments in history when American nationalists used images of Indian people as a symbol for their freedom from other foes, for example revolutionaries dressed up as Indians as they defied their mother country. One of the most famous cases was that of the Boston Tea Party in which the British government was challenged by White revolutionaries donning Indian disguises (Deloria, 1998). Later, Deloria suggests romanticized American Indian imagery became popular as Americans began to fear the implications of modernity and industrialization. In both moments in history, Indian iconography was central for the formation of national identity. In either case, American Indian people had no say in the ways their imagery was used, and such images can frequently tell us more about their creators than their subjects (Deloria, 1998).

Many works review American Indian identity in the media and the ways in which their constructs were contingent on socio-political-economic conditions (Berkhofer, 1978; Weston, 1996; Coward, 1999). As will be discussed later, from animated cartoons (Klein and Shiffman, 2006) to newspapers following a supposedly “objective” news format (Weston, 1996; Coward, 1999), images of American Indian people have followed formulaic and discernable patterns throughout America’s history. According to many scholars studying representation and the identity construction of American Indian people in popular culture, they are grossly under-represented and have been largely framed in predictable ways according to historical imperatives when they do appear. Voices of dissent existed historically, but these often took a paternalistic form and were rarely articulated in public discourse by American Indian people themselves before the 1960s.

We can think of discourses as particular vocabularies that make some possibilities Americas, but that is a complicated topic for another day.
available while excluding others but are not necessarily monolithic. The NMAI addresses popular discourses about American Indian people in a video in the “Our Peoples” exhibit. Plains Cree actor Floyd Favel appears on a series of flat-screen television monitors hung within a gallery of George Catlin paintings, problematizing the representation of American Indian people in media, museums, and other popular texts (making his appearance via television within a museum performative). He explains to visitors:

We’re viewed as saviors of the environment, barbarians, and noble savages, the lowest form of humanity. Sometimes, all at once. Rarely are we seen as human beings. It’s a dizzying spectrum of impressions deeply embedded, fiercely held, hard to dislodge. They’ve been fixed in all our minds by histories taught in classrooms generation after generation. Hollywood has offered its own image of us. A powerful one forged and reinforced by movies, seen by countless viewers…These are persistent streams of information that have shaped impressions of native people. Repetition over decades has solidified them. And while disparate, most of these source share this: They were not created by Native Americans. Not the paintings, not the photos, not the movies, not the exhibits and collections, and especially not the histories…(From video in “Our Peoples” exhibit performed by actor Floyd Favel).

By addressing stereotypical portrayals of American Indian people in popular culture, NMAI planners have articulated an alternative, counter-discourse. As discourse presents opportunities for resistance to itself by demonstrating what possibilities are counter to it, dominant portrayals of American Indian people have also helped to construct their own opposites. While the older
discourses are often viewed as reflecting historical circumstances, the current pan-indigenous discourse is productive in its own ways.

Museum planners at the NMAI work to combat particular images of American Indian identity constructs in popular culture by emphasizing the fact that they (like history) were not inevitable. The images that are created within the NMAI tell us about the discourse of opposition that has been made available as a result of popular public images. Understanding these helps us to recognize some of the productivity of discourses emphasizing “racial brotherhood” (Coward, 1994) or the similarity drawn between various Native groups and what happens as a result of drawing or emphasizing these similarities. While the discourse of pan-Indian identity was actually a massifying White/Euro construct (Berkhofer, 1978), it has been used by advocates of American Indian rights as a means to mobilize action. However, it has not always been the case that such a generalization of identities has been desirable for particular Indian groups as will be described further in Chapter IV. It is clear that the NMAI’s planners are using the discourse of pan-indigenous identity, as others have done, for its conduciveness to collective action. As part of the national museum complex, the museum suggests that this pan-indigenous identity is also somehow American, despite the many abuses of Indian people through United States policy (domestic and international) and the practices of its citizens. Clearly, the use of such a discourse is an attempt to encourage a more positive framing of particular identities, which have been lumped together, despite their differences. However, the museum goes a step further to suggest commonalities among people who have not been lumped into this group previously by popular culture, but who, according to the museum, have some inherent characteristics that make them part of it as “Native”. The museum
attempts to positively subvert (Hall, 1997) the discourse, and suggests that despite past mistreatment by majority culture, such individuals should be proud to be lumped into this group.

Certainly, there is temptation to think of history as a great progression and to shake our heads at our follies of the past. Tomorrow we will marvel at the disillusionment of today. But, by looking at the very fluid nature of identity constructs in popular culture and their contingencies and productivity, we can get a sense of how they come about and what ends they serve. Once we abandon the idea that these simply reflect reality and that there are multiple images of identity, the act of choosing one over the other raises questions of why and for what purpose. By examining the most prevalent identity constructs of American Indian people in the media in the United States’ recent history, we can see the situatedness of our understanding of pan-indigenous identity, its intersection with nationalism based, among other factors, on a particular political, historical, economic, and social conjuncture.

The following passages provide a context for understanding the construction of American Indian identity in popular culture, from historical to contemporary representations in newspapers, television, films, and literature. In part, the objective is to demonstrate the ways in which a pan-Indigenous identity has been articulated and at other times excluded. The examples described are a selective composite, and, as will be argued, pointedly limited as conventional mass media have been particularly hostile to American Indian participation. But, these mediated discourses are useful in order to understand planners of the NMAI and other Indian activists are entering with when they attempt to subvert historical representations in the popular terrain. As will be discussed in a later chapter, museums themselves are a part of
culture and, historically, American Indians in many cases had a contentious relationship with them. So, the NMAI is in part a product of the conditions that helped to frame it. It is a response or a critique of that discourse of American Indian or pan-indigenous identity that currently existed in popular culture, and therefore, the conditions of that discourse itself helped to form the possibilities of its counter-speech.

**The Indian “Problem,” Culture and Modernity**

Weston (1996) argues that, “Indians have been in the news ever since there were newspapers in the territory that became the United States” (p. 12), and such accounts influenced the relationship between national and Indian identity. Coward (1999) suggests that two one-dimensional American Indian characters were prevalent in newspapers and popular entertainment in the nineteenth century onward: the noble and ignoble savage. Although the first was considered endearing, they were both thought be destined to extinction because they sat in opposition to or outside of the progress of expansion. This was conducive to paternalism over those “good Indians” who could be converted, that they might become governable and self-governed subjects who could exercise control. The ability to control one’s savage desires (including those of a sexual nature) was considered the mark of civilization. Whether represented as the romanticized noble savages or the bloodthirsty, evil ignoble savage,

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21 Clifford (1991) differentiates between tribal and majority museums and suggests American Indian people have had a particularly contentious relationship with the latter. Curatorial decisions in majority museums of the past were generally made by non-American Indians according to traditional museum standards and located far away from the communities they represented where actual American Indian people could not access them.

22 Rose (1999) points out the connection between national identity formation and discourses setting the nation in opposition to outsiders, whether threats or those that were merely impeding “progress.” According to Rose (1999), such a juxtaposition serves as a kind of “self-technique” for the majority (p. 47).
their “free” existences were doomed to fail because progress was thought to be inevitable and antithetical to Indian existence. Even those who lamented this disappearance did not question its inevitability, but suggested that Indian people could be saved only if assimilated in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Assimilationists believed those who did not convert to Christianity did not have the kind of self-control Whites had as civilization and Christianity were considered synonymously and their spread certain.

Coward (1994, 1999, 2005) situates news coverage of Indian events in the nineteenth century against the backdrop of civilizing discourses and ignoble vs. noble caricatures. Many newspaper articles focused on the violent acts performed by American Indians without providing an explanation or context, facilitating the violence of the Indian Wars according to Coward. The frame of the ignoble savage fit neatly into such narratives. Similarly, journalist Elmo Scott Watson (1943) wrote about the role of newspapers in greatly exaggerating the tensions building on “the warfront,” particularly near the Sioux reservation, leading to greater fear of Indians by readers. He compares articles from newspapers published in close and further proximity to “threatened” areas, and suggests those further in proximity, or those he names as the “big city dailies,” were greatly exaggerating the state of affairs in a war he called “phony” in order to sell stories (p. 208). He suggested that this was “propaganda disguised as news” (pp. 207, 219). Similarly, Coward (1999) explains the political and financial motivations involved in such stories. He explains that Horace Greely, the editor of the New York Tribune, had a vested interest in the railroad and therefore westward expansion. Coward suggests that Greely was one of the primary culprits in constructing “savage” American Indian identity in the nineteenth century, further fueling the conflict with Whites during the Indian
Wars and westward expansion.

As Indians were pushed further west, a greater demand for Indians arose in commodified form. Phillips (1998) suggests the iconographic Plains Indian emerged as “the Indian problem” of the east had in part been resolved through the 1830 Indian Removal Act and industrialization made mass produced goods and the middle-class increasingly more mobile. This was truly the construction of “the” Indian in the generic sense. Often, European characteristics existed in these icons. For example, the “Indian princess” was a prime example of the European notion of royalty mixed with the desire for “authentic” Indian identity (Deloria, 2004). This character appears in many forms of popular culture, from the filmic “Princess Redwing” (Deloria, 2004), to the Land O’ Lakes branding (Merskin, 2001, Green, 1993), histories of Sacajawea, and later to Disney’s Pocahontas (Bird, 1999, 2001b). As Bird suggests, she represented more than just the figure of an Indian woman; she was a metaphor for the land itself. She was seen as welcoming to the White man in accordance with expansionist imperatives. Whether she was sacrificing herself by riding a canoe over the Niagara Falls, offering up the bounty of nature as a stick of butter, or in her inevitable attraction to the White man, her role was one of validation for expansionist efforts, and she acted to welcome him in. But, the image of the Indian maiden dated back even earlier than the nineteenth century, and the use of the Indian maiden as an icon for White imperatives was nothing new. Even in very early separatist political cartoons, the Indian maiden is conflated with the imperatives of the White man (Deloria, 1998). She is often depicted as synonymous with the fledgling nation itself (and in opposition to Mother England). Later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, she fell in line with the narrative of romantic and star-crossed love (Bird, 1999,
2001b). Deloria (1998) argues that she later appeared in more “civilized” ways, oftentimes wearing clothing rather than going bare breasted, and acting in accordance with more civilized norms.

Bird (2003) argues that the most popular depictions of Indian women over the last two hundred years have been the lovely Maiden or Indian Princess that is uncontrollably drawn to the white man or the promiscuous squaw who will submit readily to her lusty desires. In each case, she was a construct that worked to validate masculine White experience. Indian women were pictured in such welcoming ways (much more so than Indian men) in part because they were seen as more likely than men to help their people go through a process of reform whereby they would assimilate into modern society (Trump, 2001). The assumption of reformers, according to Trump, was that Indian women were degraded, and it was up to civilizing movements to improve their conditions. They were seen as the gateway to civilization for the Indian people. However, Indian women were not always depicted in a sympathetic light, and as Trump points out, the image of “squaw drudges” drew a popular nineteenth century comparison between civilization and savagery. Usually such characters were depicted as overworked and sexually abused (in juxtaposition with “civilized” women).

Bird (1999) similarly argues that the sexualization of Indian characters and reference to their sexuality served several functions in texts of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the ignoble savage male was sometimes positioned as a rapist and the noble savage as a sexualized “warrior stud,” the female character was often positioned as either the Indian princess or the promiscuous wretch giving in to any sexual whim as described. Associating

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Despite the appearance of such characters, Trump argues that Indian reform movements, including groups of White women, were important in the commodification of American Indian goods, and in the process, they provided a counter-narrative to images of Indian women as
self-control with civility and morality was a technique of the self used by the British Empire and later passed to the Americas as a means of self-definition (Rose, 1999). Such notions were manifest in media texts. Newspaper coverage, for example, suggested American Indians did not have the same control over their savage impulses. In many stories, White men would sooner shoot their wives than allow them to fall into the torturous hands of the savages who might rape them. Coward (1999) refers to newspaper stories on the 1867 Fort Buford incident in which a colonel had allegedly shot his wife as Indians were closing in to spare her from the cruelty and defilement of the savages.

Rose (1999, referencing Foucault, 1990) provides an explanation of ‘uncivilized’ identity construction during this time period that is helpful for understanding stories addressing the sexuality of the “uncivilized”. He writes:

Thus, for example, nineteenth century images of the dangerous classes in terms of alien races within the body politic helped form and stabilize bourgeois identities; images of the sexuality of the uncivilized races subject to colonial rule located the ethics and morality of civilized sexuality within a fundamentally racialized opposition; and, as we have seen, practices for the inculcation of civility in terms of self-control were supported by seductive yet horrifying images of forms of ‘primitive’ life where such abused as greater value was placed on their art and they as artisans.

Foucault (1990) traces this notion of control through both Christian and Greco-Roman traditions. He suggests that these moralisms were different; Christians focused more on a systemic moral code that was adaptable to all areas of behavior, while the Greeks and Romans concerned themselves more with “practices of the self” through which the ethical subject could be free of and maintain mastery over the passions. Both, however, involved the relationship between control for the sake of seeking truth.

Coward cites the following on the Fort Buford story:


It seems such an explanation could also be applied to the influx of poor immigrants into
controls were absent. The colonial experience and the codes of race were thus constitutively engaged in the formation of governable subjectivities: what Foucault referred to as the kind of racism that a society practices against itself in the name of securing itself against internal dangers, and which will inscribe a whole series of micro-racisms within the government of the population of all ‘liberal’ societies (p. 47).

American Indians depicted as savages were considered of lesser integrity and mentality because dominant discourse suggested they did not engage with the same standards of care for the self as those of White European descent. Other social liberal reform institutions, like the public museum arising in the eighteenth century, provided techniques of the self for learning and refining one’s thoughts and behaviors. Such institutions, housing the objects taken and sometimes the bodies of American Indians, indicated that the more “advanced” society could contain the savage and exotic other. Such items then became the pride of the nation as cultural patrimony. While cultural citizens engaged with educational devices, Deloria (2004) suggests images of Indians brushing up against modernity by engaging in “modern” behavior were framed as humorous and uncharacteristic of the otherwise backward people. Similarly, Weston writes, “If Indians were often portrayed as exotic, strange, and separate from white society, their display of ‘white’ ways would be unusual and, therefore, newsworthy. This seemed to be the journalistic reasoning behind the selection of many brief newspaper stories” (p. 74).

Phillips (1998) argues the commodification of American Indian goods in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries helped to shape more paternalistic images of American Indian people. However, she suggests that such was the case only after Indian people no longer cities also driving westward expansion.
presented as much of a “threat” to civilization. The romanticized, Enlightenment-inspired iconography of the Noble Savage emerging in literature and art during the later half of the nineteenth century only became fashionable following the widespread removal and elimination of “the Indian problem” in what became the eastern United States (Berkhofer, 1978; Phillips, 1998). The Indian Removal Act of 1830 ensured that the country’s first cities would be safe from the Indians, and in a more paternalistic spirit, purportedly protected the Indians from a civilization to which they would have difficulty adjusting by relocating them west of the Mississippi River. Removal was believed a humane solution that would save Indian people from clashing with civilization by placing them on reservations. In a December 1829 First Annual Message to Congress, President Andrew Jackson expressed this paternalistic sentiment stating:

> Surrounded by the whites with their arts of civilization, which by destroying the resources of the savage doom him to weakness and decay, the fate of the Mohegan, the Narragansett, and the Delaware is fast overtaking the Choctaw, the Cherokee, and the Creek. That this fate surely awaits them if they remain within the limits of the states does not admit of a doubt. Humanity and national honor demand that every effort should be made to avert so great a calamity.  

Not only was it clear that the infantalized Indians needed civilizing and Christianizing because they could not control their desires, they also needed public policy to protect them

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27 Presenting counter-arguments to Jackson’s initiative to move Indians off their land, New Jersey Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen addressed the Senate on April 9, 1830. Interestingly, to counter Jackson, he hearkens back to President Jefferson’s vision, suggesting the Indians would be encouraged to cultivate the land and could be taught to be farmers, if they were allowed to stay (Frelinghuysen, 1830 cited in Prucha, 1975). The Indian as farmer was another civilizing
from the evils of civilization, desire, and reason. Of course, many groups resisted the removal, and the Indian Wars, beginning in last quarter of the eighteenth century, continued on peppered by tragedies like the 1838 Trail of Tears and finally ending with the 1890 Massacre at Wounded Knee. The disruption of the Civil War (1861-1865) and a growing industrialization also threatened the disappearance of nature and provoked a sense of “loss and fear” in Western man (Phillips, 1998, p. 107). What Westerners believed was the authentic Indian, often depicted dressed as a Plains Indian associated with limitless natural abundance, was in demand according to a form of imperialist nostalgia that prevailed after American Indians and what was considered undeveloped land became more rare (Phillips, 1998, taking from Rosaldo, 1989). As Meyer & Royer write,

At the same time, the Indian arts appealed to white Americans’ concerns about labor, modernity, and lost values: Modern America’s ills might be cured by contemplating lessons from the primitive past. Such images erased historical conflict and ignored present political realities, selling art objects that could be consumed without guilt (as cited by Trump, 2001).

In either the case of relocation or civilizing/Christianizing, there was no doubt that while the Noble Savage Indian iconography was bittersweet, it was considered part of the past as the progress of civilization was held to be inevitable.28

28 Individuals holding another more paternalistic understanding of American Indian people, sharing the same motivation of “loss and fear,” scrambled to record their cultures before what was believed to be imminent extinction. Painters like George Catlin traveled to the West to document what he believed to be disappearing people, creating portraits of American Indians, and also beginning some of the first Wild West shows. His portraits were more popular in Europe than in the United States, but others followed in his tradition. For example, when
The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also witnessed the emergence of new communications and transportation technologies, and these in turn shaped the ways in which American Indian people were understood by Westerners. Coward (1999), for example, suggests that news about American Indian people during the later part of the nineteenth century was very much shaped by the telegraph. News stories became less centered on eye-witness accounts from citizens and more the result of standardized stories with overly simplistic, “factual” information based on wire stories. By the 1860s, the telegraph was used widely around the world for news reporting. Sensationalized news about the Indian problem struck fear in the hearts of White settlers. Coward argues that the advent of the telegraph and the subsequent cultural form of newspapers encouraged the representation of American Indians as increasingly simplified and one-dimensional caricatures. Similarly, western-theme dime novels emerged in the 1830s and became popularized throughout the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a result of innovations in printing and publishing, dime novels were inexpensive and widely available. The often nationalistic plotlines frequently consisted of confrontations between American Indians (as ignoble savages) and White settlers.

Exhibitionary practices, including Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West shows, shared similar plotlines. Both forms of popular entertainment depicted the iconographic American Indian as standing in the way of and outside of progress. Early cinema also reflected the two predominant, extreme attitudes including those privileging extermination and those privileging photography became a more accessible technology, Phillip S. Curtis set out to photograph Indian people west of the Mississippi starting in the later part of the nineteenth century until about 1930.

Similarly, Miller (1998) suggests that developing technologies like the telegraph and railroad also played a role in the discourses of technological determinism seeping into everyday vocabularies. It was suggested that those who fell outside of these truths were excluded from modernity (Marchand, 1985).
assimilation/paternalism for the ignoble or noble savage respectively (Deloria, 2004). As with tourist art, many films employed familiar iconography including the Indian princess in order to appeal to White audiences.

Coward (1999) and Deloria (2004) suggest because American Indians were historically and materially in the way of expansionist movements, they were also in the way of an ideological national notion of progress. By defining them as non-modern and technologically illiterate, as newspapers and other forms of media did throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, expansionists could justify their actions. Communications technologies – the printing press, telegraph, newswires, professionalized newspapers, the camera, the dime novel, and film (all heralded for their democratic potential) – historically contributed to the construction of American Indian identity in such essentialist ways, according to Deloria (2004), Coward (1999), and Phillips (1998). Thus, American Indians had less control over those “technologies of truth” establishing “facts” about themselves. And, as Miller (1998) points out, those who control the media work in part to prescribe normalcy or operate what Foucault (1977) termed “technologies of normalization.”

As Coward (1994) notes, there were several Indian newspapers in the latter part of the nineteenth century published largely for Indian audiences, though Indian people were not asked to contribute to the “facts” established about them in mainstream popular culture. In fact, Coward suggests Indian newspapers, while frequently critical of government policies, walked a fine line between alienating their white supporters and their critical Indian readership. It is no surprise they took as their model for reporting those press sources found in mainstream American culture in an attempt to establish legitimacy.
The Twentieth Century

The twentieth century reflected the preexisting pattern of ambivalence toward Indian identity from the 1920s on. As increased technologization, mass production, World War, professionalized news formats, and psychologically-oriented propaganda and marketing became a reality, there was again a resurgence of paternalism in the United States. This time, Weston (1996) suggests the paternalism reflected a desire not to convert American Indian people into a more assimilated modern state, but to help them to maintain their traditional lifestyles. Perhaps this reflected the “fear and loss” (Phillips, 1998) of an ever-increasingly industrialized world. Similarly, “authentic” Indian goods had become a commodified signifier of the cultural citizen who donned such rarefied -- rather than mass produced – items, encouraging an appreciation for authentic lifestyles, art and the Indian artisans who had created them (Trump, 2001). The use of Indian culture generally worked in a one-way flow, in accordance with the desires of mainstream society, and “high” art appropriating elements of Indian tradition, like that of Picasso, was left for mainstream rather than Native products (Clifford, 1989). Additionally, the “pluralist” movement toward traditionalism ran counter to the still powerful drive of assimilationists, and the tug of war between them was very much effected by press systems, with the outcome being, “a consequence of the news process itself” (Weston, p. 2). Both, Weston suggests, proposed solutions to the devastating effects of the Dawes Act of 1887. The Janus-faced sides of the reoccurring debate suggested Indian

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The Dawes Act was devastating to many American Indian people because it encouraged assimilation by breaking up reservation land into individually-held plots, therefore encouraging Indian people to farm, cultivate, and “own” individual plots. The Bill worked to break up collectively held land by allowing White people to lease and eventually own plots not in use by Indian people. Farming and private property were thought to be marks of the assimilated majority culture, and the Act worked toward dissolving reservations and engaging American Indian people in such a system (Deloria & Lytle, 1984; Clifford, 1989).
poverty could be dealt with either through increased assimilation or a return to the traditional ways (Hinsley, 1994).

Weston provides a comprehensive overview of news and magazine coverage of American Indian public policy issues from the 1920s through the 1990s, and suggests the press have continuously reproduced common stereotypes of Indian people in their literary devices throughout the twentieth century, despite the prevalent notion of objectivity and “ideal of fair and factual reporting” (p. 2). She especially attributes the press’ tendency to focus on stories about the “unusual” and “human interest” as particularly conducive to stereotypes about Indian people, while important and complex legal issues are never pursued.

The constraints of the press industry, including tight deadlines, gate-keeping, logistics, budgets, and editorial decisions, encourage stories and characters that fit easily into conventional news frames. Contributing to the delegitimation of non-mainstream beliefs and people was the rise of the expert as a “legitimate” source of information via liberal reform movements (Rose, 1999). Perhaps no people have suffered from what Rose calls the “generosity of the expert” as the various groups termed American Indian. As Schudson (1978) suggests, journalism helped professionalize itself as “objective” and less “opinion-based” through the use of such experts. But, just as in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Indians were positioned as non-modern, and therefore non-technological or rational early in the twentieth. They were not positioned well as qualified experts, and were rarely asked their opinions for news stories on issues that directly affected their lives. Indians were not frequently invited to speak as “experts,” even when topics pertaining to them were covered in the national news, likely because their belief systems were not considered rational (Coward,
Therefore, mainstream news stories constructed images of “the” Indian without the benefit of Native peoples’ perspectives.

Although the associated images have transformed, many news-stories continue to include essentialist language. Indeed, as Reinhardt (2005) points out, even some of the coverage of the 2004 NMAI opening contained “new age drivel” and terms that were “cliché” and “cartoonish.” Terms like “Chiefs” “Braves” “Squaws” and “Papooes” have continued to appear in coverage throughout the century about different groups of American Indian people, despite the fact that only some actually used such terms and tools (Weston, pg. 70). Only a handful of distinctive, overarching frames were used interchangeably to refer to very different groups of Indian people throughout the twentieth century (Murphy & Murphy, 1981).

Weston attributes shifts in twentieth century reporting to several major historical phenomena and turns in the Nation’s definition of itself. She suggests 1930s print press coverage largely depicted Native American Indian people as 1.) Good or noble savages; 2.) bad or degraded Indians- no longer a threat militarily, but belittled and the objects of humor; and 3.) “exotic relics of the past who were more museum exhibits than human beings” (p. 59). Conversely, WWII coverage shifted to depict Indians as “warriors.” Although several thousand American Indians fought for America in World War I (largely as volunteers), the Second World War marked the first time in which Indians were eligible for the draft, and some Navajos played an integral role in the war as “Code Talkers” to help encode and decode secret messages in a variation of their language for the United States government (Holm, 1985; Weston, 1996). During the war, Weston suggests the “Good Indian” or noble savage warrior stereotype became a common news frame. Such Indians were depicted as brave “patriots” and “instinctively
superior fighters” (p. 87). Although such stereotypes were subverted, they continued to position Indian people as generic and almost non-human (and certainly non-white) in their special abilities.

Assimilationists took “positive coverage” to mean that Indians were easily assimilated into white culture, and used this argument to support the withdrawal of government support, thus facilitating movement toward termination and relocation in the 1950s (Weston, 1996). Critics suggested government support was synonymous with communism. In post-war coverage, American Indian people were once again depicted as lazy, and the withdrawal of federal funds and encouraged assimilation was positioned as a means of “setting the Indians free.” Such rhetoric hooked up with “anti-communism” in the cold war era of the 1950s, while the notion of individualism was valorized and conflated with “freedom,” that of “collectivism” or “socialism” was devalued, and Indian benefits were positioned by assimilationists as “handouts” (Weston, p. 99).

In the 1950s, Americans still predominately relied on newspapers for their news (rather than television news), and wire stories continued to be seen as especially objective. Neither the hard news stories nor the features fleshed out the complexities of assimilation. Receiving little national news coverage were the consequences of termination and assimilation policies in the 1950s during which time several Indian tribes were no longer federally supported or recognized, and several groups lost their land (Loew & Mella, 2005; Deloria & Lytle, 1984; Clifford, 1989).
Social Movement

The latter half of the twentieth century yielded heightened sensitivity about race relations as the Civil Rights Movement escalated. The 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of American Indian identity not merely as a generalizing tool for mainstream media, news reporting, and entertainment but also as an overarching category used to unite players in social movement. Popular texts like Brown’s (1970) *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* and works by Vine Deloria, Jr. (1969, 1973) emerging during the Civil Rights era helped to make majority culture more aware of the inequities faced by American Indians. The “Red Power” movement associated with the American Indian Movement (AIM) used the pre-existing pan-Indian identity to attract attention to the many issues and problems faced by various groups considered within this identity category. Many of the grievances expressed by AIM were in part a result of inequitable relations and residual effects of termination policies (Weston, 1996). Individuals associated with the Red Power movement participated in several confrontations/standoffs with the United States Government, including the occupations of Mount Rushmore, A Bureau of Indian Affairs office building, Alcatraz Island, and finally the Wounded Knee village on the Pine Ridge reservation in 1973, resulting in the deaths of two AIM supporters. AIM itself had many internal rifts and was never strictly organized in its membership (Messerschmidt, 1983). When the groups’ more radical actions drew negative press coverage, many American Indian people shied away from association with it (Le Beau, 2000).  

The press tended to focus on the personalities of the group’s leaders (Russell Means and Dennis Banks) and some of the more

31 Todd Gitlin’s (1980) study of the New Left provides a useful account of social movement and media. There are also many works describing the relationship between AIM, the government, and the media, several of which explain the events surrounding the Occupation of Wounded Knee, including those by Zimmerman (1976); Matthiessen (1985); Dewing (1985); Sanchez and Stuckey (2000); Burnett & Koster (1974); Holm (1985); Sanchez, J., Stukey,
extreme actions taken to gain press attention rather than the important issues the group was attempting to draw into public consciousness (Sanchez and Stuckey, 2000; Brady, 2003).

However, the events of the 1960s and 1970s led to a great public interest in American Indian affairs. It was also the first time in which Indian activists like Richard Oakes and intellectuals like Vine Deloria, Jr. had access to the media, and American Indian people were no longer seen as a “vanishing race” by the mainstream (Deloria, 1973/2003). News discourse similar to the 1950s emerged about the inherent romanticized benefits of being Indian, including the treatment of Indian religion/spirituality as “otherworldly” or “mystical.” Along with the commodification of Indian culture came the White “new-agers,” further fueling the cultural tourist market. Such consumption of American Indian goods was considered part of the “inner journey,” “self-presentation,” and “self-remedy” to one’s sense of ethical incompleteness as will be discussed further in Chapter IV.

Despite the fact that a new understanding of press coverage of racial issues was prompted by the Johnson administration’s 1960 Kerner Commission report (Murphy & Murphy, 1981), and positive stereotypes of the noble savage resurfaced, the “savage” and violent ignoble savage still appeared in popular media including newspaper and magazine coverage of important events. For example, press coverage of AIM events including standoffs and occupations were often covered sympathetically in the beginning, but still in ways that were over-deterministic, romanticized, and generalized. Eventually, as national press got impatient with the publicity stunts staged by AIM leaders, the ignoble savage returned. Also adding to the tension during events like the 71-day standoff with the government during the Occupation of Wounded Knee was the fact that the press had to rely heavily on government-
issued press releases because of government press blocks (Burnettte and Koster, 1974), and the militant and poverty-stricken ignoble savage (perhaps even associated with communism) once again became a popular character in the press. Romantic images were replaced by those of violence, and AIM was depicted as militant and radical (Sanchez & Stuckey, 2000; Brady, 2003).

Despite some negative coverage in the news, by the 1980s, the notion of “self-determination” for American Indian people had taken hold. These years were especially harsh in terms of Indian policy. The Reagan years meant significant reduction of government assistance for American Indian people leading to great economic hardships for many tribes/nations, especially when recession hit. Several reservations had to consider facing serious health and environmental issues in exchange for short-term economic growth (Weston, 1996). Others suffered health problems due to industries cropping up nearby. For example, some Navajo people suffered from radiation and eventually cancer, and many believe it was the result of uranium mining. However, the increase in journalist diversity and a greater sensitivity toward racial issues brought about more opportunity for Indian people to express concerns via media. The 1980s and 1990s also meant greater legal power for several American Indian groups, and passage of acts like the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and the 1989 NMAI Act suggested the impact of advocacy. However, greater movement toward American Indian “self-representation” did not mean the end of popular stereotypes or framing in the media.

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32 Several articles included comments from authorities suggested the group was acting as part of a broader left-wing communist conspiracy (Brady, 2003).
33 The 2000 documentary “The Return of Navajo Boy”, directed by Jeff Spitz, illustrates the
**Contemporary Depictions**

Because the notion of progress is so deeply embedded in America’s national ethos, it may come as a surprise that contemporary representations of American Indian people have changed little since the earlier examples described (especially because contemporary cultural citizenship proudly dons “multi-cultural sensitivity” as will be described further in Chapter IV).

According to recent studies, many depictions of American Indians have continued to reflect the characteristics and archetypes seen in earlier depictions throughout the twentieth century. In recent works, Bird (2003) suggests that although there is an increase in the production of Indian-made media projects, little has changed in contemporary depictions of American Indian people on mainstream television. The “prevailing archetype of the Indian” now she suggests, is the “noble savage” (p. 86), a throwback to the romanticized character personified in Rousseau’s (1762) *Emile*, a book on education. Oftentimes, he is portrayed as a handsome warrior “stud” characterized as “physically strong” but “structurally impotent”, or as a wise elder-type whose function is to provide spiritual guidance to the main, White characters (Bird, 2001a, p. 75). As described previously, male Indians historically have also been depicted as ignoble savages, including the sexual predator, the drunken Indian, the “shiftless loser”, and even the cannibal (Bird, 2003; Berkhofer, 1979). Those of the Indian woman have been the lovely maiden or Indian Princess or the promiscuous squaw. However, today, she most frequently appears on television and in movies in undeveloped bit parts, so in other terms, she is usually sexless and anonymous. While Indian male and female characters are sometimes highly sexualized, they are rarely depicted as having meaningful relationships with one another,

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34 Sherman Alexie’s (1998) film “Smoke Signals” is often cited as ground breaking for being the first feature-length movie written, acted, directed, and produced by American Indian people.
but rather, storylines most frequently develop relationships with White partners. The underlying theme is that once the Indian race encounters white members of the opposite sex, they become disinterested in their “own kind” (Bird, 1999, 2001b). In addition, Bird suggests that romance novels with western themes primarily target white women and most frequently incorporate a white woman as the heroine because of the target market and because the white woman fits more neatly into the “captivity” narrative as she falls in love with her tough but sensitive warrior/captor.

Despite the appearance of hyper-sexualized characters, according to Bird, contemporary media texts more often portray Indians as “wise, calm, spiritual—and living in a kind of mythical nether-world” (p. 87). Or as Kretch (1999) suggests, as “ecological Indians” or “children of nature.” American Indian characters in mainstream television have also been described as “stoic,” “non-emotional,” “limited,” and laden with “a heavy-overlay of romanticism” according to (Bird, p. 87). While Bird and Merskin (1998, 2001) suggest American Indian characters serve to validate the White experience, as is often seen in the Western genre, little is done to validate the experiences of American Indians or to portray a situation that has relevance to their current lives. Bird contends that contemporary stereotypes associated with Indian television characters are not necessarily always negative, but that they are still “narrow” and “one-dimensional.” Furthermore, she suggests that contemporary media images provide no realistic models to which American Indians can relate. Although some American Indian characters have appeared sporadically on different television shows over the years, Bird (1999, 2001b) argues that American Indian appearances, especially those of women, on television shows is scarce. As Merskin (1998) points out, the extremely limited
number of American Indian characters, especially female characters makes for a kind of “symbolic annihilation”\textsuperscript{35} that perpetuates the notion that because modern American Indian characters are infrequently represented, they have disappeared.

Research on advertising suggests similar archetypes continue to exist in marketing materials. Merskin (2001) engages in a semiotic project identifying the ways in which brands continued to dehumanize Indian people by depicting them as infantilized caricatures. For example, the “generic Indian maiden” featured on Land O’Lakes packaging continues with little change from its original 1924 version. Merskin suggests the Land O’ Lakes maiden continues to represent the archetypal innocent child of nature offering up her natural abundance. Other brands continue to use caricatures of Indian people to sell products including Crazy Horse Malt Liquor, Red Man Tobacco, and Sue Bee Honey. Sue Bee (originally Sioux Bee) is half Indian girl and half bee, blending non-human characteristics with Indian people (Merskin, 2001).

Other depictions of American Indians are featured as sporting logos including the Atlanta Braves (discussed further in Chapter V), the Washington Redskins, and the University of Illinois’ Chief Illiniwek, over which a great amount of heated debate has taken place.\textsuperscript{36} The University of Illinois’ 2007 decision to retire the mascot despite objections from avid fans reflects the tensions felt over the years between American Indian advocates and the University. Similarly, Green (1993) associates commercials depicting American Indian people with the same “Noble savage identity” construction seen in sports mascot logos, closely associating American Indian people with nature and extra-human characteristics. Green suggests the use of

\textsuperscript{35}“Symbolic annihilation” is described further in Tuchman (1981/1973).

\textsuperscript{36}The 1995 documentary “In Whose Honor? American Indian Mascots in Sports” directed by Jay Rosenstein provides further background on this debate.
common and stereotypical images of American Indians in advertising both “…denies that they are human beings” and “…denies to them any moral standing and thus any claim to moral consideration and treatment” (p. 323). He continues, “The conception of Native Americans as savages undercuts the very conditions for the possibility of moral respect” (p. 323).37 Such branding attempts to use transference to associate products with well-known American Indian iconography. The reinforcement of such misleading stereotypes continues the well-established legacy of depicting American Indian people being close to nature (Kretch). Despite the fact that the majority of American Indians currently live in urban settings, they are largely constructed as non-modern (Sanchez, 2003). Non-modernism and technological impotence can still be identified as predominant themes in media representations of American Indians from television shows to postcards (Bird, 2003).

Bird (2003) suggests that while there is a growing body of scholarship on representation, few have actually asked American Indian audiences what they think of representations of American Indians in the media. She found that American Indian participants in her studies believed most of the American Indian characters on television and in films were not honest portrayals. However, even when provided the opportunity to create new texts about themselves during a “creative experiment,” Bird (2003) suggests American Indian participants frequently stayed within the confines of accepted Western practices such as genre. Non-American Indian participants continued to include “token” American Indian characters such as the wise and prophetic spiritual guide. Bird concluded that because the media are so embedded and intertwined in the social fabric, people (including American Indians) are conditioned by the

37 Garrouette (2003) points out the frequent challenge to Indian identity, including challenges to the identity of the actor who was in the 1970s anti-pollution commercial in which an “Indian” man gazes at a polluted river as a tear rolls down his cheek. There is a demand for the
texts with which they are familiar. Sanchez (2003) similarly uses the example that even when an American Indian youth raised with a modern and professional American Indian family was asked to draw a picture of an American Indian by his classroom teacher, he drew the stereotypical, archetypal noble savage complete with braids and feather. He points out that while this youth knew first hand that American Indian people lead modern lives, he resorted back to the pervasive iconography so ingrained in popular imagery.

Merskin (1998) suggests that while television shows and filmic projects featuring American Indian people have provided many validating experiences for White people, there are very few instances in which such texts validate the experiences of actual American Indian people, even when American Indian characters are included. She asked Native participants a series of questions in a survey on 1990s shows and films featuring American Indian characters including Northern Exposure, and Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman. Movies mentioned were Dances With Wolves, On Deadly Ground, and Last of the Mohicans. Influenced by Tuchman (1973/1981), she writes, “As a method of actual as well as symbolic annihilation, Native Americans have been categorized as one homogeneous group of ‘Indians’ and considered on the basis of overgeneralized physical, emotional, and intellectual characteristics” (p. 333). She suggests that filmic projects and television shows both rarely feature American Indian characters. Both also tend to depict Native people as living in the past as events taking place in movies frequently depict historical conflicts with Whites from the era of the Indian Wars. She suggests, “…with the exception of the occasional episode…opportunities to see media portrayals of Native Americans in everyday life are extremely limited” (p. 341). Merskin suggests American Indian identity is most commonly constructed as lazy, humorless, and “authentic” Indian as such identity is believed to be rarified (Phillips).
unintelligent. Their spiritual beliefs are generally represented as “heathenistic nonsense” and their English-speaking skills very poor (Taking from Morris [1985]). Through her survey research Merskin (1998) found that nearly two thirds of respondents felt shows about American Indian people “fell short” because they did not accurately depict American Indian lifestyles.

Sanchez (2003) similarly makes the connection between news, pedagogical media, and “misrepresentation” in the classroom. He suggests because most teachers are not American Indian and have not had training in cultural issues, they are unable to correct inaccurate depictions and have less control over pre-produced content in general. Depictions of American Indian people as impoverished, drunken, and uneducated in both educational media and news reports severely affects the self-esteem of American Indian adolescents, according to Sanchez. Similarly, as Loew & Mella (citing Mark Trahant, a journalist of Shoshone-Bannock background) suggest neither the concepts of government-to-government relations within the United States nor the concept of tribal sovereignty are taught in schools nor are they considered important topics for mainstream press. Therefore, they suggest the majority does not fully understand the complexities of issues and arguments surrounding the concept of tribal sovereignty. Borrowing from Gans (1980), they argue mainstream news coverage is assimilationist in nature, and therefore bends more toward the interests of the White, middle-class. Many scholars and journalists have suggested stories featuring American Indian issues continue to fit into pre-established frames or categories. For example, Joe Allen, former publisher of The Circle, suggests most mainstream news-stories about Indian people fit into one of four categories, including “Indians on the Warpath”, or stories about legal battles; “Pretty Pow Wow Pictures,” focusing on “exotic” dancing and images; “From Reservation Rags to
Riches,” or stories about the ways in which gaming has made Indians wealthy; and “the Little Indian Who Could” about individuals who have become successful according to mainstream standards (as cited by Loew & Mella, 2005). These storylines are as stereotypical as the images they circulate. Of course, none of these categories could possibly capture the complexities or long and sordid histories.

As Perkins & Starosta (2001) suggest, the journalistic form used to report on Indian issues also plays an important role in the ways in which Indian issues are portrayed. In their own study on Midwestern coverage of the struggle over Anishnaabe spear fishing rights in the 1980s and 1990s, they found that quotations from tribal authorities were in almost all cases included later in stories after other non-native authorities, that their ideas were far more frequently paraphrased, and their positions given less “credence” as they were referred to less often by individual titles and more as merely generic “tribal authorities.” They also found that particular groups were referred to interchangeably and in some instances Indian people were quoted despite the fact that they were not members of the groups directly involved in the issue.

Ironically, although mainstream depictions of American Indian people frequently promote a kind of abstract notion of American Indians and their inherent connection with nature, many nations and non-federally or state recognized Indian groups continue to struggle with issues pertaining to the environment and land. In many cases, subsistence activities are interrupted as a result of pollution and many groups struggle to gain control of traditional lands and rights. Loew & Mella conducted a study of Wisconsin tribal paper coverage of environmental issues/tribal sovereignty. They suggest, “white reporters and by implication their readers misunderstand tribal sovereignty and fail to understand how it informs public
debate over the environment” (p. 102). They write, “Over the past two decades, issues involving tribal sovereignty have become front-page news, although mainstream reports about these issues rarely invoke sovereignty as a theme or define it for their readers” (p. 102), and therefore, non-Indian audiences are largely uninformed about what tribal sovereignty means. They suggest that tribal newspapers are important in addressing this shortcoming.

Many Indian activists are optimistic about the future of self-representation, or “cultural sovereignty” as will be discussed further in chapter IV. Loew & Mella suggest that in recent years, American Indian people have had a greater ability to contribute to stories about themselves in both tribal and mainstream media. They attribute the greater access to forums for public discourse by American Indian people to several factors including economic growth on reservations (in part from gaming), growing numbers of professional American Indian journalists and tribal newspapers, and what they explain as a “heightened sense of tribal sovereignty” (p. 101). They attribute part of this to the increase in tribal media, the phenomenon of “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983), and the kind of pride inherent in the increased feeling of “tribal sovereignty,” or ability for American Indian groups to govern themselves without interference. As mentioned previously, many American Indian groups have also had greater access to legal representation, and are currently fighting legal battles pertaining to issues considered essential to tribal sovereignty, including self-representation.

In addition to the increase in tribal press there has also been an increase in the use of the Internet by tribal schools and governments, enabling many groups to maintain contacts with remote loved ones and to contribute to information about their groups. Despite the fact that some groups still struggle to achieve connectivity (Anderson, 1999) and the apprehension that
others feel at introducing greater commercialism and non-traditional values into their groups via Internet, others have embraced the technology and are using it to teach younger generations more traditional values (Monroe, 2002). While many of these projects remain an interest primarily to Indian people, the fact that they have access to platforms to stay connected to themselves and other groups understood as “Indian” remains important to many (and is what Appaduari, 1996 referred to as an ethnoscape). Media projects created and acted by Indian people are also gaining more of a foothold in independent and more popular markets, including Sherman Alexie’s (1998) “Smoke Signals” directed by Chris Eyre. The concept of cultural sovereignty and its relationship with representation will be described further in Chapter IV, but the point worth emphasizing here is that pan-Indigenous identity functions in many different ways as is clear from our examination of its manifestations in popular consciousness.

Conclusion

“The” iconographic, stereotypical pan-Indian noble savage as a child of nature and abstract symbol of nation and land or as a blood-thirsty ignoble savage on the warpath seen throughout United States history continues in popular culture today. He/she still surfaces in many branding and marketing efforts, in mainstream newspapers, novels, television shows and on film. The pan-Indigenous/Indian identity as an umbrella category is particularly conducive to generalization. But, real issues that pertain to particular groups like environmental and land struggles and the complexities of the relationship between the United States government and particular Indian groups are rarely fleshed out in the popular media (Loew & Mella). Weston suggests, “…mass culture images of Indians, noble or degraded, strange or ancient, resonate
widely. But real Native Americans, because of their small numbers and relative lack of political and economic influence, are often unseen and unheard” (p. 16). But, the pan-indigenous/Indian identity is also conducive to social/collective action as was clear with the construction of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, part of the national museum complex and part of the “pride” of the nation. The manifestation of the museum, housing items collected over the centuries from disparate groups under one title, “Indian,” ostensibly addresses past misconceptions. Such is the perplexing and ambivalent Janus-faced nature of generalization.

During the Revolutionary War, the use of American Indian caricatures represented the new “rebel” nation (Deloria, 1998). During Word War II, American Indian people were depicted as super-human “warriors” (Weston, 1996). During the most recent war, Arizona Congressman Rick Renzi described the death of Private Lori Piestewa, a 23-year old female Hopi/Latina soldier killed in combat as "her last stand."38 Such language, while a positive subversion of a stereotype, reflects a generalization none-the-less. Some of the more recent depictions of American Indian people in the mainstream media have continued war-time legacies of the Revolution and World War II by using American Indian identity as quintessential Americanness because there is another enemy for the nation to “other,” to demonize. But, if WWII is any precedent, such nationalistic framing is a distraction from real issues that have little interest for Hollywood. Movies like Wind Talkers (2002), The Last

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38 Although the details of her death are unclear, it has been reported that the Humvee Piestewa was driving with passengers, including PCF Jessica Lynch, was struck during an attack, and she was wounded and transported to an Iraqi hospital afterward where she likely died. (Davidson, Osha Gray. (2004). A Wrong Turn in the Dessert in The Rolling Stone online. Retrieved from http://www.oshadavidson.com/Piestewa3.htm February, 2007). She has been described as “a true warrior spirit” (online Reality TV Magazine “Piestawa Family…”, May 82 2005).
Samurai (2003), Natural Born Killers (1994), and The Last of the Mohicans (1992) continue
the legacy of their predecessors like Dances With Wolves (1990) to sustain the nation’s ethos
and to validate white experiences as they introduce Indian characters and issues as
supplements, “adding spice” (hooks, 1992) to plots that are really about conflicted White
characters.39 One can only hope that emerging popular cultural texts like the films will take the
opportunity to explore the complex relationship between nationalism and pan-Indian identity
constructs and the dangers of forming expectations based on impossible stereotypes.40

The next chapter will situate the advocacy and policy efforts that have arisen partly in
response to the construction of American Indian identity in popular consciousness through the
media as addressed in this chapter. In addition, it will explain the long struggle over
representation and control of cultural patrimony in museums and the ways in which the
National Museum of the American Indian is a response to identity construction. The chapter
will describe the various ways in which we can consider culture from governance to resource,
using Raymond Williams’ (1983) genealogy of the term as a trajectory. Finally, it will
question whether dominant liberal constitutional discourse adequately informs our
understanding of American Indian issues and cultural sites such as the NMAI.

39 There are of course some counter-examples exploring the complexities of identity and
assimilation, but these are less predominant and are generally still essentialized.
40 Interestingly, several of the movies I have just listed are set during war time (From the Indian
Wars to WWII) and depict the relationship American Indian people have had with such
conflicts. War time seems to be especially important in the construction of national identity,
and thus it is interesting that American Indian people have a tendency of appearing in films
about it. It suggests, again, that American Indian people are still used to help construct national
identity. Just as Weston argues Latino people frequently appear in shows about the police
(generally as officers or criminals), American Indian people seem to appear frequently in
movies about war or conflicts involving US military forces. They appear over and over again83
as soldiers or “warriors.”
“I will never forget the tremendous sense of loss I felt as I turned over the remains of a woman from the Uyak site for packing and return for reburial” (Donald J. Ortner, former Chair of the Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, 1994).

What is culture? The Cultural Policy Debates and American Indians

To define the term culture is no easy task. Moreover, how we consider issues arising from the intervention of policy within issues of culture is also highly contingent on the ways in which we understand the term. Raymond Williams’ (1983) genealogy left us with three useful definitions. While his first two notions have been widely held, the third has more recently become an intellectual focus. Williams suggested culture has commonly been thought of as 1.) the humanities-influenced notion of high culture as “artistic output” from “creative people” (Miller & Yudice, 2002) or the very best of the best (Packer and Coffey, 2004); 2.) the social science/anthropologically-influenced notion of culture as an “…all encompassing concept about how we live our lives” (Miller, p. 67); and 3.) culture as a form of “cultivation” or in its “applied” relationship with government (Packer & Coffey, 2004, p. 667 citing Williams, 1983, p. 88). Tony Bennett (1992) summarizes the third notion of culture as “governance,” and suggests culture (in the first two senses) can be used as a mechanism to prescribe certain ways of knowing, being, and self-governing.\(^{41}\)

\(^{41}\) Packer and Coffey (2004) provide an example of the ways in which the third notion of control can be applied to an object/phenomenon. They describe the changing meaning of the motorcycle in different contexts and the ways in the behaviors and thoughts of motorcycle riders and museum visitors are governed through the object’s relative status. At one time, the “indigenous” motorcycle rider cultivated a tough image to signify membership, but various factors including campaigns to create a friendlier image (by corporations and bikers themselves) and the placement of such objects in museums like the Guggenheim and Chicago Field Museum of Natural history, have worked to reconfigure what the motorcycle signifies as
While power/knowledge formations work to legitimate certain people and truths while marginalizing others, some critical/cultural thinkers are optimistic about the possibilities of including more traditionally marginalized perspectives in policy decisions (Bennett, 1998). Others see its “practical” or bureaucratic application a means of treating culture merely as “resource,” delimiting its critical potential (Said, 1994; Osborne, 2006). The latter, more hard-lined Marxist perspectives influenced by Adorno (1960/1991) generally view power formations via a more repressive model rather than through the Foucauldian lens engaging the productive capacities of power. The critique of culture as resource finds problematic intellectuals who assume the pragmatic approach of partnering with Institutional State Apparatuses (ISAs) and bureaucrats in order to change institutions from the inside out. What is probably the most problematic aspect of this proposition for critics is the neo-liberal formation within which the governance of culture is occurring (Haacke, 1984). Museums are increasingly run as and partner with corporations, and oftentimes the behavior they prescribe is consumer-oriented.

Engaging both sentiments on Williams’ third notion of culture (as governance/praxis or as resource), I suggest we study the National Museum of the American Indian and associated cultural policy through the lens of ensuing cultural policy debates (Bennett, 1983; Miller, 1998; Rose, 1999; Packer and Coffey, 2004, Osborne, 2006). I ask how we might think of the latest attempts to incorporate American Indian voice into policy and its physical manifestation, the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian, against the backdrop of the many years of policy and cultural institutions devoid of American Indian input. However, I both art and artifact respectively (corresponding with Williams’ first two notions of culture). The motorcycle has a new value, signifying the shift in power/knowledge formation, but it is particular to the power/knowledge apparatus in which it signifies. It also prescribes particular behaviors including the less “violent,” more socially responsible biker/cultural citizen and well behaved museum-goer (Packer and Coffey, 2004).
also attempt to trouble an argument that presupposes the national museum has, or ever will be, an egalitarian site of public discourse, representation, and “democratized knowledge” (Bennett, 1995). I argue the liberal constitutional framework does not help us understand the complexities and contradictions of policies regulating American Indian culture and conduct.

While the museum has focused on the epistemic shift of Indian people as a known object of the past to living subjects brought into the democratic process, the underpinnings of cultural policies remain unchallenged. I ask what potentialities have become available by using culture as governance to “cultivate” particular thoughts about American Indian people.

This chapter offers an update in the ways in which culture has been construed as “resource” or governance/praxis within the national museum complex and the NMAI. Particular objects (like human remains) and the importance of “voice” have shifted in terms of their relative status and have come to signify new power/knowledge formations. This chapter also asks whether the economic logic of the museum is competing with or outweighing the new self-reflexive practices of the NMAI and the shift in power/knowledge formation they signify. It provides a historical context and set of examples to demonstrate the ways in which specific acts, interpretive difficulties, and contradictions arise from the inadequacy of discourse used to address power relations and Indian people. A vocabulary is needed to better understand the relationship between culture, power, and American Indian policy and in order to move beyond the idea that the museum is a democratic panacea or a repressive site where culture is merely “resource.”

In order to better understand some of the “double binds” inherent in American Indian cultural policy, the latter part of this chapter reviews key policy events focusing on three areas
including: 1.) the acquisition of artifacts, 2.) issues of self-representation, and 3.) trends toward fundraising and privatization or the neo-liberal formation under which the museum has materialized. I suggest two conclusions: 1.) The constraining nature of liberal constitutional vocabulary does not address the complexities or contradictions of American Indian/indigenous issues (Tully, 1995); 2.) The use of some objects in the museum and de-accession of others signifies a shifting power/knowledge formation that treats objects as more than merely resources, although they also still serve the instrumental function of nation-building as national cultural patrimony and operate within a neo-liberal formation.

**The National Museum and the National Museum Complex**

The shifting value of collections objects within the national museum complex indicates a wider discursive shift. Historically, the Smithsonian Institution housed a large collection of human remains. Some were studied and most were preserved to prevent their eventual natural decay. Many were stored in cardboard boxes collecting dust over the years since the nineteenth century. Of the collection of 18,000 remains, 4,000 were gathered by soldiers from battle and grave sites at the end of the nineteenth century per the United States Surgeon General (NMAI Act). An additional 14,000 were collected through archaeological excavations and donations (NMAI Act). A portion of the collection was at first housed in the Army Medical Museum, but all were eventually transferred to the Smithsonian Institution. The national museum complex viewed physical remains as “public property” collected in the Nation’s Attic for the benefit of “the people.” These remains were largely those of American Indians and other minorities. As always, cultural policy reflected a very definite attitude about precisely who “the people” were,
and conversely, who were the objects of study. Under the discursive order of science and the
power/knowledge apparatus that privileged it (the National Museum of Natural History), the
value placed on human remains was in their potential as objects of study and in unlocking
medical and historical questions. Policy encouraging and protecting their compilation in the
Smithsonian also reflected a particular power/knowledge formation and the power of scientific
discourses and science to determine “truth.” However, the value of such “objects” is
historically contingent and determined by the power/knowledge formation claiming jurisdiction
over it.

Over the past twenty years, federal legislation has included a more encompassing
definition of citizenry and human rights in the form of policies like the National Museum of the
American Indian Act (NMAI Act), 1989, and the Native American Graves Protection and
Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), 1990. These new forms of legislation reflect the
problematization of particular objects as collections (human remains and sacred and funerary
objects), while reaffirming the importance of the balance of the collections as national cultural
patrimony. Legislation enacting the construction of the NMAI was passed in 1989 and less
than a year later, NAGPRA followed, giving greater authority to American Indians to manage
their remains, burial sites, and cultural patrimony.42 This required federal agencies to inventory

42 According to the NMAI Act, “Indian” is defined as “a member of an Indian tribe.” The act
does not provide its own definition, but refers readers to the definition of “Indian Tribe” from
section 450b of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (1975). There,
“Indian Tribe” means any “Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community,
including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or
established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act(85 Stat. 688) [43 U.S.C. 1601
et seq.], which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the
United States to Indians because of their status as Indians” (Indian Self-Determination and
Education Assistance Act, 1975). Note that although the Act only defines groups within the
United States as American Indian, the museum displays exhibit materials on “Native” groups
from throughout the Western Hemisphere, including those outside the United States, using a
the cultural patrimony and human remains in their collections.\textsuperscript{43} They, along with associated funerary objects, were to be returned to the tribes with which they were “culturally affiliated”:\textsuperscript{44} We can understand such national policy shifts as part of a greater cultural trend from assimilation to multi-culturalism starting in the 1970s. Such changes were also prompted by the legal challenges of Indian advocacy groups insisting particular historical circumstances warranted better policies. This new value placed on human remains and sacred and funerary objects as well as inclusion of alternative world-views into policy structure signified a shift in power/knowledge formation and a new legitimacy for American Indian activists. In part, policy shifts have fostered different expectations of representational politics. In the process, the museum has become the par excellence of representation and the focus of power and reform.

\textbf{Cultural Patrimony and Power}

The Smithsonian’s Larsen Bay repatriation provides one example of the shifting policy. In July of 1987, the tribal council of Larsen Bay, a group representing the Native people of Kodiak Island, Alaska sent a letter to the chairwoman of the Anthropology Department at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) requesting the return of their ancestors. Excavated and taken from a burial site on the island for study in the 1930s, the Larsen Bay ancestors represented a significant, five percent portion of the total NMNH collection of physical human remains (Fitzhugh, 1994). Several weeks later, they received a more “pan-Indian” notion and linking those groups from within the United States to those outside its borders.

\textsuperscript{43} However, NAGPRA explicitly excludes the Smithsonian Institution (NAGPRA, Section 2.4). But, the Smithsonian has an institution-wide policy of adhering to NAGPRA policy.

\textsuperscript{44} “Culturally affiliated,” is defined as, “…there is a relationship of shared group identity which can be reasonably traced historically or prehistorically between a present day Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and an identifiable earlier group” according to the Native
reply from Chairwoman Adrienne Kaeppler that read, “the issue of deaccession is a complex one, which the Smithsonian must consider in light of the Institution’s responsibility to hold its collections in trust for the benefit of all people, not just discrete interest groups” (Kaeppler as cited by Pullar, 1994). Kaeppler alludes to the way the Smithsonian formerly considered remains as cultural patrimony, a notion integral to national identity for the larger majority (1991). While it is tempting to think of Kaeppler’s first response in terms of the critical “culture as resources” model, they also signified the greater value placed on scientific and nationalistic discourse. Eventually, the Larsen Bay remains were returned in the first repatriation of many beginning just before the passage of NAGPRA, signifying the new value placed on them.

The tradition from which such collections stem was also an imperialist indication that one group had power over another, so Kaeppler’s comments also signified a particular power relation that delegitimized American Indian groups and world-views. The possession of physical objects to indicate the dominance, imperialism, or superiority of a nation has a long tradition (Barkan and Bush, 2002). There are numerous examples throughout history (ie: the bronze horses in Saint Mark’s Square and the Greek Elgin Marbles now held by the British) (Barkan, 2002; Merryman, 1986).


45 The Larsen’s Bay case, according to Fitzhugh, 1994, Director of Artic Studies Center at the Smithsonian, represented a “watershed” moment in the long and sordid history between American Indian people and the Smithsonian. The case was widely publicized and gained a lot of attention about issues of repatriation. Shortly before it was determined that the Kodiak Island remains would be repatriated to claimants, the Smithsonian Repatriation Review Committee of five, four nominated by “the Native American community” and one appointed by the Smithsonian Secretary as per the NMAI Act (Signed into law November 21, 1989) had been established, but “not yet convened” (Bray & Killion, 1994, p. 7). However, they were not consulted regarding the case, and the decision to repatriate the remains was ultimately determined by Smithsonian Secretary Robert McCormick Adams.
Although modernism and scientific discourse provided justification for the gathering of human remains (and undoubtedly it was thought that science benefited “the people”) whom was on the side of power was clear as the bodies were removed from their resting places and gathered as “national patrimony.” Although this was said to benefit the collective, Native people had not agreed to American rule or the removal of their ancestors, and they were not considered part of the polis (Tully, 1995). Moreover, most American Indian groups did not value the concept of private property or consider their ancestors or land subjects of human possession. As Rebecca Tsosie (1997) points out, British common law did not consider most human remains as possessions, but in one obvious contradiction, indigenous remains were the exception and could be owned for the benefit of the nation.

Legislation including the NMAI Act and NAGPRA signify a shift in power/knowledge formation regarding what is appropriate in terms of collection. Such legislation has been influenced by the discourse of human rights, banning the possession and study of American Indian human remains. Such shifts suggest a changing value has been placed on human remains by regulatory apparatuses. However, the discourse of human rights also implies universalities and Western notions of time, and government (Tsosie, Brown). As James Tully (1995) suggests, the masculine, Euro-centric assumptions bearing universal values and constitutional vocabularies do not address the kinds of concerns many indigenous people have with the appropriation of cultural resources or representation. Introducing “indigenous” ideas into policy and culture brings great complexity as cases involving politics of recognition, representation, repatriation, redistribution and claims to indigenous material and non-material “cultures” have made apparent.
One argument suggests we do not currently have the vocabulary to address indigenous claims and that the determination of such claims can only be made through the incorporation of indigenous ways of thinking into constitutionalism (Tully, 1995). There are millions of indigenous people holding very different world-views. Some of these views suggest it is impossible to separate life into realms like “the public/political,” the private, economic, social, life/afterlife, etc. Some indigenous people have used individualist-oriented intellectual property and copyright laws for “total heritage protection” in order to guard whole ways of traditional Native lifestyles from cultural appropriation and to ensure resources (Brown, 2003). Michael Brown argues that such cases have legislated culture, therefore placing something that is by nature fluid in “an iron cage.”

Many groups long to have greater control over their material and non-material cultures or for cultural sovereignty. The nationalism proposed by American Indian activists is not limited to the rights of a domestic dependent nation, but involves governance on their own terms according to their own language and understandings of it (Weaver et. al, 2006). Some suggest the liberal notion of self-governance is not enough (Coffey & Tsosie, 2001). From this perspective, the notion of sovereignty itself, the term we have come to understand as “self-governance” is embedded with a problematic constitutional vocabulary as it is oriented toward

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46 In addition, Brown suggests heritage protection acts are frequently problematic because they require a uniform means of dealing with complicated issues of culture. Some of these include the Historic Preservation Act (1966), the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA), the National Museum of the American Indian Act (NMAI Act), and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990).

47 As a better model, Brown points to two cases involving Federal Land (Devils Tower and Big Horn Medicine Wheel in Wyoming) in which compromise and “non-legislated” solutions have been reached, “soliciting cooperation” and striking a balance between “moral choice and mutual respect” (p. 172). The conflict was between public use of the land thought of as sacred by some Indian groups, who wished to practice spiritual ceremonies in the locations without the disturbance of the public. Also a problem was the degradation of the sacred sites by the public.
individual rather than group rights (Tully, 1995).

**Cultural Policy and American Indians**

“To treat the candidates for admission ‘just like all the rest of us’ is not to treat them justly at all. It is to treat them within the imperial conventions and institutions that have been constructed to exclude, dominate, assimilate or exterminate them, thereby ignoring the question the politics of recognition raises concerning the universality of the guardians and the institutions they guard” (Tully, 1995, p. 97).

It was rare for American Indian perspectives to be taken seriously in key policy decisions about them prior to the Civil Rights years. Modern laws also continue to use older policies as points of trajectory. Although Indian people were encouraged to assimilate and were subject to United States laws, they (along with other “outsider” groups) were not officially included in the political process. It was not until 1924 that limited groups of American Indian people were allowed to vote (despite the fact some served the United States government in World War I as volunteers). While paternalistic insiders historically advocated on behalf of what they believed to be in the best interest of Indian people, rarely were Indian people themselves considered legitimate advocates for policy change prior to 1975, when the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act was passed, encouraging policies of self-determination, rather than those of termination. The Act provided greater control for Indian people over the educational systems of their Nations, allowing particular groups to administer their own educational programs by contracting with government agencies like the Bureau of Indian Affairs and provided grant money for various Federal programs. In 1978, the American Indian Religious

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48 President Richard Nixon is often seen as a driving force behind the movement of the 1970s policies. In his 1970 “Repudiation of Termination” and “Special Message to the Congress on Indian Affairs”, he encouraged “Self-Determination Without Termination.” He continued the
Freedom Act passed (AIRFA) and was later reinforced with an Executive Order by President Bill Clinton to “protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent rights to believe, express and exercise [their] traditional religions…including but not limited to access to site, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites” (Brown citing AIRFA p. 154).\textsuperscript{49} Other legislation like the Peyote Act (an amendment to AIRFA) worked to protect specific Indian traditions. In addition, the Indian Child Welfare Act (1978) came about in response to the common historical practice of placing adopted Indian children with non-Indian families in order to encourage assimilation. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, The National Museum of the American Indian Act and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, pushed by the legal advocacy group, the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), marked some of the most important forms of legislation heavily influenced by American Indian people.

International and domestic movement toward indigenous rights in the 1980s and 1990s legacy started by Theodore Roosevelt to push for the return of Taos Pueblo lands to Native Pueblo people, a struggle over which had continued for 64 years. Nixon’s goodwill toward Indian people may have been tainted in public perceptions in 1970 when the New York Times published an excerpt from a memo to Nixon from consultant and future United States Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (Kihss, 1 March). In the face of government confrontation with more radical groups like the Black Panthers, Moynihan suggested the government focus their attention on the problems of other minority groups such as American Indians as a strategy to turn national attention toward the government’s efforts in a process he called “benign neglect.” Moynihan wrote:

“We may need a period in which Negro progress continues and racial rhetoric fades. The Administration can help bring this about by paying close attention to such progress—as we are doing—while seeking to avoid situations in which extremists of either race are given opportunities for martyrdom, heroics, histrionics, or whatever. Greater attention to Indians, Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans would be useful. A tendency to ignore provocations from groups such as the Black Panthers might also be useful.”

\textsuperscript{49} However, according to Tsosie (1997), the courts have not been “charitable” while using AIRFA to determine whether American Indian religious practices have been disrupted (p. 73).
helped secure greater legal pull for Native groups. NAGPRA (1990) was considered a major step toward the federal recognition of indigenous human rights and the right to religious freedom. But, there were some limitations to the new forms of recognition emerging in the 1980s and 1990s. As Brown (2003) points out, the rights-oriented arguments of NAGPRA and the NMAI Act are very much based on liberal notions of democracy. These pieces of legislation became tricky to implement because they were only considered constitutional when they did not infringe on the rights of other individuals. Such became apparent in the Kennewick Man case. In this instance, scientists argued that the repatriation of Kennewick Man’s remains (found on federal land in Washington) was a violation of their first amendment rights to study the ancient man and contribute to the body of literature in their field. In

50 International conventions also grew from recognition of the abhorrent inequitable relations of power experienced by colonized peoples globally, including the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (Convention 169) adopted by the International Labor Organization in 1989 (Posey, 2002). Although not legally binding, others are considered important in providing guidelines for countries in their dealings with indigenous peoples including the United Nations’ UNESCO and the Working Group on Indigenous Populations Draft U.N. Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (1994) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992). While the UNESCO declaration claims to protect the “rights” of indigenous groups, it operates according to discourses of human rights such as “self-determination”, notions more akin to liberal constitutional and individualistic rather than collective group belief systems. However, UNESCO recognized “cultural landscapes” in its 1972 “World Heritage Convention” and the rights of “Peoples” according to heritage and group identity, and this was also a focus on the 1992 biological convention. Because indigenous traditions are less likely to separate food and medicine and spiritual and everyday life, environment is important for many indigenous groups (Posey, 2002).

51 Scientists involved in Bonnichsen et al v. United States argued that the First Amendment protected their right to “send and receive information” and to “facilitate the dissemination of knowledge” in their suit requesting permission to study the 9,000 year old Kennewick Man against the will of the Umatilla Indian Nation located geographically nearest to the site where the skeletal remains were found (Owsley & Jantz, 2002, p. 152). Attempting to maintain compliance with NAGPRA, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, who manages the land where the remains were found, was in the process of “repatriating” them to the Umatilla Indians when the scientists followed suit, requesting access to the remains. They contended that a.) the remains dated to a period of antiquity believed to be prior to the inhabitation of the area by the Umatilla Indians, and therefore it was b.) questionable whether the group were
addition, Native claimants struggled to prove the legal standard of “cultural affiliation” with the 9,000 year old male Caucasoid as the burden of proof lay on them. It also became clear that NAGPRA would only protect those rights of groups that were recognized as a tribe by the government, despite the fact that the government itself has systematically worked to disenfranchise various Indian groups through assimilation efforts and legislative initiatives like those of termination and relocation of the 1950s. Because the federal government ceased to recognize some groups as American Indian, those groups are no longer eligible for the rights or benefits of NAGPRA. It becomes even more difficult to apply these rights merely to “practice” rather than “tradition” or in terms of self-definition according to Michael Brown (2003, p. 244).

“direct lineal descendants” or “culturally affiliated” as required by NAGPRA for the repatriation process to begin and that c.) the brief, preliminary studies of the remains suggested that the individual possessed characteristics not typical of Native American ancestry (and typical of caucasoidal, also characteristic of South Asians) and therefore may not have been Native American that d.) further research was necessary in order to determine whether the group actually had a right to see the remains repatriated under NAGPRA, and E.) that the public would benefit greatly from the study of such ancient remains, and it was the scientists’ right under the First Amendment to contribute to the body of knowledge on this topic (Owsley & Jantz, 2002, p. 152). However, according the Gerstenblith, Kennewick Man predated the recorded documentation of Europe’s contact with the Americas, and therefore was ultimately considered an “indigenous” person under NAGPRA. The case itself caused confusion over the definition of “indigenous”, and therefore the term was clarified to include peoples that existed “prior to the historically documented arrival of European explorers” (Gerstenblith quoting statutory definition used by Department of Interior, p. 171). Kennewick Man was also found on lands covered by NAGPRA, including federal or tribal land, although the area was not legally held at the time the remains were discovered, by the Umatilla group or any other American Indian tribe. Therefore, the group was unable to establish “minimal” evidence of cultural affiliation, or “a relationship of shared group identity which can be reasonably traced historically or prehistorically between a present-day Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and an identifiable earlier group” (NAGPRA Act). Because the court could find no culturally affiliated tribe to which the remains could be repatriated, the Ninth Circuit established that NAGPRA did not apply, and the remains were stored in the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture in Seattle, a repository deemed “temporary” and “neutral” by the court (http://www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/kman/kman_home.htm). In addition, scientists bringing suit the Bonnichsen et al v. United States case were allowed to conduct studies on the remains because it was not required for them to seek permission as no presently existing culturally affiliated tribe was established.
According to Brown, “cultural continuity,” was a legal standard imposed on American Indian people as they struggled for various rights. Those unable to prove their tribal membership with a federally recognized nation do not benefit from the legislation. Additionally, because identity is so difficult to delimit in a settler society like the United States, such identity-based human rights legislation is problematic in its unyielding “absolutism” (Brown).

According to Patty Gerstenblith (2001), American Indian people (who were largely systematically removed from ancestral lands) must prove their ownership of particular lands in order to lay claim to the material cultural items and remains found there, according to NAGPRA. The only other exception is federal land, and thus cultural objects and human remains found on private and public lands are only governed by state statutes. Unless they are acquired illegally and “are commercially traded in interstate commerce,” NAGPRA also excludes private collection items (Tsosie, p. 71). A legal system based on private property is problematic for indigenous people because they have faced the pressures of assimilation. Laws in the United States and Canada at one time banned traditional practices, religious beliefs, and language, including the Dawes-Coke Bill (1884) and the Dawes General Allotment Act (1887) in the United States and the Indian Act (1884) of Canada (Phillips & Johnson, 2003). Similarly, the effects of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, a reaction to earlier allotment acts, also made it difficult for American Indians to meet such standards. First, it facilitated the return of tribal lands to some groups and rescinded government allotment policies and those of

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52 In his seminal essay on “Identity in Mashpee”, Clifford describes the legal standard of “cultural continuity” in which claimants to ancestral land were required to prove they had continued practicing their material and non-material cultures (language, spiritual practices, and lifestyles) without interruption in order to be eligible for the land and government recognition of the group. Clifford’s essay helped to point out the ridiculous nature of such standards in light of the transformative nature of culture and pressures put on Indian people to assimilate historically.
forced removal of Indian children and placement within assimilation-oriented boarding schools.

In this manner, the Indian Reorganization Act (1934) “promoted tribal self-governance” (Coffey & Tsosie, 2001). However, the Act also led to the 1954 “termination and relocation” phase, in which 61 tribes were dismantled and no longer federally recognized. Members were encouraged to relocate to urban environments like the Chicago land area where they could receive skills training for employment offered through government programs. In other terms, the termination policies of the 1950s ended “trust” relationships with some tribes and encouraged assimilation and entrance into majority culture. The accompanying rhetoric suggested Indian people could better manage their own lives if given the opportunity to leave the reservation and lead “modern” existences. However, it also meant they would no longer be federally recognized as American Indian.

Despite the long history of the legal enforcement of assimilation and removal from ancestral lands, the definition of authentic culture legally warranting claims to cultural objects and lands has until recently revolved around the maintenance of uninterrupted culture and lands despite historical circumstances. As Clifford (1989) suggested with the Mashpee Case, while the law has held culture up to an “authenticity” test in the past, it is by nature fluid and changing. While some groups have insisted they are authentic, legal systems in the past insisted on proof of “pure” culture, an impossible standard to meet. Moreover, it is at times considered unconstitutional to allow differential rights to American Indian people if there is a possibility such allowance will infringe on the rights of another.

It is now widely accepted that American Indian people legally reserve a “special status” as members of tribes, or “domestic dependent nations,” and also as citizens of the United
States. However, it is often difficult to implement regulatory devices that will protect Indians’
rights to continue religious practices while not interfering with the constitutional rights of other
people. In addition, it is often difficult to distinguish between the “promotion” of religion,
which is prohibited by the first amendment, while still allowing its free practice, as Brown
(2003) and Darrell Addison Posey (2002) suggest. This is in part due to the fact that religious
practices often entail sacred places. While Christian-influenced westerners are accustomed to
praying in an easily confined area like a church, many Indian beliefs center on sacred locations
such as mountain ranges or entire islands (Brown, 2003).

American Indian practices and lifestyles are to a large extent bound up with various
federal statutes charged with cultural preservation as sacred sites and natural resources are in
many cases protected by such laws. Federal bodies governing such natural resources include
the National Park Service, The Bureau of Land Management, and the Fish and Wildlife
Service. Federal statutes include the National Historic Preservation Act (NHP) (1966), the
Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) (which replaced the Antiquities Act of
1906). In addition, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) was a charter to
protect the environment by requiring businesses to make informed decisions when engaging in
development. It required Indian people to bear the burden of providing evidence that such
development would have an impact on their health and environment (Coffey and Tsosie).

While the older laws, including ARPA and the Antiquities Act before it, treated Indian
remains merely as resources and did not emphasize the importance Indian people put on letting
remains rest undisturbed, they protected the rights of archaeologists to preserve remains from
more natural cycles. If remains were found on federal lands, they were considered federal

\[53\] Traditionally, these agencies held thousands of Indian human remains.
property according to ARPA, and if found on reservations, they were considered the property of the tribe. In addition, preservation of such lands was for “public” use rather than specifically for Indian sacred ceremonies. Laws like ARPA treated human remains as national possessions.

As Rebecca Tsosie explains, most Anglo-American corpses are not considered “property” under common law, and the disturbance of a gravesite is punishable by law. However, because the study of Indian people was considered beneficial to the public and their burial practices were different, their bodies were subject to a different standard.

While preservation statutes of the past (like the Antiquities Act) treated Indian bodies as federal property, newer laws consider the rights of Indian people rather than just archaeologists. NAGPRA was implemented to remedy such unequal treatment of human remains, and recognizes that Indian people do not hold the same notion of “next of kin” when considering family or ancestors. Legislation allowing American Indian people the opportunity to decide the appropriate means of handling important cultural patrimony, sacred and funerary objects, and the burial of their deceased ancestors is considered by many American Indian activists as “basic human rights” (Tsosie, 1997, p. 67).

To a large extent, NAGPRA’s burden fell on federal institutions. Curators had to inventory and return items with a rather sickly granting budget from the National Park Service to be shared by public museums and federal agencies pending award of grant. Museums were left with the costly responsibility of funding the labor-intensive inventorying and repatriation or risk violation of the law. Such cultural politics of redistribution and recognition are excellent examples of the contingent and shifting understanding of culture and the material consequences of such a shift. Shifting understandings of culture also have influenced the ways in which the
Smithsonian has approached native peoples, even before the NMAI was constructed.

**The Smithsonian, Indians, and Ethnologists**

Cultural policies oriented toward Indian people can be better understood in the longer historical context concerning museums, Indians, and ethnologists. Through the museological exhibitionary norms inspired by scientific ordering and anthropology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, museums worked to “Other” American Indians and other colonized groups by portraying them as savages, either extinct or living non-modern lives destined to extinction. At the same time, such exhibits validated western lives, technologies, and arts as progressive and civilized (Bennett, 1995; Clifford, 1989; and Coombes, 2004). The museum was considered an encyclopedic-like institution for the display of artifacts (Findlen, 2004). Linked were the spread of industrialization and the “social scientific gazes” as determining factors for “classification of normalcy” through observation (Miller, 1993, p. 20). Through the study and display of human remains and the “collection of culture,” Western collectors removed cultural objects from their context and placed an arbitrary Western value on such items as art, artifact, or fetish, depending on where such items were displayed (Fisher, 2004). Museums of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries worked to reinforce the West’s superiority by containing and displaying “exotic” cultures (Fisher, 2004). Exhibition ranged from the display of human remains to actual live subjects living in mock villages (Coombes, 2004).

Liberal projects like the museum were also positioned as sites in which “the common man” could become educated as culture, once reserved for the elite, became “democratized” for the liberal citizen’s self-improvement (Bennett, 1995). The museum worked to occupy the
once rambunctious subject’s leisure time with more “civilized” behaviors and demonstrated the ways in which one should self-govern (Bennett, 1995; Miller, 1993). The lesson being taught in the museum was that the exotic “Other” was less socially and mentally developed than the civilized liberal subject of the West (Coombes, 2004; Hinsley). Anthropology’s scientific ordering became the par excellence of the museum form, and objects (including human remains) were arranged from the least to the most developed (Bennett, 1995, p. 79). Franz Boas (1887 as cited by Hinsley, 1981) troubled this evolutionary ordering of objects and proposed they be placed in “cultural context,” rather than in terms of a scale with the tools of Western civilization positioned as the most advanced. However, Boas along with players from the Smithsonian’s Bureau of American Ethnology, began traditions that would continue to treat American Indian people as the objects of the scientific gaze for more than a century.

The Smithsonian Institution played a major role in the United States as the only national museum complex and among the country’s first institutions representing public education and “original research.” The representation of American Indian people within the museum was closely related to the politics of science throughout the museum’s history (Hinsley, 1981). The institution, founded during the Victorian era in 1846, came around 16 years after the passage of the Indian Removal Act and following the era of the Trail of Tears in which thousands of Indians were herded west of the Mississippi, many of which died along the way. During the height of this civilizing movement, a “salvage ethnography” was emerging. This movement suggested that it was the role of the ethnologist and the museum to record material culture, language, and practices because they would soon be gone. Curtis Hinsley describes the Victorian era as confusing, and especially following the devastation of the Civil War, museums

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54 Boas famously insisted, “Classification is not explanation” (Boas, 1887 as cited by Hinsley).
took on a moral function.\textsuperscript{55} The notion that civilized man had interrupted the natural process in order to take control of his destiny also resonated with this moralism, and it was reflected in various forms of public education (Hinsley). As ethnology in the latter part of the nineteenth century was a developing field, the Smithsonian’s Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) administrators made every effort to distinguish their works from those of amateurs and to position the field of anthropology as more scientific. Hinsley writes:

The men who established anthropology in the National Museum saw their enterprise as a pious endeavor in an age of science and religious doubt; they called themselves scientists, but theirs was as often an aesthetic and religious exercise, and always a moral service to the nation. By displaying order in the tangible works of man through all ages and places, they would confirm cosmic purpose. The consequence of this stance was an anthropology that was constraining rather than expansive, classificatory rather than exploratory. The anthropologists of the early National Museum sought to contain the world within walls and categories; they sought old verities, not new truths. (p. 84)

The national museum and BAE were shaped by the personalities and political/moral ideologies of their leaders and the era in which they emerged (Hinsley, 1994). Of the most powerful and popular notions commanding the decisions of Smithsonian and BAE leaders was the notion that savage man was in a specific stage of human social development. Thus, despite

\textsuperscript{55} Hinsley describes the Victorian era as confusing and angst-ridden because while they were privileged, it was believed industrialism, science, and man’s own technologies threatened his innocence, as evidenced by the unprecedented number of deaths during the Civil War (1861-1865). Phillips describes this same feeling as “a sense of loss and fear” (Phillips, 1998, p. 107). As scientific explanations like Darwin’s 1859 Biological Evolutionism replaced religious discourses, Hinsley suggests museum exhibitions shifted from the wonders of God to the
the realities of government policies of forced assimilation, the museum continued to represent Indian people in their “primitive” state throughout the bulk of the twentieth century (Phillips, 1998). However, the portrayal of “primitives” had ideological implications beyond representation.

Liberal reform museums like the Smithsonian’s were oriented toward training docile bodies how to be civilized by placing them on the opposite side of the “savage” (Bennett, 1995). While the first museums acted as sovereign displays of power and later curiosity shops, the museum emerging in the era of the Smithsonian acted as a disciplinary mechanism and is now thought of a site of democratic representation. However, as I will explain, the museum as a platform for public discourse has many problems.

Foucault’s modalities of power map onto United States relations with American Indian people as they have been used to provide “the people” with ways in which they can imagine themselves through discourses of nationalism. But, we can also see the shifts relating directly to Indian people from their forced removal and genocide during westward expansion (sovereign power), to the later means of disciplining in “educational” institutions like Indian boarding schools (disciplinary power), through the measurement of their Indian identity through physical techniques like blood quantum, and in the process of assimilation by providing techniques of the self through which Indian people can self-govern within the acceptable

creation of man, despite the ambivalence felt over it.

56 Consider the Smithsonian’s African American Art and Culture Museum recently passed by Congress and the National Holocaust Memorial Museum (not part of the Smithsonian, but located near the National Mall), in addition to the NMAI.

57 The disciplinary machines proposed to “educate” American Indian students in the Nineteenth century as described by Crain (2003) could be likened to those machines for learning highlighted in Foucault’s Discipline and Punish. Marketers of the “reading station,” (circa 1812) for example, suggested that far less teachers could teach a greater number of students their lessons more efficiently using this machine (See Appendix I).
boundaries of resistance, including juridical as opposed to radical means (governmentality). However, collaboration with American Indian people for the Smithsonian’s NMAI marks an emerging change in terms of representation worthy of careful consideration. For now, the remainder of the chapter will explore three issues involving cultural policies that have affected the NMAI in contradictory ways: artifact acquisition, self representation/cultural sovereignty, and funding.

Artifact Acquisition

In contradistinction to the legacy of other Smithsonian museums like the Natural Museum of Natural History, NMAI planners attempted to create what was at once a museum and yet a non-museum; as a space that is self-reflexive, thoughtful, intellectual, and poly-vocal. A good place to start to explain the NMAI is what is not included in its exhibits or collections: Euro-centric display of American Indian human remains and funerary and spiritual objects. Such a shift in museological understanding and the use of critical scholarship in informing museum projects is what Ruth Phillips (2005) calls “the second museum age” (borrowing the term from William Sturtevant). The museum projects emerging are characterized by collaborative models and displays that are more sensitive to non-Western modes of exhibition. This model advocates a balance between concern for intellectual/bureaucratic participation and that of First Nations/Indian people in constructing the cultural texts that represent them (Phillips, 2005).

While some of the first museums expressed sheer sovereign power through collections of cultural patrimony (Bennett, 1995), today’s museum does not suggest that might is right through the display of objects taken or coerced from people. As Phillips and Johnson (2003)
point out, many First Nations people have given items to museums for their safe-keeping. But, of course, not all items obtained by newer museums were appropriated ethically. The majority of the NMAI collections came from those compiled by George Gustav Heye throughout his lifetime. Heye was a rich businessman and avid collector who sought Indian items during a time when it was increasingly more difficult to find them in their most “authentic” forms and many salvagers were convinced American Indians were to become extinct. He amassed his collection in the beginning of the nineteenth century after the United States and Canadian governments passed laws that prohibited Indian ceremonies, language, and other practices, and Indian children were systematically removed from their homes in order to cleanse them of their Indian cultures and instill in them Christian belief systems. The 1870’s policies brought a push toward assimilation and the forceful movement of Indian people onto reservations, and the policies that followed banned the practice of cultural activities including the Dawes-Coke Bill (1884) and the Dawes General Allotment Act (1887) in the United States and the Indian Act (1884) of Canada (Phillips & Johnson, 2003). While government policies worked to rarify Indian items further, the commodification of such authentic goods in the face of industrialization and mass-produced goods increased (Phillips). Collectors scrambled to gather what they could (in Heye’s case by the train-car). Eventually, Heye established the Museum of the American Indian in New York to house the collection of items amassed from throughout the Western Hemisphere (Jacknis, 2006). In 1989, after the storage facilities for Heye’s collections had reached a state of disarray and dilapidation, Congress passed the NMAI Act transferring the collections of the Heye Foundation into those of the Smithsonian Institution.  

58 The relationship between Heye’s MAI and Indian people began to shift in the 1970s when several programs for Indian people were established, and American Indian people including 106 Vine Deloria were appointed as trustees of the museum (Jacknis, 2006).
Despite the ways or assumptions under which such collections originated, their display in the new museum is ostensibly different in its self-reflexivity. For example, a label near some of Heye’s possessions displayed in the NMAI is characteristic of the overall sense of self-reflexivity throughout the museum:

Our contemporary sensibilities may not be entirely comfortable with an individual who appropriated, on a massive scale, the evidence of cultures not his. Some may even see in Heye’s actions a bloodless reenactment of earlier great wrongs. And yet, in his unstoppable course, Heye saved an irreplaceable living record that might otherwise have gone to oblivion. Out of his acquisitive passion has come a legacy of inestimable worth, to heirs on whom he never reckoned. Had he been someone other than who he was, he would have left us all poorer.

-Lawrence M. Small, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution, 2000

Secretary Small’s statement assumes some degree of reflexivity by suggesting the collection of the goods was problematic according to our current sensibilities. It emphasizes an important point; as the years pass, so too do differing notions of what “the diffusion of knowledge” consists of. However, Small also justifies the NMAI’s continual possession and display of such items and employs a rather forgiving tone toward Heye’s salvage efforts, an endeavor to which the NMAI owes its collections. By suggesting we would all be “poorer” without Heye’s collections, he is not assuming the position of American Indian people who

59 In his last will and testament, British scientist James Smithson left his estate to his nephew with the stipulation that if his nephew were to pass away, his inheritance would go toward the construction of an American institution bearing Smithsonian’s name. According to Smithsonian’s wishes, the institution would work toward the “increase and diffusion of knowledge among men” (“History: The history of the Smithsonian”).
might have benefited from using such items in their own communities. Small suggests everyone has come to an agreement on the proper atonement, but has omitted some not so savory details.\(^{60}\) For example, mention of the Smithsonian Institution’s once extensive collection of Indian human remains is nowhere overtly stated within the NMAI mall museum.

The NMAI is also a bit cryptic in its definition of just what “Native” means. Indeed, indigenous identity in various countries in the Western Hemisphere has a very different meaning as was clear from some of the preliminary meetings conducted with NMAI planners and leaders of indigenous groups from Latin America. During the “Ethnic Identity, Community Museums and Development Programs” meeting sponsored by the Smithsonian, several Latin American indigenous peoples were invited to help explain what some of the objects in the museum’s collections meant in part to “Expand the concept of ‘American Indian’ beyond America’s borders” (Miller & Yudice, 2002, p. 155). Miller and Yudice suggest, based on review of an unpublished manuscript from Bassols and Herrera, the Latin American Indians were not “impressed” with the museum’s “racial component of the so-called ethnic minorities” nor the stipulation that the board must have a set number of American Indian people on it (p. 156). One participant argued that rather than emphasizing an “el día de la raza (day of the race),” a more suitable celebration should be for “el día del compesenado (day of the peasant)” (Miller & Yudice, p. 157 citing Bassols & Herrera). The discussion emphasized the importance placed on class by some Latin American indigenous people, rather than the racial focus taken by the NMAI. And, yet, West (2000) claims the NMAI speaks for the all-encompassing “authentic Native voice” (West, p. 7). United States national policy and its

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\(^{60}\) Part of his omission includes his own tendencies as a collector of the “rare”—illegally imported endangered bird feathers, a crime he pled guilty to as described further in Chapter VII (Neuman, 2007). Perhaps Small’s affinity for collecting led to his more forgiving tone toward
connection with Latin American indigenous people is also not addressed (DeLugan, 2006).

*The Way of the People* (1991) describes the decision by museum planners to include at least 25 percent of displays representing Latin American indigenous people, but explains the difficulty encountered in attempting collaborative curation of such displays. The discourse of pan-indigenous identity not only reflects particular understanding of policy, but helps to shape it, serving a kind of “normalizing” function, as Miller suggests. The assumption made by the NMAI is that there is a collective identity held or to be made by groups available to dictate the foundations of the policy. In part, this discourse is articulated because of Heye’s legacy of appropriating cultural items from throughout the Western Hemisphere, which subsequently worked to construct the NMAI’s definition of “Native” as his collection became theirs.

Another criticism of the museum involves its broader functioning. James Clifford (1991) critiques such centralized majority museum collections and the huge amounts of grant money allocated for such endeavors and compares these to the meager funds available to tribal museums. In addition, he considers the unscrupulous measures taken in order to obtain many forms of cultural ‘property’ exhibited in majority museums. Community tribal museums also benefit local groups by displaying cultural objects that are part of that particular group’s history. However, as a result of repatriation efforts, many objects have also been returned to American Indian tribes or have been put back into “circulation” for the benefit of tribal

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61 Similarly, it has not always been the case that it is advantageous for various groups considered American Indian to identify with one another. In one case, Seminole Nation Indians of Oklahoma have struggled with the concepts of “Indianness” and who is deserving of federal funding (Glaberson, 2001). To be precise, federal funding of $56 million sparked the controversy as National leaders deliberated over who the money should go to. While many associated with the Seminole are also of African American ancestry, others within the Nation have argued that those “black” Seminoles should not be considered tribal members as “blood” Seminoles are.
In addition, the museum has returned some pieces to groups outside of the United States. Items annexed into the NMAI from Heye’s collections included several pieces confiscated from the well-known Village Island Potlatch, most of which sat in storage in a New York warehouse, despite pleas requesting repatriation from the U’mista Cultural Center and the Kwagiulth Museum and Cultural Center in British Columbia, representing the groups from which the items had originated. Phillips and Johnson (2003) suggest the items were originally taken in 1922 when participants of the potlatch (which had been outlawed by the Canadian Government) were presented with the “choice not sanctioned by the law” of facing imprisonment or giving up the culturally valuable potlatch items to the Canadian government, who in turn sold them to several museums. An Indian agent named W.M. Halliday sold several of these items to George Gustav Heye, although it is likely that he was not authorized to do so as he was reprimanded by his superiors for selling the items to a non-Canadian (Clifford, 1991, p. 243). At the time when Clifford first published his piece on “Four Northwest Coast Museums,” he suggested the Museum of the American Indian had still refused to repatriate 33 of the items. However, since Congress nationalized Heye’s Museum of the American Indian, Congress set up a granting program to provide some groups with funds to prepare appropriate museum spaces in which Smithsonian collections on loan could be temporarily displayed. Such funds encourage greater circulation of the collections. On a similar note, although Canada has not implemented an act comparable to NAGPRA, many Canadian museums have repatriated items on a voluntary basis and the The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, established in 1991 also provides guidance on the country’s policy for returning items. In many cases, the Canadian government required the First Nations groups to construct museums in which to house the important items before their repatriation would take place from Canadian collections. Federal grant money was eventually provided to assist the some groups in the completion of museum projects prescribed by the Canadian court. The benefits of a policy that does not prescribe a priori solutions to questions concerning cultural patrimony deserves serious consideration (Phillips & Johnson, 2003).

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64 Clifford’s piece was published both in 1991 and 1997.
plans for the repatriation of the items back to the Kwagiulth people had been put into place.\textsuperscript{65} It would seem that this move was at least somewhat voluntary as it was not necessary under the NMAI Act or NAGPRA, but was rather the policy of the Smithsonian itself.\textsuperscript{66} According to Andrea Sanborn, U’mista Cultural Centre Executive Director, the pieces believed to belong to the U’mista in the collections of the NMAI and other Canadian museums (including the National Museum of Canada) had been repatriated as of February, 2006.\textsuperscript{67} However, items that were “deaccessioned” from Heye’s collection and for which the Cultural Center has no records are still missing, including one they believed had made its way to France. The group is still working to find the missing pieces as they hold special significance and importance to their community.\textsuperscript{68} As the next section suggests, many groups (like the Kwagiulth) believe greater control over their material and non-material culture and images of their people means a greater degree of sovereignty.

\textsuperscript{65} See “The Potlatch Collection History” at http://www.umista.org/potlatch/potlatch.asp.
\textsuperscript{66} According to the Act, an Indian must be “recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians” (Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, 1975), and therefore the repatriation of goods to groups in Canada was not required by the Act. According to the act, “Indian” is defined as “a member of an Indian tribe.” The act does not provide its own definition, but refers readers to the definition of “Indian Tribe” from section 450b of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (1975). There, “Indian Tribe” is (e) "Indian tribe" means any “Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act(85 Stat. 688) [43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.], which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians” (Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, 1975).
\textsuperscript{67} It is also possible that Clifford himself is in part responsible for the return of the potlatch items in addition to the advocacy of the tribal groups from which they had originated as his “Four Northwest Coast Museums” article no doubt drew attention to the issue.
Self-Representation and Cultural Sovereignty

“The outrageous conduct that Euroamericans have displayed toward Native American remains, funerary objects and sacred objects exemplifies a basic and ongoing disregard for Native American human rights...And this callous disregard turned into calculated evil with the genocidal military campaign conducted against Indians, which culminated with an 1868 U.S. Surgeon General’s order directing army personnel to collect Indian crania and other body parts for the Army Medical Museum...Importantly, this policy was accomplished in the name of 'scientific research’” (Tsosie, 1997, p. 67).

Given its past, why would the national museum complex still be considered the par excellence of representation for Indian people? Why is it those engaged in a politics of recognition would choose to do so through the museum form? The obvious reason, as reflected by the 2007 decision by the University of Illinois to retire mascot Chief Illiniwek, is that highly visible manifestations of identity shape the way we think about it.

At the most basic level, the NMAI is a site in which majority culture engages in terms of multiculturalism. But, at the same time, opportunities for “self-presentation” for traditionally marginalized groups have been made available through the cultural politics of the museum. Spaces like the NMAI are productive in many ways. They can encourage the consideration of alternative ways of engaging with the world. As Kymlicka (1995) suggests, while government policy has in the past privileged the representation of majority culture (as with funding for the arts, for example), multicultural government policies starting in the 1970s began to ensure greater inclusiveness. The NMAI provides various Indian groups with a physical, semiotic presence in the political hub of the nation. When Congress passed an Act to build the NMAI in 1989, the museum’s advocates proposed the creation of a space in which American Indian groups, or more specifically, Native people of the Western Hemisphere, could articulate their

\[68\] From personal correspondence with Ms. Sanborn in February of 2006.
histories in their own voices via a space of public education (http://www.nmai.si.edu/).\footnote{In addition to the mall museum in Washington D.C. where American Indian people can “self-represent,” the National Museum of the American Indian also included the George Gustav Heye Center of the NMAI in New York and the Cultural Resources Center (CRC) in Suitland Maryland. According to “The Way of the People,” the Museum’s master planning document, the mall museum serves as the public face of the museum. Conversely, the CRC, in addition to serving as a storage facility for the NMAI’s collections, was intended as a “welcoming space” for Indian people and researchers (especially Indian researchers). In addition, on a tour of the facilities in the summer of 2006, I was introduced to spaces in which Indian people can spend time with items from the collections and “ceremonial” rooms where various ceremonies can be performed with the objects including rubbing. The NMAI turns off fire alarms for ceremonies like these (Marstine, 2001). The CRC provides a secluded wooded area and an outdoor fire pit.}

Through the discourse of self-representation, American Indian people are able to engage in telling their own stories through a process of “self-presentation” in order to “immortalize their culture” (Bennett, 1992; 1998).

The struggle for entrance into public discourse can be interpreted in many ways, but assumes the democratic notion that public institutions are obliged to represent the interests of their constituents. There are several approaches to this understanding of democracy. For example, liberal egalitarian perspectives challenge classical liberal political philosophy following social contract theorists in questioning the disproportionate spread of resources among particular demographics and suggesting redistribution in order to achieve social justice for under-privileged groups, ultimately promoting conditions that will foster the common good.

Of course, not all claims are those of redistribution of actual goods, but rather, center on recognition, following the notion that the majority group has historically had greater access to the social institutions that have ideologically shaped the nation. While the notion of universal citizenship, or the notion that individuals are entitled to equal rights, has driven democracies, most modern democratic nations have implemented some form of differentiated citizenship, or rights based on group affiliation for national minorities (including indigenous people) because
of their unique political/historical positions (Kymlicka, 1995). But, as Tully (1995) points out, the very assumptions and language of political theory (including the liberal egalitarian approach) and constitutionalism itself has been shaped by a very specific set of assumptions and language. He suggests indigenous claims can only be understood when they are disarticulated from contemporary constitutionalism. It is taken for granted that the constitution is universal (and therefore neutral), when in fact the very assumptions under which it was constructed included a disregard for indigenous people and language and was oriented toward Western notions like individual rights and private property following the works of Thomas Paine and The Federalist Papers (Tully, p. 97).70

Tsosie (1997) argues it is necessary for Indian people to step outside of Western conceptions of sovereignty in accordance with more Indian ways of understanding. But even the current notion of political sovereignty is not enough (Coffey & Tsosie, 2001). As political sovereignty doctrine currently exists, Indian nations are considered to closely resemble separate nations. They have discernable, physical boundaries and are considered politically sovereign. However, they must submit to the authority of Federal Indian Law and are considered “domestic dependent nations.” In addition, the tendency of majority culture to appropriate Indian culture and the misleading representations of Indian people perpetuated by the majority where Indian people perform ceremonies and leave offerings when they come to visit.

70 Because so many American Indian groups denied the United States’ sovereignty over them, some like the Cherokee even petitioning to be admitted as an independent state, Tully points out, it is not clear how the United States “acquired sovereignty” over the western states. In “The Public Good”, Paine suggests US sovereignty would extend over all “vacant” territory without recognizing the people there or their rights. Despite the fact that Indian people lived on these lands, it was established they were “vacant” because they were not being cultivated and therefore were not owned as private property. As Tully points out, conversations about manifest destiny took place “within the undoubted imperium of the constitution and its modern conventions,” and that “the Aboriginal peoples had already been dispossessed and debased within them” (p. 95).
prompt Coffey and Tsosie to call Indian people to take control of their cultures. They suggest the telling of one’s own histories, for example, can help to “counterbalance the false images that have been presented as truth by non-Natives” (Coffey & Tsosie, p. 200). Thus, a more radical reading of repatriation based on cultural sovereignty may not only apply to material culture, but also to intangible things like oral traditions/histories.

Cultural politics claims have not merely focused on economic compensation (distribution), compensation in terms of physical resources, or exclusive rights to intangible and material forms of culture, but also the opportunity for public recognition of identity and sovereignty. The argument often made regarding “cultural sovereignty” is that self-representation and inclusiveness in public discourse and politics are necessary in order to achieve it (Brown, 2003). It becomes difficult to make a distinction between cultural politics that center on distribution and those that center on recognition when the notion of cultural sovereignty is bound up with participation in public discourse via public institutions.

According to Coffey and Tsosie, cultural sovereignty 1.) incorporates rights to the lands that are an important resource to maintaining indigenous ways of life, 2.) in addition to control over indigenous material and “non-tangible” culture and histories, 3.) and a public recognition of the “inherent” sovereignty of American Indian people. Tsosie writes, “The indigenous rights perspective is founded on the contemporary political movement to reassert tribal sovereignty and self-determination and demand respect for indigenous rights to cultural survival” (Tsosie, taking from Morris, 1992). Thus, according to Coffey and Tsosie, a politics of distribution is inseparable from a politics of recognition and inherent sovereignty. However, as they point out, the very notion of “self-determination” and universal human rights work in accordance
with the Western vocabulary of individual, egalitarian rights rather than those with a group orientation. Similarly, arguments for increased self-representation are very much based on the notion of democratized information, while failing to take into consideration the ideological functioning of social institutions (particularly museums) and the discourses with which they constitute themselves, including nationalism (Bennett, 1995).

The same issues exist with other technologies considered conducive to the “triumph of democracy” including the Internet and other electronic media making it easier to share such information with more people (Brown, p. 31). Many indigenous groups, whom wish to be left alone by majority culture, have argued their right to privacy and freedom of association, legal arguments with a foundation in individual, rather than group rights (Brown, 2003). In the same vein, there have been many debates centering on the disclosure of sensitive information about Indian culture and the use of Indian religion, songs, words, arts, and images by non-Indians, including many in the form of commercial branding (Brown, 2003). Oftentimes, disputes about this kind of (mis)use center on primary legal concerns that 1.) such “cultural theft” is harmful to Indian people (for example, one’s religion is harmed when people practice it inappropriately) and 2.) Indian people themselves rarely benefit economically from such cultural appropriation, while countless corporations make huge profits in the process (Brown, 2003; Tsosie, 2001).

While it is true that many American Indian people are proud to display their cultural patrimony in museums (Phillips & Johnson, 2003), a great many others would prefer to keep various aspects of their culture including religious beliefs and practices to the members of their group whom can be trusted to keep them only to insiders. Various segments of those identifying as “American Indian” hold worldviews that suggest the NMAI and its collections
are problematic because of their majority museum status. In addition, for many, the display of cultural objects is antithetical to their purpose and alternative notions of being and legitimacy. It is not the concept of exhibition or collections that come into question for the majority of objects at the NMAI, but rather, what those objects now signify and their broader function within a neo-liberal formation, as will be discussed in the next section.

Growing bodies of literature loosely considered “American Indian Studies” have been informing advocacy, policy, and what is thought of as cultural sovereignty throughout the twentieth century. Whether it is understood in this literature that there should be such a strict division between work and thought, life and work or even death and life is a topic worthy of exploration. American Indian literature has been calling for a re-examination of dominant culture for many years and should be considered within debates that focus on institutions like the Smithsonian, which were largely shaped by government/Indian relations. Because so many cultural institutions have materialized with specific consideration of Indian people (the Constitution/the national museum complex) and have worked to systematically disenfranchise them with results considered unjust according to contemporary sensibilities, it is time to finally consider the ways in which they might be better informed by alternative discursive formations.

Culture as Fun?

“This notion of culture as fun (via the market) and progress (via the state) is central to much of cultural policy” (Miller & Yudice, 2002, p. 16).

The Smithsonian complex, although to some degree providing an ideological opportunity, is problematic as a site of political expression and democratic representation
because it also bends to other pressures (Lonetree, 2006). There have been several recent 
blatant examples of the conflation of what is considered “private” and “public”/civic related to 
the national museum complex. Although the treatment of culture instrumentally has occurred 
since the complex’s inception and the “invisible hand” of the market has increasingly played a 
role in its shaping, bold involvement by private interest has sparked an upset by critics who 
wish to understand the museum as public sphere. Rather than taking a step back 
etymologically, and asking under what assumptions the museum was created and about the 
power relations surrounding it, the debate frequently focuses on the breakdown of public space 
and the proliferation of private interest within. As Miller and Yudice (2002) argue, the funding 
for such cultural institutions has been sharply increasing in recent years from governments and 
NGOs. For many critical scholars, such a combination necessitates consideration of the 
economics and politics of state interests, private entities, and those philanthropic bodies 
lingering somewhere in between private and public, or the civic/private/”third sector” triad 
(Miller & Yudice, p. 5).

At the end of the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, there was an increase in the 
“monetarization of heritage” in both the first and third worlds though various organizations 
such as NGOs and World Bank (Miller & Yudice, 2002). It is also clear from legislation such 
as the NMAI Act that government is dependent on outside funding to construct the kinds of 
museum projects that will impress citizens of the United States and foreign visitors. In the case 
of the construction and planning of the mall museum, the NMAI Act stipulated the Board of 
Regents would only pay up to two-thirds the cost of the museum, while the other one third had 

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71 As Haacke (1984) argued more than twenty years ago, public cultural institutions are 
increasingly run as businesses, and more and more of the administrators involved in such 
institutions are trained as MBAs.
to be paid from “non-Federal sources” (NMAI Act). Such contingencies place in context the naming of entire galleries within the museum after corporations (for example, the “3M Gallery” in the NMAI, a space for moving exhibits). It also explains spaces that feel more commodified (for example, the two levels of gift shops within the NMAI and the very pricy Mitsitam Native Foods Café where one can buy a variety of “Native” foods from various regions).\footnote{Similarly, the December 1, 2006 “Trail of Tears Study Act” suggested the examination of “feasibility and suitability” of additional land for the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail established in 1987, suggesting the additions are an important educational resource for the nation. However, no new funding has been designated for the expansion of the trail by the government, “That would require another act of Congress” (Adams, 2007). Based on recent events, one wonders whether corporate sponsors will be asked to provide funding in exchange for product placements and corporate branding along the trail.}

Similarly, a recent deal between the Smithsonian and Showtime Networks sent many academics and filmmakers into a frenzy. Established in 2006, the deal provides exclusive rights to film footage going beyond a few minutes of the Smithsonian, its resources, or staff to Showtime, to be determined by Showtime on a case-by-case basis. Filmmakers including Michael Moore, R.J. Cutler, and Alex Gibney petitioned against the deal, protesting a contract that would limit access by filmmakers to the public institution and resources that have largely been publicly funded (Manly, 2006). (Although, it is clear from the NMAI Act that some museums within the national museum complex are also largely privately funded). Many were also angered that the details of the contract were never made public (House Committee Challenges…., 2006). Margaret Drain, a vice president at public broadcasting station WGBH in Boston said, “I’m outraged that a public institution would do a semiexclusive deal with a commercial broadcaster” (Wyatt, 2006).

Secretary Lawrence Small justified the deal by arguing the institution is drastically under-funded (Manly, 2006). In response to the deal, which seemed to “fly under the radar,”
the House Appropriations Committee cut the Institution’s budget by another $15 million in May of last year (House Committee Challenges…, 2006). Such cuts may lead to further commodified spaces and surely played a part in the recent mass mailing funding and membership drive letters in which Small writes, “At a time when public interest in the Smithsonian is at an all-time high, private support for our exhibitions, research, and educational activities is not keeping pace with the Institution’s needs.”73

The case of the Smithsonian deal raises several important issues about what the notion of “cultural patrimony” means. Apparently, those protesting the deal hold that cultural patrimony (in part because it was collected and housed in a publicly funded institution) should belong to the public. They ask why the “common good” should only apply to the people who subscribe to cable. They believe the Smithsonian has taken the citizen/consumer relationship to a whole new level. The following comment seems to summarize critical concerns:

For some, the former political doctrine of liberty has been displaced by the notion of consumption. The subject’s freedom is marked by the capacity to acquire. This means that symbolic exchange, and hence the circulation of meaning and taste, is now the factor defining the person…Popular culture and democracy meet now; the engagement of quality and reason that typified the hierarchized link between an aesthetic sense and the enlightened citizenry at work in the public sphere is no more. (Miller, 1993, p. 47)

Conclusion

As Miller’s quotation ending the preceding section eludes, the “doctrine of liberty” has always only applied to some while considering others more instrumentally. The moral

imperatives now prescribed to visitors include a more multicultural perspective and cultural signifiers/capital (Bourdieu, 1984) reflect a kind of social awareness for cultural citizens. Why do we get the sense that the museum ever was “the public sphere”? Contemporary assumptions about the nature of the museum (and the class neutrality of “the public sphere”) by those who challenge its commodification miss the point that the museum never was a space of egalitarian public discourse, and they miss a larger opportunity to question the ways in which the national museum complex has been organized to act on the social historically and today.

The appearance of an institution like the NMAI indicates that the state takes cues from the social and even institutionalizes reform policies (Bennett). While the proliferation of the commercial might work to water down messages in order to keep patrons in a “buying mood,” through “the fun factor” (Bruce, 2006), it also provides a space through which traditional museums can be problematized as alternative modes of discourse become available and expected. It does not mean new museum spaces are unproblematic; it merely means the function of the traditional museum has at last begun the long process of denaturalization.

Despite the critical response to culture as “resource” (as exemplified by the Showtime deal), Bennett is correct in suggesting “alternative” kinds of knowledge can effect or inform administration and policy. It can change it drastically as is clear from the NMAI Act and NAGPRA. It is clear that under this new discursive order (and especially the shift in relative object status) as compared to policy of the past, power/knowledge formations are changing. American Indian people are now considered experts of themselves. Their human remains, once

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The content in newer national museums focused on “the popular” also attests to the transforming notion. For example, the Te Papa Museum in Wellington, New Zealand’s national museum recently passed up the opportunity to exhibit the Dead Sea Scrolls, opting rather for an exhibit on body art (Bruce, 2006). Of course, the importance of the exhibit could be understood in longer, historical traditions of body art by New Zealand’s Maori people.
valued as objects for analysis, now signify something else, and their spiritual significance outweighs their scientific importance. New realms of truth now inform the law, and the neutrality of science is no longer taken for granted as its effects on people with alternative belief systems have been critically examined.

But, the museum is productive in other ways. Although the new power/knowledge formation has shifted expert voice, it does not question the expert (or “cultural interpreter”) as it still manages to authenticate itself through one who possesses a particular expert vocabulary, in this case, one who is “other” to scientific discourse. (This works to maintain a binary). It does not question the constitutional liberal discourse or the ways in which alternative world-views have been forced to fit within its confines. In addition, the new museum naturalizes the neo-liberal formation and large-scale museum projects (as opposed to smaller tribal museums). We would make an overly reductive statement in suggesting American Indian material and non-material culture are merely treated as “resources” within the NMAI, and it is clear that their re-presentation breaks with museological tradition in very important ways. However, some forms of culture are still treated instrumentally as national cultural patrimony as the museum continues to constitute itself through a nation-building discourse, albeit a discourse that is informed by American Indian people.

This chapter has illustrated the ways in which we can understand the relationship between culture and governance and has suggested liberal constitutional discourse disadvantages our understanding of cultural policy, American Indians, and the NMAI. It described some of the implications of the neo-liberal formation under which the NMAI has materialized. However, it also suggested the NMAI and NAGPRA have signified a shift in

However, it certainly says something of the redefinition of cultural patrimony.
power/knowledge formation as greater importance has been placed on American Indian voice in policy as compared with the legislation of years past.

The next chapter will concentrate more closely on the neo-liberal formation under which the museum has become manifest and the economic logics with which it constitutes itself. It describes the museum’s various stakeholders, fundraising and public relations efforts, and reception by various audience segments. While policy makers, museum planners, and critical intellectuals may understand the museum in particular ways, Chapter V will describe the ways in which some visitors have responded to it and the various segments the museum was attempting to “speak to.” The chapter explains multiple readings, comparing them to the self-articulated goals of museum planners in order to increase our understanding about the ways in which the NMAI operates and, more broadly, continues exploring the relationship between power, knowledge, and discourse.
CHAPTER V: A DIVERSITY OF STAKEHOLDERS
Benefactors, Critics, Visitors, and Constituents

“This is complicated business. The National Museum of the American Indian is essentially a constituency-driven organization. One is inevitably going to have differences of opinion. We are only human in the end.”

Introduction: The Stakeholders

The Washington Post’s Bob Thompson wrote of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), “…the power of the stakeholders is clear” (Bob Thompson. 19 Sept. 2004. The Washington Post). His comments, like those from West (cited above) allude to the important, foundational question of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI): Who is it for? Because the NMAI had so many stakeholders with great interest in the museum as a large-scale, privately/publicly funded project, it was caught in the uncomfortable position of trying to please very disparate groups of people. In addition, the political/economic conditions at the Smithsonian facilitated an environment in which fundraising was a top priority, and therefore, benefactors and partnering corporations were key. The museum measured its success in terms of its capacity for generating funds and greater visitor numbers, or its ability to be “competitive.” It avoided potentially offensive content for a largely non-American Indian audience, provided affective multi-media presentations, sites for cultural citizens to consume, and the opportunity to “experience” rarified objects, therefore meeting the expectations of many modern museum-goers. As a result, it received a great deal of positive reception from many of its stakeholders. Corporate sponsors were also happy to partner with or donate to a “good cause” that troubled Western culture (but not too much) while keeping visitors in a
buying mood. But while the museum achieved an alternative museological style, and unprecedented opportunities became available for American Indian people to participate, it did not meet the expectations of those seeking more critical engagement with history. Many American Indian critics argued that because the museum serves an ideological function, it has a greater responsibility to present the harsh realities faced by American Indian people. Conversely, others criticized it for not performing like a linear, traditional museum and for not presenting Western versions of history.

As will be explained, because the scale of the project and the neo-liberal formation in which it emerged implicated so many disparate stakeholders, it became impossible to please them all. Although only a limited pool are addressed in detail in this chapter, the following is a more comprehensive list of key NMAI stakeholder groups (some of which overlap):

- The American public broadly construed
- American Indian people broadly construed
- The 25-member board of trustees and other high-level NMAI officials
- Smithsonian Institution officials such as the Board of Regents and other governing bodies determining whether the NMAI has been a good “neighbor on the mall” and has upheld the Smithsonian’s “brand”
- Partnering corporations and vendors
- Current and prospective donors, supporters, and philanthropists
- Museum/Smithsonian planners and personnel
- The general press

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75 See, for example, critiques from Camp (1999) in the section on “The Press and Internal Conflicts” and from Lonetree (2006) and Atalay (2006a-c) in the section on “Academic Debates and Emerging Themes.”
• Academics and museum professionals
• Museum visitors

This chapter will focus further on the various segments identified as museum stakeholders, their expectations, their roles in shaping the NMAI, and ultimately how the museum was received. The following sections will include a more detailed discussion of key stakeholders such as 1.) American Indian people, 2.) donors, supporters, and partnering companies, 3.) museum/Smithsonian planners and personnel, 4.) the popular print press, 5.) academics, and 6.) NMAI visitors. The proceeding section will explain why American Indian people were not considered the primary audience for the museum, but rather, its constituents (as the chapter title alludes). Section three will describe the role of benefactors, one of the most important groups of NMAI stakeholders, and the importance of public relations and fundraising for the museum. Internal conflicts that arose between museum planners during various stages of the museum’s development and the ways in which disagreements among personnel endangered press coverage will be addressed in section four. Section five will then describe the popular press’ response to the museum’s opening in 2004. A review of some of the praise and challenges launched by academics in response to the museum will be described in the sixth section. Finally section seven will describe responses from visitors to the museum during the summer of 2006. Using a combination of news and academic articles, archival documents, and original interviews, I will explain who the museum is for, the ways in which some stakeholders have responded to it, and the political/economic conditions in which it has emerged.
American Indian People: Constituents vs. Audiences

According to the museum’s proposed mission, American Indian people ostensibly should be the most important stakeholders of the NMAI. From the inception of the NMAI, planners have been aware the majority of people who identify as American Indian will never make it to Washington D.C. to visit the museum. Therefore, while American Indian people have been considered the “constituents” of the museum, planners are fully aware that they are not the primary audience. As is reflected in the NMAI’s foundational planning document, “The Way of the People” (TWOTP), a distinction should be made between “constituents” and “audiences.” As NMAI museum planners were well aware, the majority of people visiting the NMAI mall museum would not be American Indian:

The museum has both a *constituency* and an *audience*. Although there is some amount of overlap, these groups have different concerns and relationships with the museum. The *constituency* is the indigenous peoples of the western hemisphere. With this museum the government of the United States is offering Native people a place of respect and the opportunity to tell their own stories…The *audience* will be the millions of annual visitors of all ages and levels of education. Most of these people will be non-Indian citizens of the United States and from abroad. Many will come with stereotypical misconceptions of Indians (undated NMAI EMP Progress Report Executive Summary included in TWOTP).

How did NMAI planners know American Indian people would make up only a small segment of their Mall museum “audience”? Aside from comprising a small portion of the
United States population in general (about 1.5 percent in 2004 according to the United States Census Bureau, “Census bureau facts…,” 2004, U.S. Newswire, 21 Sept.), mall planners were also aware many American Indian people would have to travel a great distance to get to the National Mall. According to a report prepared for the museum by Harrison Price Company in 1990, the largest populations of American Indian people resided at the time in Oklahoma, California, Arizona, and New Mexico (about 40% of the national total) (The Way of The People, Appendix, 1993). The metropolitan areas of Los Angeles, Tulsa, New York, and the San Francisco/Oakland/San José included the largest populations of American Indian people according to the report. While it suggested 87,487 American Indian people lived in Los Angeles, only 17,480 lived in the Washington D.C./Baltimore area. The Harrison Price Company also advised the museum that their primary resident market would be comprised of people living within 25 miles of the museum. They suggest, “…industry experience not surprisingly reveals a strong inverse relationship between propensity to attend and travel distance…” However, they were also aware that tourists (20% foreign, according to TWOTP, V. 3, p. II.14) would make up a large percentage of visitors. “Visitors will be predominately tourists, coming for the most part for a one-time or rare visit to Washington and taking in a number of other historical sites and Smithsonian museums. Average stays of one and one half hours are expected, though lengths of stay may sometimes be shorter, given the projected capacity of the building” (TWOTP, V.3, p. II.14). “Tourists will represent slightly more than three-fourths of overall market support and thus can be expected to contribute healthily to the visitation base of the new museum” (TWOTP, V.3, p. II.14). Therefore, NMAI visitors would include some American Indian people, but would mostly be comprised of millions of non-
Native foreign and non-foreign tourists and the more local “resident market.”

Harrison Price continues, “The comparatively small size of the immediately available Native American and Hispanic market underscores the importance of outreach programs to be undertaken by NMAI.” The data begs the question, if the museum is “for” American Indian people, why did planners build it so far away from where the largest American Indian populations live? Of course, the location of the museum within the Nation’s Capital is symbolic (according to the NMAI), but again, the answer is that American Indian people were never really considered the primary audience of the museum, but rather, its “constituents” (Although NMAI planners hoped to attract unprecedented numbers of American Indian people to the Mall) (NMAI TWOTP, V. 3, II.12). As will be explained, the NMAI, while creating the networking efforts deemed the “Fourth Museum” to reach Native constituents, invested a great deal of effort in generating the revenue to create the Mall museum, which will be visited by millions of non-Native museum-goers every year.

Museum Benefactors, Supporters, and Partnering Corporations

A project of such a massive scale as the NMAI would inevitably attract a great deal of attention. At the advice of Dick Taft, of the J. Richard Taft Organization, hired to help early in fund-raising and public relations efforts, the NMAI took an integrative approach to public outreach (fundraising, public relations, marketing, and advertising). While the approach helped to keep the NMAI’s messages unified, portions of the campaign were tailored to specific stakeholders. In the end, the road was far from smooth as would be expected with any public/quasi private endeavor of this magnitude. NMAI planners and members of the
Smithsonian Institution’s Office of External Affairs and Development (Director Elizabeth Duggal and later, her successor Acting Director Margaret Bertin) and the Office of Public Affairs (Director Madeline Jacobs) exercised a great amount of effort to control media spin, outreach, and the messages that would reach their various stakeholders. The archival documents from their offices now housed in the Smithsonian Institution Archives suggest it was a formidable task.

The sheer size of the project turned most of the efforts toward fund-raising, at least initially. Because NMAI planners knew the success of the museum depended on their ability to raise the funds, one of the most important audiences was that of wealthy philanthropists, and one to which NMAI planners dedicated quite a bit of effort in courting. As Smithsonian Secretary Michael Heyman wrote, “To warrant continued success in attracting private resources, the Smithsonian bears a huge responsibility to the donor community” (Heyman, 1994, December). Richard Taft wrote in a memorandum to a trainee he was coaching in the ways of “cultivation/solicitation” of donor prospects, “Each prospect becomes an individual campaign, a distinct strategy” (November 8, 2000 Memorandum from Dick Taft to Todd Cain, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-171, “Taft Chron”). In other terms, you spin the museum to the prospect in the way you believe they will buy it. Those prospects of the most interest were those with holdings beyond “moderate wealth,” resting neatly within “the seven figure club” such as Steward Bryan of Richmond, VA, at that time the President and CEO of Media General. Ben Lord (of Benjamin Lord Associates), who was commissioned to help in the fundraising efforts, advised Elizabeth Duggal that Bryan’s wealth at the time reached about $150 million. Lord suggested “big prospects” like these should be considered
before the “moderately wealthy” because of the investment of time and money it would take to court them (Memorandum from Ben Lord to Elizabeth Duggal, December 4, 2000, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-171).

In addition, American Indian corporations would be important as potential donors to the NMAI campaign including those “Native high dollar individual and large Native businesses such as the Alaska Native Corporation,” (“Corporate Foundation and Private Foundation Project Report,” Taft Organization, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-171; Memorandum, January 29, 2000, Maggie Bertin, Re: Gaming Tribes, “NCO-OEAD Chron”).

However, at one point, California Proposition 5 threatened gaming and made many West Coast tribes generating great amounts of casino revenue very nervous. It threatened to set a dangerous precedent, but Taft continued to encourage NMAI planners to pursue Indian nations with gaming money (Memo to Elizabeth Duggal, Sept. 17, 2000, subject, Mall brochure- Taft Chron, 04-171, box 1/1; National Campaign/Office of External Affairs & Development Report to the Board of Trustees, NMAI, October 1998; January 29, 2000 Memorandum from Maggie Bertin to Dwight Gorneau, Smithsonian Institution Archives, NCO-OEAD Chron, January 2000, Subject: Gaming Tribes). While some Indian nations were conservative with their donations because they feared the passage of California’s legislation, in the end, the museum benefited greatly from gaming revenues.76

In midstream, West began to face problems from the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies. The NMAI faced budget deficit problems and a dire budgetary

76 An October 2, 2000 memo from Dick Taft to Elizabeth Duggal does in fact reflect a push to approach groups with gaming revenue. Raising the issue out of seemingly nowhere, he writes, “Speaking of our efforts to get money out of gaming tribes, how about asking the Pequots and other tribes to put a Mall Wall brochure in every room or hand it out with every bill they give a hotel customer?” (Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-171, “Taft Chron, 1998-
climate at the Smithsonian from 1993-1995 when funds for the Suitland Cultural Resources Center construction were essential. After his 1993 requests for funds to help construct the CRC in FY 1995 and FY 1996, Chairman Ralph Regula simply told West he had no money to give him as West later relayed to his board of trustees (Memorandum from Richard West to Board of Trustees, 27 February, 1995, Smithsonian Institution Archives). Regula suggested the CRC undergo a less expensive redesign, delay, or complete termination of construction, but West insisted the construction of the CRC was part of the agreement in the nationalization of the Heye collection, and the 1989 NMAI Act had promised the facility. He suggested the delay would cost more money in the long term and would allow greater degradation to the collections (Memorandum from Richard West to Board of Trustees, February 27, 1995, Smithsonian Institution Archives). As the co-sponsors of the original NMAI Act pointed out in a letter pleading for the funds, essentially what the Appropriations Committee was attempting to do was rescind the $21.9 million in funds promised to help build the CRC, breaking the word the United States government had given to be the “caretaker” (or “steward”) of the Heye objects “for the Indian owners,” making it possible legally for the state of New York to reclaim them (Letter from U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Resources, Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, Bill Richardson, and Tim Johnson, 1 March, 1995 to Bob Livingston and Ralph Regula, Smithsonian Institution Archives). Construction of the storage facility had been part of the understanding under which MAI trustees had agreed to transfer the collection as they wished to keep it in tact rather than breaking it up piece meal. It was within this climate of budgetary crisis that the NMAI was attempting to get the museum off the ground, making it all the more apparent that it would be their fundraising efforts that would make the museum possible.
Partnering corporations and donors would expect the museum to uphold a “positive” image of social consciousness with a competitive edge in light of the “competition” the museum would be facing.

In order to encourage good relations with the public, everything became a photo or press opportunity for the museum from the announcement that the Board of Regents had approved the “Memorandum of Understanding” between the NMAI and the Heye Foundation and Adams’ signing of the document, to the blessing ceremonies for the NMAI site on the National Mall once it had been constructed fifteen years later (Memorandum from Alice Green Burnette, Convenor, NMAI Task Force on Development and Public Relations, May 23, 1990 titled: “Technology Application- NMAI site”). Why have an “unceremonious signing” when there was a photo opportunity to be had? (Margaret Bertin, Agenda Meeting Notes, May 8, 1989, Smithsonian Institution Archives, 04-170, Box 5/8, 1986-2003). Director Richard West, an articulate lawyer of Cheyenne descent who had dealt in Indian legal issues, was the perfect public face for the NMAI. Planners prepared by arranging speaking coaches for West (Letter from Joe Feurey, President, Professional Communication Services to Madeline Jacobs, Director, Office of Public Affairs, Smithsonian Institution, June 15, 1998, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-170, Box 1/8). Although quite polished already, and a rarity in Washington D.C. as he also wrote his own speeches, he had a few kinks to work out such as his propensity for phrases like “If you will” (Gottschall, 1992). Like Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell and NMAI mall museum designer Douglas Cardinal, reporters were fascinated with West’s background, and frequently reproduced his narrative about his Southern Cheyenne upbringing and his father’s insistence that he maintain tradition while obtaining a Western
education. “We would have to be prepared to live and cross over to other worlds too,” West told reporters (Wilkinson, 2005, “W. Richard West, Jr.—Founding director…,” *The Washington Post*, 25 Sept.). In one six-month period from October 1991-March, 1992, at least four profiles of West appeared in the popular print press (Memorandum, Madeline Jacobs to Secretary Adams et al, April 17, 1992, Smithsonian Institution Archives). West and his team armed themselves for the public relations and fundraising battles that would continue even after the museum’s opening. Courting the press and prospective donors would take enormous effort and time.

From the beginning, the NMAI was no stranger to fundraising, as its initial agreement with Congress demanded one third of the building costs be raised by the NMAI. The George Gustav Heye Center was funded through the federal government and the state and city of New York. In addition, $40 million in federal funds were allocated for the Suitland facility. According to the agreement with Congress, NMAI planners would raise some $35-37 million from private sources as its obligation to fund one third of the estimated $110 million in construction costs for the Mall facility. An additional $23 million would be raised for an endowment (Heyman, 1994, December). Over and over again, campaign press materials made it clear that Congress required the NMAI to raise private funds. To aid in the efforts, the museum established the National Campaign of the American Indian (October 1992 Campaign Fact Sheet, National Campaign Office, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-170, Box 7/8). By 1996, the NMAI had raised $36.7 million for construction costs, but continued to raise money for other funds (Memorandum from Dick Taft to Maggie Bertin and Elizabeth Duggal, August 21, 2000, “Executive Summary for Burke Report,” Accession 04-171, “Taft
Even after initial funds were raised, the NMAI would remain in a perpetual state of fundraising for continued operating costs, maintenance, new programs, endowments, etc. While Congress had initially stipulated the NMAI was required to raise approximately $36.7 million for construction costs, the museum actually raised about $70 million in the first campaign, and a second campaign pushed the NMAI to raise another $50 million, reaching the museum’s “ultimate private goal” of $120 million (Memorandum from Taft to Duggal, Sept. 17, 2000, subject, Mall brochure- Taft Chron, box 04-171).

Long before plans for museum construction had started, national and international fundraising committees comprised of members highly experienced in the world of philanthropy were assembled as part of the National Campaign of the American Indian and The International Founders Council, a “high-level volunteer committee” organized to “advise and lead the financial development efforts,” (Gandy, The Sunday Oklahoman, 12 January, 1992). The “prominent and concerned” members of the Council included Ted Turner, Jane Fonda, Barber Conable, and David Rockefeller (National Museum of the American Indian Board of Trustees Handbook, 4/26/93, Smithsonian Institution Archives). At one point, the council was chaired by Gene Keluche, founder of International Conference Resorts Inc. and Michael Heyman, Secretary of the Smithsonian following Adams (Fact Sheet: National Campaign of the National Museum of the American Indian, May 1996, Smithsonian Institution Archives Accession 04-170, “Press Correspondence”). The National Campaign was chaired by Congressman Ben Nighthorse Campbell, and at one point was directed by John L. Colonghi (Eskimo/Aleut). It included a committee of 37 Honorary Members such as George H.W. Bush and other living presidents and their wives including the Fords, the Carters, the Reagans, and the Nixons, actors
Kevin Costner, Paul Newman, and Robert Redford, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation Wilma Mankiller, 1990 Nobel Prize Winner Octavio Paz, and golf pro Arnold Palmer. The Honorary Members “agreed to lend their names and personal support” in the efforts to raise funds (National Museum of the American Indian Board of Trustees Handbook, 4/26/93, Smithsonian Institution Archives).

A great deal of money came from donors including individuals and corporations. For example, the Ford Foundation gave $1.15 million - the largest from a foundation at that time (“Ford Foundation…”, Indian Country Today, 30 June, 1993) and others included the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Coca-Cola Foundation, Microsoft, David Rockefeller, Eastman Kodak Company, Metropolitan Life, and 3M, just to name a small portion. Tribal donors included the Oneida of New York and the Mohegan (Cobb, “West Interview,” 2005). An astounding $10 million was donated by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, a Connecticut group that has become quite wealthy from gaming revenue.77 Members of the group supported the museum at various special events as well; for instance, in 1998, tribal member (and brother of the tribal leader) Robert Hayward spent $40,000 on a blanket being auctioned by Senator Daniel Inouye at a fundraiser to benefit the museum (The Washington Post, December 5, 1998, Names & Faces).78 If a foundation contributed once, they were often

77 A picture of the Mashantucket Pequot cultural center in Connecticut is shown on a NMAI display panel in “Our Lives.” The panel deals with the pros and cons of gambling (of course, the NMAI does not overtly or self-reflexively admit the large donation helped to make possible the NMAI as well as the wall visitors are standing before). The panel suggests while some disagree with the introduction of gambling to their communities, the profits mean greater economic stability, infrastructure, and institutions like schools and cultural centers. Nothing too critical is addressed, as The Washington Post’s Marc Fisher complains. (He would like to see something about gambling addiction or the ways in which non-Indian consultants “siphon off profits”) (Sept. 21, 2004, “Indian museum’s appeal…” The Washington Post).

78 As Ostrowitz (2005) points out, there is further connection between the Mashantucket Pequots and NMAI planners. The lead architecture firm for the Mashantucket Pequot cultural
approached again to help fund programs and exhibits. For example, the Knight Foundation made a donation to the building fund in 1993, and West requested a meeting with the Penelope McPhee, Vice President, Chief Program Officer later in 2000 to inquire about further support (Letter to the Knight Foundation from Margaret Bertin, January 10, 2000, Smithsonian Institution Archives).

Membership drives, part of the National Campaign, also raised substantial funds and could be promoted through partnerships with other companies. As Richard West writes in an April, 1993 letter, at least $3 million had been raised for the building through memberships at that time. In addition, also available was a Corporate Membership Program for $25,000 of which Time Warner, Inc. was a part (Letter dated April 28, 1993 to Robert Kisken from Richard West). According to a May, 1996 “Fact Sheet” distributed to the press, the museum had nearly 70,000 charter members (members who contribute at least $20), from which the museum had obtained more than $6 million toward the construction fund (Fact Sheet: National Campaign of the National Museum of the American Indian, May 1996, Smithsonian Institution Archives Accession 04-170, “Press Correspondence”).

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center Polshek and Partners (non-Native) also designed the NMAI CRC and were highly involved in the later stages of the NMAI mall museum after Douglas Cardinal’s departure. In describing the design and consultation process for the NMAI mall museum and CRC and the “continuing involvement and overlapping interests of selected players,” Ostrowitz suggests, “…there was an effective Pequot presence during the consultation for the NMAI…” (p. 397). However, within the Mall museum there is nothing so overt or obvious suggesting groups that donate more money get greater representation within the NMAI. The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation does not have a cultural area dedicated to it and neither do other “Tribal and Alaska Native Supporters.” (One exception is the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians who did donate and who do currently have a cultural area in the NMAI). The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation has constructed a private museum/cultural center in Connecticut that is even larger than the NMAI mall museum, attracting hordes of tourists each year. The group’s interest in representing its culture to non-Indian audiences and in demonstrating the “good” that can come of casino money is clear.
Another approach to fundraising was “cause marketing” in partnerships with other companies, for which public relations veteran Dick Taft was hired to assist. Some of such efforts were met with more “positive” affiliations for the NMAI, especially when they were with “earth friendly” companies whose messages seemed to bode well with the perceived ethos of the museum. For example, an article in the *Dallas Morning Star* headlined “Buying eco-snacks can save the earth,” reported a portion of proceeds from specific Nature Company products would go to the NMAI and other companies like the Nature Conservancy, indicating a connection with other companies concerned with the environment (Chrichton, 1993). But, while the NMAI did partner with corporations like the Nature Company, they sought out collaboration with a number of “types” of companies, from Siesta Telecom Phone Cards, sold in casinos, to Neiman Marcus. Partnerships with companies that somehow did not seem congruent with the museum’s message were sometimes met with skepticism. There was even talk of partnering with Phillip Morris for some cause marketing, although there was some apprehension over partnering with tobacco, alcohol, or firearms companies.\(^8^0\)

To help in the cause marketing efforts, Richard Taft encouraged Elizabeth Duggal to integrate marketing efforts and outsource to a greater extent. He suggested once again bringing in New York public relations specialist Dick Weiner, who, according to Taft was “a brilliant guy who orchestrated the success of the Cabbage Patch doll” (Memorandum to Elizabeth Duggal, October 3, 2000, Subject: Public Relations, Smithsonian Institution Archives). Indeed, Taft had used Weiner “in the early going” of NMAI fund-raising, and Taft had suggested

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\(^{8^0}\) In fact, Phillip Morris had been a contributor to the New York Museum of the American Indian (Force, 1999), and was likely approached because of its prior history and interest in the museum. Fundraisers for the NMAI attempted to bring past donors with them when the collection transferred, but as Brundin (1996) suggests, some donors felt alienated as a result of
partnering with a tobacco company. In 1990, Weiner had sent a memorandum to Alice Burnette about the possibility of partnering with Phillip Morris in addition to the American Association of Retired People (AARP) and MasterCard. After meeting with Peter Powers, Smithsonian Institution General Council, Weiner advised, “…a major prohibition is that no tobacco products can be advertised in the Smithsonian magazine and no tobacco or alcoholic products can be distributed as ‘favors’ in Smithsonian buildings. He also speculated that some types of companies could not be affiliated with NMAI, such as firearms manufacturers” (Memorandum to Alice Burnette from Richard Weiner, November 7, 1990, Smithsonian Institution Archives). Not surprisingly, the Cabbage Patch Kid mastermind did not mention in his list of concerns the many health issues faced by American Indian people and the effects of partnering with companies who produce such potentially dangerous products and market them to “at risk” groups like American Indians. But, no doubt, every option was explored in the formidable task of raising museum funds.

Other types of corporate sponsorships were another possibility for raising funds, and the Smithsonian had something to offer corporations in its reputation. After all, the Smithsonian is one of the best recognized “brands” in the country, as Taft points out in a letter to Robert Speltz, Nike’s Global Grand Manager/Community Affairs (November 6, 2001, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-171, “Taft Chron, 1998-2002). Taft emphasized the Smithsonian’s great brand equity and attempted to entice Nike to give the NMAI a corporate sponsorship. He writes, “As you undoubtedly know, the Smithsonian is one of the best brands in America, with 93 percent of all Americans recognizing it as the nation’s premiere cultural institution. Many say it is more important than the Statute of Liberty…” In terms of the repatriation policies.
corporate company you would keep, we believe it will be impressive.” He goes on to list the other “corporate sponsors” the Smithsonian was in negotiations with including Federal Department Stores, America Online/Time Warner, Merrill Lynch, Minnesota Mining & Manufacturing, etc. (He did not mention that he was planning to approach Oprah Winfrey to ask her to host a book club featuring American Indian authors during the museum opening as “Anything she promotes becomes an instant best seller”) (from a memo from Taft to Maggie Bertin, subject, Naming wall promotion, Dec. 13, 1999). Taft assured Nike that they would receive “very wide media exposure” as the NMAI had retained Hill & Knowlton, a major agency, for future public relations endeavors. In approaching Nike, Taft was combining his corporate sponsorship idea with yet another fund-raising endeavor, The Honor Wall. The wall, which circles the Potomac and ascends several floors, is engraved with names. But the cost to engrave a name ($150) was a bit steep, especially for less economically advantaged Indian families. Taft proposed that Nike sponsor a run by Indian children to raise money for Indian families to engrave their names. He writes “We are keenly aware, however, that for many Indian families, $150.00 is a considerable sum and probably prohibitive despite their desire to imprint their names on this explicitly Native facility…We believe it would be a travesty if more Indian people did not have the opportunity to participate and share the great honor of recognition in their own museum” (Nov, 2001 letter from Taft to Speltz, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-171). So, the solution to this economic problem, like many others, was corporate partnership. Taft saw the NMAI for what it was, a “private-public venture” as he wrote in a March, 2002 letter to Richard N. Goldman of the Richard & Rhoda Goldman Fund (March 6, 2002, Letter to Richard N. Goldman, Richard and Rhoda Goldman
Fund, Accession 04-171, “Taft Chron, 1998-2002”). But, while Taft’s letter to Nike emphasizes the publicity a corporate sponsorship would bring them, his letter to the wealthy philanthropists of the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund emphasizes the museum’s potential to educate “millions of young people” about the “pure and wonderful values of Native Americans.”

Special events were and continue to be another means of soliciting funds. In addition, the press opportunities for such events are great. Reporters seem especially fascinated with the kinds of events that attract high-level, photogenic socialites like the national gala weekend event held as part of an annual “social, educational and morale-raising” effort to impress very important people (Geracimos, 18 April, 2005). Coverage of the 2005 gala explained that at the fund raiser, donors “heard themselves praised almost as often as the glories of the institution were trumpeted” because, “The government can only do so much…” Along with the maintenance of ongoing courtships, “There is a lot of talk about money,” as attendee Jill Sackler suggested (her late husband is the namesake of the Smithsonian’s Sackler Gallery). The 2005 gala itinerary included a gathering at the White House hosted by Laura Bush (Geracimos, 18 April 2005).

Corporate donations also came in to support particular special events or programs. For example, Mobile Corporation donated nearly $200,000 toward the traveling exhibit *Woven by the Grandmothers* shown at several museums including the Heard Museum and the Navajo Museum in Arizona. The Ford Foundation donated $100,000 toward the 1997 Native American Film and Video Festival at the Heye Center (National Campaign Report, International Founders Council Meeting, September 1997, Smithsonian Institution Archives).

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81 The Sacklers were also donors to and involved with Heye’s MAI (Force, 1999).
Other donations came not in monetary form, but in the form of free press, and as Richard Taft commented (as all P.R. professionals have at one time or another), “There is nothing like free publicity” (October 2, 2000, Memorandum, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-171, “Taft Chron, 1998-2002”). Several publications offered free advertising space to the NMAI, including *Time, US News & World Report, Sports Illustrated*, and (of course) *Smithsonian* (Fact Sheet: National Campaign of the National Museum of the American Indian, May 1996, Smithsonian Institution Archives Accession 04-170, “Press Correspondence”). In addition, *Forbes* magazine on October 16, 1995 included a profile of the NMAI in its issue listing the “400 Richest People in America.” Such third party validation was exactly what the museum was after, and this particular issue was sure to reach some of the coveted “seven figure club.”

The museum did not seem to discriminate when it came to raising funds. Ironically, the release of the movie “Dances With Wolves” reflected the museum’s relationship with the movie and Kevin Costner, the star of the film who was also an Honorary Member of the National Campaign. Orion Pictures made the world premiere of the film a benefit for the NMAI (Memorandum from Madeline Jacobs to Alice Burnette, January 14, 1991). As discussed in Chapter III, scholars have roundly criticized the movie because it centers on the experiences of a White character and romanticizes American Indian people as noble savages. In response to a draft letter written by Alice Burnette thanking Orion Pictures and raving about the movie and its historical accuracy, Madeline Jacobs questioned whether this sounded too much like a “product endorsement,” and reminded her that Peter Powers, Smithsonian Institution General Counsel, had advised NMAI planners to avoid product endorsements.
The NMAI also partnered with Ted Turner and Turner Broadcasting to launch a series of programs and news reports (on TNT, TBS, and CNN) and a book from Turner Publishing designed to present “a comprehensive exploration of American Indian history.” Turner would provide the NMAI with airtime or “free publicity” (Turner News Release, April 7, 1993, Smithsonian Institution Archives). The partnership on the programming project, “The Native Americans. Behind the Legends. Beyond the Myths,” had great potential in terms of public relations for the NMAI. As an April 7, 1993 Turner press release suggests, “Through exposure to an audience of millions, Turner Broadcasting’s presentation of Native American issues, leaders, events and artists will help create the visibility and interest necessary to the Smithsonian’s extensive fundraising efforts on behalf of this worthy and ambitious project” (“Turner Broadcasting Expands Native American Initiative,” Smithsonian Institution Archives).

However, Ted Turner himself, a new character involved in the ongoing NMAI press problems, also fueled some dissent among those within and outside of Indian Country. Many were critical of his ownership of the Atlanta Braves, their mascot, and their notorious “Tomahawk Chop.” Turner made the mistake of saying too much at a December 3, 1992 press conference about the project and in defense of his team, a point of contention for those already
offended by the Braves. In a December 10, 1992 *Indian Country Today* article emerging from the press conference titled, “Turner praises Indians with one hand, chops with other,” Bunty Anquoe explained Turner’s refusal to admit the name and gesture were racist. Instead, Turner tactlessly insisted he had not chosen the team name (designated in 1911) and that most American Indians he had spoken with had no problem with it (especially now that the team was winning). He told reporters, “I can’t stop the chop,” as he made the gesture. Also cited in the article was a response from well-known American Indian activist Charlene Teeters, who said poignantly and with far fewer words than Turner, “He just doesn’t get it…I think he’s trying to buy us off, or at least appease us by offering the programming. But our dignity is not for sale” (Anquoe, 1992).

Other objectors from Indian organizations like the National Congress of American Indians are cited by Anquoe expressing their dissent to what they and others in Indian country perceive as a racist team name. A memorandum from Dan Agent to Alice Burnette on December 17, 1992 made the following comment about the article: “Because the first half of the story is extremely critical of Mr. Turner and his statements at the press conference, Ms. Anquoe may have done us a favor—intentionally or unintentionally—by not mentioning our relationship with the project” (Smithsonian Institution Archive, Accession 04-170). Another note, only addressed from “L.S.” to “Madeline” attached to an “Off the Record” article by Jim Windolf remarks, “This is the shortest most damming piece! What a riot” (Smithsonian Institution Archive, Accession 04-170). The piece states, “In his rambling lecture, the man nicknamed the Mouth of the South tried to squeeze in the experiences of American Indians from the time of Columbus to the present” (Windolf, “Off the Record,” New York Observer,
Concerned citizens wrote to the NMAI to express their discontent about Turner’s involvement with the museum, but the response to at least one of these letters revealed the value placed on Turner. One, written by Robert Kisken of Ann Arbor, MI was met with a respectful response by Director Richard West in which he explained why the relationship with Turner and the project were “important”; He said it would present “an undertaking whose magnitude and scope are virtually unprecedented in the commercial media” (Smithsonian Institution Archives, Letter dated April 28, 1993 to Robert Kisken from Richard West). He also explained that the endeavor employed a rigorous consultation program in which many American Indian scholars, writers, and actors were involved. West continues, “I have every anticipation that the televising of our toll-free number to millions of Turner viewers will add thousands to our membership and bring us that much closer to our fund-raising goal” (Smithsonian Institution Archives, Letter dated April 28, 1993 to Robert Kisken from Richard West). Several special events in conjunction with Turner helped to promote the visibility of the campaign.

NMAI planners knew their relationship with Turner was bound to gain press attention (his smiling face is pictured along with several articles related to the museum) and that it should be handled carefully. Turner’s own public relations firm, New-York based Manning, Selvage, and Lee met with NMAI collaborators along with Turner Broadcasting advertising sales staff so as to synchronize their messages about the joint project and the museum’s mission and progress (Memorandum from Susannah Kellems to Colonghi, Kogen, Weiner, and West with SI Public Affairs’ Burnette, Jacobs, and Nester cc'd, April 8, 1993, Accession 04-170 Box 1993).
7/8). But, as the following section explains, Turner was only one small hiccup of many fits in the museum’s public relations saga. If NMAI planners knew anything from the late 1980s on, they knew they would have to control the messages about the museum in order to get it off the ground. The success of their fund-raising campaigns depended on it.

**Internal Conflicts and the Press**

Despite its efforts to create an image worthy of corporate and philanthropic sponsorship, from its very inception, the NMAI was laden with controversy, and would have to do what it could to minimize negative press coverage. It faced a barrage of bad press at the first suggestion the beloved Museum of the American Indian (MAI) Heye collection be transferred from the state of New York. Many protested the removal of such a great institution due to politics (Costikyan, 1987). Several individuals involved with the MAI complained that New York politicians had not done enough to keep the MAI collection (Costikyan, “New York State Paralysis…” 5 August 1987). Hearkening back to his “Benign Neglect” days, New York Senator Daniel Moynihan delayed his ultimate agreement with the Smithsonian as he knew angry New Yorkers would be after him with pitch forks for letting this unmatched collection out of the state (*The New York Times*, “Keep the Indian Museum in New York,” June 3, 1987). But, as he, and the MAI trustees concluded, there was no suitable site in state available for such a large collection.

Also of great controversy was the repatriation legislation associated with the NMAI and later the passage of NAGPRA. Repatriation was met with resistance from some of those heavily involved with the MAI, making their already-bitter stance on movement of the
collection out of New York taste even worse. There was great press attention on repatriation taking several different angles, but many reporters were sympathetic toward the legislation. However, even positive coverage of the legislation sometimes cast shadows on the Smithsonian itself. Many described repatriations as “bittersweet” because it had taken so long (The Globe & Mail, 16 January, 1993, “The Day Ottawa Gutted a Culture…”). At times, Smithsonian Secretary Robert McCormick Adams became exceedingly frustrated with more critical repatriation coverage. He even wrote an angry letter to the editor of the St. Louis Post Dispatch to express his discontent with the simplistic, “one-sided” way in which an editorial had addressed the issue and painted his institution as an antagonist in the already difficult situation (Letter from Robert McC. Adams to Editorial Page Editor, December 29, 1987 in response to 12 December 1987 article, “Indian Remains Deserve Burial,” Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-170, Box 4/8).

To add to the volatile climate, former MAI Director Roland Force and his successor Julie Kidd were difficult to control and on several occasions voiced their discontent about various aspects of the transfer process. In 1999, a somewhat embarrassing history of the MAI/NMAI by Roland Force was published posthumously by his wife. Force described the confusing and sordid political climate under which the Heye collection was transferred. (Like the conditions under which many collections items had been coerced in the first place, MAI trustees faced various economic and environmental hardships). For many New Yorkers, the MAI had been a local staple. The Bronx annex yard had for years been adorned with teepees and totem poles. Over the years, however, the MAI facilities had become dilapidated in a degraded neighborhood, and trustees could no longer afford to care for the massive collection
properly. New York wanted to hold onto Heye’s collection (the largest of American Indian artifacts in the world containing about one million objects) although it was in disrepair and its storage facilities were inadequate, and it was rumored pieces of the collection were disappearing through theft. In addition, it was at risk of being dismantled into smaller pieces or worse, sold off to private collectors like entrepreneur Ross Perot, who wished to move the collection to Texas for a “Cowboys and Indians” themed museum (Force, 1999). The NMNH also made a proposition to acquire the collection, but trustees of the Heye Foundation believed NMNH facilities were not large enough to house the one million objects (Costikyan, 1987). Finally, an agreement was struck to transfer it to the Smithsonian, changing the name by placing “National” in front of it, and to keep at least part of the collections and exhibits in New York in the re-vamped Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House in Manhattan, deeming it the National Museum of the American Indian’s George Gustav Heye Center. (New York got to hold onto part of a beloved institution). The bulk of the collections would be moved the Suitland, MD into the Cultural Resources Center storage facility. Some would be exhibited in the newly constructed museum on the National Mall.

Along with the NMAI Act prescribing the move came repatriation legislation, long being pushed by activists like Suzan Shown Harjo, Senator Daniel Inouye (Hawaii), and Congressman Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Colorado- the only American Indian person in Congress). Next came the challenge of trying to sell the idea of repatriation. Some of the MAI leaders saw as a threat movement toward repatriation efforts. For example, Julie Kidd, Director of MAI (Roland Force’s successor and president of her family’s The Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation), was clearly upset about the implications of repatriation to the
Heye collection. She circulated a memo to all Indian trustees of the MAI, reprimanding their newly adopted repatriation policy, asking them to reconsider what they had done. (She had not been in attendance when the agreement had unanimously passed). (Memorandum from Madeline Jacobs to Adams and West, March 17, 1991 including attendance list from March 4, 1991 NMAI Board of Trustees meeting, Smithsonian Institution Archives, 04-170, Box 4/8).

Kidd suggested the members were depriving Indian people of their history and wrote, “Forgive me, but you, as the Indian leaders of the NMAI board have let your people down. You have made yourselves the heroes of the moment—but you have sacrificed the future” (Memorandum from Julie J. Kidd, March 6, 1991 to Indian Members of the NMAI Bard of Trustees, Re: Repatriation, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-170 Box 4/8). Her memo made Richard West nervous as reflected in a March, 1991 note he wrote to Alice Burnette, “I cannot begin to describe the damage to this project that is likely to flow from this memorandum” (March 8, 1991, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-170 Box 4/8). Madeline Jacobs advised Richard West and Secretary Adams to brace themselves for the very real possibility that Kidd’s dissenting sentiments (at that point “insider information”) would be leaked to the press (Confidential Memorandum from Madeline Jacobs to Richard West and Secretary Adams, March 17, 1991, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-170, Box 4/8).

Anthropologists and archaeologists were also highly outspoken about repatriation as they saw the potential for the National Museum of Natural History, to be sucked into to the full time inventory and repatriation of its some 18,000 human remains and funerary and sacred objects to “culturally affiliated” groups. NAGPRA policy did in fact mean drastic change for
the NMNH. Once a leader in research, the museum is now bogged down in repatriation. Archaeologists and scientists who foresaw this movement were extremely vocal in their resistance, resulting in some negative coverage of NAGPRA (1990) and the NMAI Act (1989) before the museum had even really begun to take shape. Scientists compared repatriation and reburial to book burning. They claimed the study of Native remains not only informed science, but enabled a better understanding of the past for Native people. Activists like Shown Harjo did not buy the scientific argument and resented scientists for disrupting and stealing Indian ancestors. The National Museum of Natural History and the NMAI have undergone varying degrees of repatriation efforts as a result of NAGPRA policy and the NMAI Act, evoking mixed feelings nationally. Because Heye was less interested in human remains (Force, 1999), it would appear the NMNH bore the brunt of the new repatriation policy.

Kidd was not the only “in-house” challenge to the NMAI at the time. Critics from

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82 When the struggle for Kennewick Man began, scientists railed even harder against repatriation, and seemed to win the legal battle because no current group could meet the standard of cultural affiliation in that isolated case.

83 In the end, the NMAI did what it could to patch up relations with former MAI leaders. (In the world of philanthropy, it does not make sense to burn one’s bridges). Force was still inadvertently involved in the new museum because of the connections he maintained with those supporters of the MAI who continued on with the museum after the transfer. In a November, 1993 letter from Richard West to Roland Force, West informs him that Charles Simon his “good friend and former colleague at the Museum of the American Indian” had donated $250,000 to the museum in order to honor Force and Julie Kidd. West corresponded with Force’ wife, Maryanne Tefft Force after his death about a possible “naming opportunity” at the museum for Kidd and Force. Maryanne Tefft Force explained the financial support Kidd had provided from her family foundation when the MAI was going through various legal battles. Both Force and Kidd are recognized in the museum near the large Copper Screen Wall surrounding the Potomac designed by Ramone Sakiestewa (Hopi). It is clear that Kidd invested a great deal of money and effort in ensuring the future of the NMAI.

84 Other critics from the MAI/NMAI include Judith A. Brundin (a former administrator and editor for the museum). She also expressed dissent at the lack of academic integrity and political agendas she believed were being served by the NMAI (Brundin, Academic Questions. A New Cultural Agenda for the National Museum of the American Indian, Fall, 1996). Brundin suggests a kind of reverse racism manifested itself with new policies set by Richard West and
within the Smithsonian, seeing what repatriation meant to their professions and field, expressed their sentiments in public. Not only did Public Law 101-601 (NAGPRA) force the return of human remains and funerary and sacred objects, some believed this left the door wide open for the repatriation of other objects and greater portions of their collections. For example, Bill Sturtevant of the NMNH Department of Anthropology wrote a very critical review in the Museum Anthropology newsletter about the repatriation legislation. Richard West wrote a response also later published in the newsletter. He commented in a memorandum, “I am not particularly pleased to be taking on a ‘member of the family’ in public, but I believe that Dr. Sturtevant left me little choice” (June 3, 1991, Re: My proposed response to Bill Sturtevant’s article in Museum Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution Archive, to Frank H. Talbot and Donald J. Ortner, Accession 04-170, Box 4/8). In his response, West emphasized repatriation legislation only applied to “limited” collections materials, and that it was a flexible policy that was not “writ in stone” (in other words not everything had to go back, and things would happen slowly on a case-by-case basis) (June 3, 1991, Re: My proposed response to Bill Sturtevant’s article in Museum Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution Archive, Accession 04-170, Box 4/8). Secretary Heyman began writing about the NMAI in the Smithsonian Perspectives column, likely to combat skepticism both in-house and outside the complex as well as to defend Richard Hill as they excluded whites from leadership positions. She also criticized the ways in which meetings and consultations were conducted, suggesting tribal leaders frequently do not agree with the majority of their community, and therefore consultants provided a biased view. She also suggests connections with Indian communities forged by the MAI over the years were largely ignored. Also points of concern, she suggested, were the lack of expertise by drafters of “comprehensive” repatriation policy and the alienation of “significant” benefactors that happened as a result of the new policy. She writes, “The liberal NMAI policy does not stress scholarly input about the return of objects, and it should be noted that the collection contains very few items considered ‘human remains,’ which are the primary focus of NAGPRA” (p. 39). Brundin’s concerns emphasize the broad scope and language of the legislation to include items like “burial” objects. She also suggested many de-accessioned objects have appeared on the
the Smithsonian’s efforts and decision (Heyman, 1994, December).

The NMAI combated negative coverage of repatriation and began planning responses to the press. In a memorandum to Richard West, Alice Green Burnette wrote:

While we are humming away internally, there is a big world out there in which repatriation continues to get a lot of play…We must get some control on this issue and over what is happening externally. The positive ‘bells and Whistles’ of the NMAI Campaign will be muted indeed if repatriation continues to be the news (Sept. 26, 1990, Re: Repatriation, Smithsonian Institution Archive, Accession 04-170, Box 4/8).

In the beginning, Smithsonian Institution Public Affairs were critiqued from both sides, those opposing and those pushing for repatriation. A memo from Director Madeline Jacobs attempted to prepare another woman from her office for reporters who would inevitably ask about repatriation while she was gone. She provided an annotated list of “Some of the most outrageous statements that are made by Indians concerning remains” including a statement by Suzan Shown Harjo that the study of Indian human remains was a precursor for Nazi Germany’s “genetic experiments.” Jacobs instructs her subordinate, “To which we don’t say anything” (Memo dated August 17, 1989, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-170, Box 2/8). They made press announcements with big profile repatriations such as the Kwakiutl Potlatch Artifacts confiscated by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1921 and sold to Heye. The items were repatriated at the request of the U’Mista Cultural Center, Alert Bay, B.C. after it was concluded they had originally been obtained illegally. While the Canadian government had outlawed potlatching at the time, the law is now considered unethical and the “open market” since their repatriation.
circumstances under which the items were obtained are now thought of as coercion as participants were threatened with prison if they did not turn over the valuable objects to authorities (Press Release, Oct. 7, 1992, Smithsonian Institution, “National Museum of the American Indian Approves.”). Efforts to emphasize such repatriations were received with supportive coverage at times, but as mentioned, questions about why it had taken so long were frequently raised (Gonzalez, 1998, “Masks’ Return…”, Herald-American).

The next scandal ensued in 1998 before the museum was built as Douglas Cardinal, the famous First Nations Blackfoot/Metis mastermind behind the distinctive NMAI mall museum architecture, was fired. He, along with GBQC, the Philadelphia group with which he was sub-contracting, did not leave on good terms, and the departure was met with mixed press coverage. The media followed his story with the NMAI from the time he was hired to well after the museum opened in 2004 (two years behind schedule). One Washington Post article reported Cardinal refused to attend the opening of the museum in 2004, despite a personal invitation from Richard West, and that he “condemned all those responsible for bastardizing his design” (Lewis, 2005, “Indian museum’s uneasy presence bespeaks troubled past”, The Washington Post, 11 June). Cardinal was a high-profile architect, and such negative relations did not reflect well on his or the museum’s reputation. Some reviews suggested flaws in the design and planning had something to do with Cardinal’s departure (Lewis, 2005, “Indian museum’s uneasy presence bespeaks troubled past”, The Washington Post, 11 June). While at first, Cardinal was celebrated by the press and was the subject of many features (see for example the clichéd “A Warrior Architect Wrestles his Demons” in The New York Times, Leigh Brown, Oct. 24, 1996), later coverage was hard on both Cardinal and the museum. For example, one
article suggested Cardinal had tried to play “hard ball” with the NMAI by unexpectedly asking for an additional one million dollars (See for example, the still clichéd Lowther, “Earth, wind, and fired,” Elm Street, Sept. 1998). This last scandal, which set back the opening of the museum by two years, followed the NMAI into the 2004 inaugural coverage and remained one of the major themes evoked by critics of the museum in architectural reviews.

Other criticism was spawned by the fact that emergent “ethnic” museums were not roundly accepted at the time (Colp, 1990, “Ethnic museums…” The Washington Times, 5 Dec.). Or, other coverage accepting the concept questioned whether the museum, slated to take the last spot on the Mall, also meant the possibility that the African American Museum (whose advocates were also pushing to get legislation passed) might not be a part of the coveted Mall space. Indeed, NMAI planners envisioned questions would inevitably arise about the competing museum (“Questions and Answers for Press Conference, May 8, 1989, Announcement of signing of Memorandum of Understanding Between the Smithsonian Institution and the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation,” Prepared for Secretary Adams, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-170, Box 5/8, 1986-2003).

NMAI planners were also aware that despite some support from Indian Country, there was certainly a critical segment who believed the museum to be bogus. Many more traditional American Indians were already critical of the government, and to some of them, this museum was just another institution driven to exploit them. One of the most outspoken of those was Carter Camp, a member of the Ponca Nation who had been actively involved with the American Indian Movement (AIM). He wrote a cynical letter appearing in Indian Country Today in the early nineties, and his criticism of the museum continued online in following years
(Camp, “Whitewashing the American Holocaust,” 21 July 1993, *Indian Country Today*). In an article posted online Camp writes:

For a decade or more the Smithsonian fundraising machine has gone merrily along, draining much needed funds away from the Indian community and diverting Americas [sic] attention away from the economic, cultural and legal devastation going on across our homelands. Our leaders are grinning and shuffling into line to endorse another whitemans [sic] dream and our artists and writers can’t seem to wait for a grant, the ultimate pat on the head from the hand of power (Carter Camp, “National Museum of the American Indian Hides Genocide,” New California Media Online, 6 December, 1999, retrieved online 31 May, 2007 from http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/663487/posts).

In addition to his critique that the NMAI was consuming funds that might otherwise more directly benefit American Indian people, Camp felt the museum was not adequately addressing the genocide of American Indian people, and suggested the museum be renamed to include the word “Holocaust.” He argued Jewish leaders had done well to remind visitors of the atrocities committed against their people so as to prevent them in the future. Camp wrote, “I envy my Jewish relatives for serving their people so well. Our Indian leaders have seen fit to sell our history so the Whiteman can bend it to fit the myth they use to avoid histories [sic] judgment,” and anticipating the audience the museum would serve, he suggested this was “…better for tourism in Washington D.C. too” (Carter Camp, Ponica Nation, “National Museum of the American Indian Hides Genocide,” New California Media Online, 6 December,
NMAI internal press reports make reference to some of the more acrid articles including Camp’s outspoken contentions in *Indian Country Today* (Indian Publicity Report, May ’91-March 5, 1991, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-170, Box 7/8). Richard West knew he would need to respond to such critiques from Indian people, and makes reference to Camp’s argument in several places without placing too much emphasis on them, as will be discussed in the following sections on news coverage and academic debates. While *Indian Country Today* did feature some critical comments about the museum early on and during the opening, some more recent articles suggest it is more receptive to the museum.

A broad array of print press articles appeared in response to the Mall museum opening, from the celebratory to the scathing, and the following section will describe some of these. They are by no means comprehensive. However, the sample reviewed attempts to get at the flavor of local and nationally circulating articles, mostly from the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Times*, *The New York Times*, and *Indian Country Today*. Positive articles are discussed along with those from some of the most outspoken critics of the museum. Reporters had been following the story of the MAI and its transformation into the NMAI, and the inaugural coverage, while heavy and varied, was only a small part of the entire story. Some veteran reporters viewed this as part of the ongoing saga (no doubt *New York Times* museum reviewer Edward Rothstein was waiting for some time with baited breath to pan the museum)86.

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85 Of course, Camp wrote these passages prior to the opening of the Mall museum, but such concern still continue in direct response to museum texts by critics like Amy Lonetree (2006b&c), as will be discussed.

86 Clearly, *New York Times* critic Edward Rothstein resents the trend of museums laden with identity politics and was panning ethnic museums long before the opening of the NMAI and
while the story likely seemed fresh to others. In any case, there was great effort and thought put into the ways in which opening coverage would play out, and NMAI planners, including Richard West, ramped up for what they knew would be the formidable task of spinning a somewhat non-conventional message for an institution many believed was obliged to be “universal.”

**The Popular Press: Reception of the NMAI**

Just as in the early years, press coverage of the museum’s opening was mixed, with some scathing reviews from more outspoken critics. While many reviews were “positive” it was going too far to say, as Richard West did in an interview with *Indian Country Today*, “If you look at the media and how it treated the museum when it opened, it was vastly positive. Overwhelmingly so, in fact” (*Indian Country Today* - West Reviews Museum’s First Year. Aug. 10, 2005 Vol. 25 (9): C2. Jim Adams). Amanda Cobb (2005b), who is generally in agreement with most of West’s sentiments, contradicts his claim, writing “…the early reviews from the national press ranged from decidedly mixed to altogether unfavorable, largely conveying a sense of confusion, disappointment, and unmet expectations” (p. 381). West’s efforts to put a positive spin on opening coverage was not accepted by academics, even those who generally accept the museum’s mission, as will be discussed further. Print press coverage, in fact, included 1.) skepticism, 2.) uncritical responses to the museum (or more “positive” long after it had opened as well. Rothstein summarizes the broader shift in contemporary museums commenting in July, 2006, “Museums are morphing. Once they were chroniclers or collectors, gathering objects and facts and putting them on display. Now many have become crucibles: places where a cultural identity is hammered out, refined and reshaped. Along the way they also have become community centers, where a group gathers to celebrate its past, commemorate its tragedies and convey its achievements to others” (Rothstein, 2006). According to Rothstein, the activities he listed should not be the function of the museum.
stories frequently regurgitating positioning statements), and 3.) articles that took the opportunity to flesh out some of the complexities involved, as will be discussed below.

Coverage of the opening of the NMAI and responses to it indicate most of those writing about the museum hold an expectation of representational adequacy in one way or the other. They generally go as follows: 1.) They ask whether the museum, like a universal survey museum, exhibits a representative number and kind of artifacts and art along with the appropriate accompanying information about their history and creation. This kind of review assumes the museum has a duty to the American public to educate them properly in the fields of art/history and science; or 2.) The second argument asks whether the museum is fairly representing its constituents (either American Indian people or other groups considered Native to the Western hemisphere). This argument assumes the museum has a duty to American Indian people to represent them fairly (in their own voices) in light of museological history. The second argument evaluates the museum according to its own self-understanding. If one accepts either premise, there are two routes to take; the museum either does or does not do an adequate job. Those adamantly clinging to either of these perspectives tend to talk past one another because of their different expectations. Two 2004 editorials appearing in *The Washington Post* in response to a 19 September article by Phillip Kennicott that year reflected the polar opposite attitudes (Kennicott, Phillip, 2004, “A particular kind of truth; as the culture wars rage, a rare victory over routes of knowledge,” *The Washington Post*, 19 Sept.). One commended the museum for having the “nerve” to demonstrate alternative ways of thinking and the museum patron who is “smart enough to see the difference” (Sandra Black of Washington). The other complains there is not enough scientific evidence used within the
museum (Daniele C. Struppa, Fairfax). (The Washington Post. “Honoring the First Nations.” 25 Sept., 2004. “Commentary”). These two examples indicate the tendency to either accept or reject the museum on its own terms, and many hold some combination of these perspectives.

Various general print press articles published before, during, and after the opening of the NMAI were reviewed in order to get a sense of press sentiment. Many addressed local concerns, including articles from the Washington Post’s extensive coverage of the museum’s opening. Not surprisingly, The New York Times also had an interest due to the large scale of the national project and New York’s history with it. Indian Country Today, which claims to be a “persuasive voice in American Indian journalism,” also featured various responses. In a back and forth over inaugural coverage and responses, general press articles laid out some of the most important critiques and perspectives on the museum. Although each vary in their generosity toward the museum’s self-understanding, some of the most outspoken critics of the museum have included Edward Rothstein (The New York Times), Paul Richard (The Washington Post), and Marc Fisher (The Washington Post). Academic essays (as will be discussed further in the following section) addressed many of the reviews that came out in the popular press. For example, Akim D. Reinhardt wrote responses to several local, general stories (Summer/Fall 2005, American Indian Quarterly). Reinhart’s comments on local print press will be used as a frame to discuss emerging arguments in some of the following passages. Reinhardt lambastes a number of the stylized, local critics and even some positive

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87 According to the Indian Country Today (ICT) Website, “indiancountry.com,” ICT “publishes more original journalistic content on American Indian issues than any other news source.” The Website also claims to have more visitor traffic than any other “original-content” Native news Website (Viewed 25 June 2007).

88 For the sake of brevity, I have focused on reviews of the NMAI Mall museum, and have chosen save analysis of articles about the New York George Gustav Heye Center for another day.
reviews he believed perpetuated stereotypes through cliché. Additional coverage will be discussed after providing an overview of Reinhardt’s concerns.

Among the complaints Reinhardt makes about local coverage of the opening was the portrayal of Indian cultures and people as “exotic,” reproducing the same old stereotypes with thoughtless banter about the surprising mix of modernity and tradition seen among American Indian attendees at the grand opening, using terms like “The Native Touch” (Trescott, 2004, “Mall’s finite space holds infinite dreams,” The Washington Post. 15 Sept.) and “the granddaddy of all clichés” “noble” (Roberts & Thomas, 2004, “An early peak, with some valleys; At preview reception, the responses are mixed.” The Washington Post. 21 Sept). He suggests such approaches “…trap Native peoples in atavistic pasts and then clarify such atavism as the exclusively authentic representation of the indigenous” (p. 1). For example, a Sept. 22, 2004 Washington Post article dwells on the juxtaposition of traditional and non-traditional characteristics exhibited by Indian crowds during NMAI opening ceremonies such as the use of cell phones and the combination of traditional with more mainstream clothing (“A Gathering of Tribes,” 22 Sept., 2004, cited by Reinhardt, 2005). However, while Reinhardt wishes for newspapers to stick to the “nuts-and-bolts” rather than “melodrama,” he does not suggest how they could have provided an overview of the museum’s historical situatedness (arguably very tragic) without sounding melodramatic. While critiques from Paul Richard try to address the victimization of American Indian people, Reinhardt is annoyed with the fact that he dwells on “victimhood.” He seems to agree with the NMAI that the most appropriate approach should only emphasize “survivance.” However, such a focus while highlighting agency does not articulate the truly horrific effects of colonization and the kinds of atrocities
that continue. And, while he objects to the “static” ways in which these articles treat American Indian people, Reinhardt does not appreciate the attempt to explain that they also lead modern lives. Granted, many of the articles to which Reinhardt refers present a stylized focus on the strange juxtaposition, however, some at least attempt to explain tradition has a place in the modern world. But, Reinhardt is quite right in pointing out that fact that critics like Paul Richard make no attempt at cultural sensitivity in inaugural reviews, especially in terms of discussions about victimhood and blood quantum (as though he resents pressures to be “politically correct”).

Reinhardt lambastes Richard for his apparent ineptitude about the ordering of objects in the museum, writing, “Richard goes on to disparage Native concepts of non-linear history, implying that if you do not accept sequential approaches to history, then you are denying history (as an actual historian myself, I can only shake my head in amazement).” Also a point of contention for Reinhardt is the fact that Richard refuses to acknowledge the similarities among various Indian groups. He is especially annoyed at Richard’s impatient rhetorical question, “What is this Indianness?” But, while Reinhardt says he welcomes critiques of the museum, and even suggests there may be some that are warranted, it is Richard’s approach that is particularly offensive. “The truth is that Richard, to his credit, has teased out some very complicated, vital, and relevant questions; it is just that they deserve equally complex and subtle answers, not the ham-fisted and simplistic pronouncements he has offered” (Reinhardt, 2005). Richard’s critiques would in fact be revisited in later academic publications reviewing initial responses. In addition, Richard himself later provided a more positive response to the moving exhibit, “Listening to Our Ancestors” (Richard, Paul. “At the Indian Museum,

Another major complaint launched against the coverage was that American Indian people were not interviewed while many quotations from “experts” (academics, etc.) appeared (As with the Hill, 2004, *Baltimore Sun*, 29 August; Copeland, 2004, *Washington Post*, 15 Sept.). Sadly, as complaints like Reinhardt’s rightly point out, the same issues of “expertise” exist in many of the articles he reviewed (though he certainly chooses a particularly offensive pool to address), and many of the same trends described in Chapter III can still be seen in the coverage. For example, rather than interviewing an American Indian participant during the opening ceremonies, S.A. Miller and Arlo Wagner of *The Washington Times* cited a quotation from a man riding by on a bicycle, who merely paused to observe the festivities (“For Indians, a feather in cap; 20,000 welcome new museum. *The Washington Times.* 22 Sept. 2004. S.A. Miller and Arlo Wagner). However, many articles do include interviews with Indian people. Although Richard West is frequently cited, conveying the museum’s “official” messages, feature articles on other self-identifying American Indian people appeared as well. For example, an article in *The Washington Post* is presented in the words of Miranda Belarde, an NMAI employee speaking about her role and understanding of the museum (Sittenfeld, *The Washington Post*, “Cultural Interpreter; Miranda Belarde-Lewis…,” 19 Sept., 2004). In this case, the story is entirely in the words of an American Indian person, albeit a museum employee.

However, some critics refuse to let go of tradition. *New York Times* museum reviewer Edward Rothstein has taken an antagonistic tone with many other “ethnic” museums, and his larger complaint seems to be with this “kind” of museums (those involving identity politics).
One of his most common grievances is that ethnic museums do not contain enough “Western” scholarship (Museum with and American Indian voice. Edward Rothstein, *New York Times*, 21 Sept., 2004). He began complaining about “Museums that tell us what to think” back in the 1990s. He continued his critique into 2006, writing of the San Francisco-based Museum of African Diaspora that it uses “humanity” to describe common “human” experiences, a similarity that this museum apparently has with the NMAI. He is quite critical of such a notion, suggesting it makes diasporic and African identity so ambiguous that it leaves one wondering exactly what being diasporic or African might mean. “…this makes African identity so broad as to be meaningless,” he writes. Similarly, in his review of the NMAI, Rothstein writes:

> The museum, though, seems satisfied with serving a sociological function for Indians of the Americas. It may indeed succeed, because it has packaged a self-celebratory romance. Understanding though, requires something more. It is not a matter of whose voice is heard. It is a matter of detail, qualification, nuance and context. It is a matter of scholarship (Rothstein, 2004, “Museum with an American Indian voice”, *New York Times*, 21 Sept).

As the above quotation suggests, other types of critiques launched at the museum reflected expectations of traditional museological paradigms. While some critics, like Edward Rothstein, complain there was no “unity” in the exhibits, he also criticizes a kind of “uniformity” he identified. He writes, the various exhibits “May have been homogenized by

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89 Rothstein’s critique, although sarcastic and stylized, raises an important point about the ambivalent humanistic/Indian identity construction within the museum, further discussed in the section on visitor reception.
subtle forces within the museum itself.” He continues, “The building emphasizes a kind of warm, earthly mysticism with comforting homilies behind every façade, reviving an old pastoral romance about the Indian” (Rothstein, 2004, “Museum with an American Indian voice,” New York Times, 21 Sept). Rothstein complains, “...the museum almost seems afraid of distinctions,” and continues:

The result is that a monotony sets in; every tribe is equal, and so is every idea. No unified intelligence has been applied. Moreover, with a net cast so wide, including South and Central America as well as Alaska, the only commonality may be the encounter with colonizers—and even this must be simplified” (Rothstein, 2004, “Museum with an American Indian voice, The New York Times, 21 Sept).

Rothstein’s critiques, generally stylized reviews heavy on the sarcasm, have been met with great annoyance. Several articles have responded to the press coverage of the opening of the museum and emphasize the larger points Rothstein has missed by maintaining traditional museum paradigms and overlooking the goals of the NMAI to be disruptive of those past paradigms (Archuleta, 2005; Reinhardt, 2005; Cobb, 2005a-c).

Washington Post reviewer Marc Fisher seems to assume a similar Hannah Arendt-style panic when it comes to identity politics and the conflation of the private into the public.

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90 The uniformity to which Rothstein refers may have been a result of the encouragement by planners for community curators to focus on certain themes. According to West’s 2005 Interview with Amanda Cobb (2005c) themes were determined during focus groups with American Indian leaders. Several themes are discernable in each of the tribal alcoves and throughout museum exhibits. In addition (as discussed further in Chapter VI) Rothstein may be referring to the uniformity in the ways in which many of the interviews and footage of dancing shown in the museum were filmed (in interview style and in slow motion as discussed in Chapter VI). He is likely also referring to the commonalities in the “spines,” or areas with common themes in each exhibit (Cobb, 2005c, “West Interview”).
Seemingly terrified of the divide identity politics threatens to a more “unified” nation, he writes:

The Holocaust Memorial Museum started us down this troubling path. A first-rate endeavor with a rigorous, probing approach to history, the Holocaust museum—a privately funded enterprise on government land—should nonetheless never have been given a spot near the Mall. Its location there opened the gate for the deconstruction of American history into ethnically separate stories told in separate buildings. Museums of black and Hispanic history are in the works (Fisher, 2004, “Indian museum’s appeal, sadly, only skin-deep”, *The Washington Post*, 21 Sept.).

Similarly, after trying with all his might to convince readers that the “Native Modernists” on display, Alan Houser and George Morrison, actually created art that was more modernist than Native, Paul Richard writes, “Art is seldom comfortable in identity museums…” He continues, “All such institutions are inherently restrictive, and by confining they mislead” (Richard, 2004, “Explorers of the new…,” *The Washington Post*, 19 Sept.). Richard takes for granted his own restrictive Western genre into which he lumps the artists. Of those reviewers concerned with identity politics’ questions, none seem to question Western paradigms without taking American Indian perspectives seriously.

22 Sept.). Terms for traditional dances and objects are referred to as “performances,” and “props,” as though American Indians are meant to provide entertainment (Higgins, 2004, “Covering a lot of ground in a little space”, The Washington Post, 20 Sept.). Such a perspective clearly makes assumptions about the nature of the museum and the ideal spectator. The following verbiage describing the procession indicates the ways in which NMAI opening ceremonies were perceived by some reporters as a “…dazzling display of elaborate, colorful native costumes and a cacophony of drums” (Miller & Wagner, 2004, “For Indians, a feather in cap…”, Washington Times, 22 Sept.). One article, attempting to get at the co-existence of modern and traditional, includes the verbiage, “That’s the Indian we came to see” as it describes a girl on a cell phone in partially traditional clothing rolling her eyes at her mother (Stuever, 2004, “A family reunion”, The Washington Post, 22 Sept.). Stuever half-heartedly apologizes for the non-Native spectator he suggests has “always secretly longed for the tribal” as he points out Indian attendees were “‘chiefing’ in every direction, everywhere you looked (because why look so fabulous and say no to a camera?)” He continues, “…and a non-Indian couldn’t be blamed for delighting in the banal details that make today’s Indians seem mythological and quite real…” (Stuever, 2004, “A family reunion”, The Washington Post, 22 Sept.). Stuever’s article speaks from the position of the onlooker rather than from that of the Native participants. The focus on entertainment is at the least an honest interpretation, but is disturbing considering the museum’s audience. Unfortunately, as Reinhardt points out, many reporters looking on during the NMAI’s opening ceremonies missed the point that NMAI planners were attempting to challenge Western understanding, and reported on the opening ceremonies according to the same frames with which they were accustomed (See Chapter III).
It was even more ironic that the coverage centered around a museum whose mission it was to challenge such frames. While some celebrate this more entertaining aspect, others, like Rothstein, resent the “verve and theatricality.” (Although he is not concerned with the voyeurism of anthropology) (Rothstein, 2004, “Museum with an American Indian voice”, *New York Times*, 21 Sept.).

It is not surprising that several articles make the comparison between the museum and Disneyland. Some bring it up as a means of defending the museum, as in “There is no Disney afoot” (Stuever, 2004, “In Tonto…”, *The Washington Post*, 18 Sept.). Others suggest various aspects of the museum are Disney-like. For example, Benjamin Forgey (2004) suggests the NMAI waterfall “rings a Disneyland bell” (“Natural wonder…”, *The Washington Post*).

Another reviewer writes:

> Bringing rude nature to the hallowed ground of the Mall takes guts, of course. But this is not rude nature. No wilderness actually looked like this. It is as calculated a built artifact in its own way as is Tomorrowland. It is nature to which human intelligence and imagination have been applied. It is an Indian’s image of Eden (Higgins, 2004, “Covering a lot of ground…”, *The Washington Post*, 20 Sept.).

The repeated references to Disneyland suggest an important parallel between expectations of museums now taking on increasingly more “entertaining” formats. The implications of such expectations are great, especially in light of the United States’ past history of exploiting American Indian people for entertainment and the ideological function of such entertainment as described in Chapter III.

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91 Or, otherwise known as “the fun factor,” (Bruce, 2006) as described further in Chapter VI.
Although generally praised, the building itself also became a point of critique. As NMAI planners expected, the Douglas Cardinal affair was the subject of several press stories as the museum opened. (Editors had not forgotten Cardinal was fired short of completing the job in 1998 and that a variation of his plans was carried out by another architecture firm). Some rave about the building’s exterior and then ask whether the interior of the building might have been more effective had Cardinal stayed on, calling the whole affair “sad and messy” (Forgey, 2004, “Natural wonder…”, *The Washington Post*, 17 Sept.). Still, others slam the whole project suggesting the turmoil is reflected in the end product (Lewis, 2005, “Indian museum’s uneasy presence bespeaks troubled past,” *The Washington Post*, 11 June). For example, Roger Lewis writes, “Whenever someone asks me what I think of the National Museum of the American Indian, I always give the same answer: It is one of the few museums I was eager to leave after a relatively short visit.” He continues, “I find the museum’s design flawed in many ways. Some of its flaws reflect in part the contentious process by which it was designed, in part the complexity of its challenging mission and in part the unique aesthetic credo of Native American architect Douglas Cardinal, the man responsible for the museum’s design concept.” He calls the rotunda “empty” and “vast” (Lewis, 2005, “Indian museum’s uneasy presence bespeaks troubled past”, *The Washington Post*, 11 June). Lewis also implied the curvilinear architecture employed by Cardinal reflected a “fad” rather than a more practical kind of design involving 90 degree angles (Lewis, 2005, “Indian museum’s uneasy presence bespeaks troubled past”, *The Washington Post*, 11 June).\footnote{Similarly, *Sho-Ban News* reported of one visitor, “Her first impression was that it was ‘pretty lacking,’ with empty white walls” (Echo, 2004, “NMAI receives mixed reviews…”, *Sho-Ban News*, 7 Oct.). However, despite some negative reviews from architects, the architecture was}
own terms, other coverage took the opposite approach. Some praised the museum uncritically or raised critiques only to simply dismiss them in order to end articles on a high, optimistic note. For example, Paul Schwartzman’s article in *The Washington Post* uses a partial quotation from a woman from the San Carlos Apache tribe at the opening ceremonies, but then paraphrases her final sentiment in his own words, ending on a positive note:

> In some measure, she said, she has mixed feelings about the notion of a museum being the repository for tribal artifacts, because her ancestors ‘didn’t do it that way….Old things were never showcased,’ she said. ‘In our teachings, those things are supposed to be passed on to someone else to be taken care of.’ On the other hand, Kitcheyan said, the opening of a museum is ample compensation (Note, the last line is not in her words!) (Schwartzman, 2004, “We’re finally being recognized…”, *The Washington Post*, 20 Sept.).

In several similar articles, the concerns of some Indian people about the museum are critical, but the articles ultimately suggest they believe it is a step in the right direction. While this might be the case, some seem dismissive of the serious criticism raised. For instance, one *Washington Post* article suggested, “In the end, simply having their voices heard is the real accomplishment, many volunteered. The bothersome details, they said, are less important than the big picture” (Roberts & Thomas, 2004, “Early peak, with some valleys”, *The Washington Post*, 21 Sept.).

generally commended in general print press articles reviewed

93 Even scathing academic articles providing critical commentary throughout the entire body of the piece at times end on a positive note, as though apologizing for the blow they have just served the museum. It is hard to explain why otherwise critical perspectives insist on a happy ending.
The “repetitive stories of survival” pointed out by Fisher also appear again and again within news stories (Fisher, 2004, “Indian museum’s appeal, sadly, only skin-deep”, *The Washington Post*, 21 Sept.; Lonetree, 2006c). In fact, several print press stories relay this message, and some even frame their entire article around it, such as *The Washington Post* article in which gaming revenue is described as another form of survival and further demonstrates the resilience of the Eastern Band of Cherokee (Thompson, 2004, “Where myth and museums meet…”, *The Washington Post*, 14 Sept.). In many of the stories, the same themes of survival or “survivance,” and the term “We’re still here” appear again and again, suggesting the emphasis placed on these concepts in press materials provided by the museum. Director West’s speech to the National Press Club two weeks before the opening of the museum also emphasized the idea of survivance (National Museum of the American Indian, 2004, Sept. 9). It is a simple, well-crafted message with a universal theme easily transferable into news stories. It is apparent many of the angles assumed by the press like themes of survival/survivance did not originate with reporters or editors as verbiage provided by the museum is frequently reproduced verbatim (see for example, Schwartzman, 2004, “We’re finally being recognized…,” *The Washington Post*, 20 Sept.; “The Indian Presence”, 2004, *The Washington Post* 21 Sept.). Bob Thompson adds a bit to the theme when he writes, “You guys did your worst, but we’re still here.” (Thompson, 2004, “Where myth and museums meet…,” *The Washington Post*, 14 Sept.). This message seems most clearly targeted at a non-Native audience (as American Indian people are likely well aware they are still here).

Other articles celebrate the new model of collaboration. (No doubt, this theme is also emphasized in press materials as it is repeated time and again). For example, Carol Morello of
The Washington Post (Sept. 16, 2004) writes, “As a result of their input, the main entrance to the museum faces east.” She explains this is a “bow” to the tribes from Maryland and Virginia, but does not explain, then, why the building is reminiscent of the American South West. Other discernible themes include those of humanism (Copeland, 2004, “Guiding spirit; American Indian Museum…”, The Washington Post 15 Sept.) and competition with other museums (Trescott, 2004, “Indian museum attracts healthy crowd…”, The Washington Post, 23 Nov; Kilian, 2004, “The universes of the American Indian”, Chicago Tribune, 26 Sept.).

The recipe book “Food of the Americas” by Fernando and Marlene Divina released with the opening of the museum (Weinraub, 2004, “For the Native Palate”, The Washington Post, 22 Sept.) and the Mitsitam Foods Café were also the subjects of several very positive and un-reflexive articles. Some café coverage invites the museum visitor to sit back and consume. One article reads, “Fortunately, for the tourist searching for something more edifying than skirmishes over political correctness, there is the cafeteria…” (Smith, 2005, “The History is here, but the action is elsewhere”, The New York Times, 30 March). While minimizing the struggle over self-articulation occurring throughout the exhibits, this article invites mostly White tourists to avoid the polemical through entertainment and dining. The article takes complicated identity issues and easily dismisses them by reducing the visitor’s role to that of consumer.94

Despite press tendencies to deny the museum on its own terms or to uncritically adopt

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94 According to Cobb (2005b & c), the museum encourages visitors to co-construct meaning with the museum, and therefore, such a passive role seems counter to the goals of the museum. According to one article citing Duane Blue Spruce, NMAI architect and facilities coordinator, the café is currently serving more than twice the amount of people they had originally intended, and it is clear from these numbers as well as from interviews conducted during the Summer of 2006 that the café is an attraction for many visitors who sometimes have much less interest in the rest of the museum (Weinraub, 2005, “Between Exhibits, a plate of buffalo chili”, The Washington Post, 22 Sept.).
the museum’s positioning statements, others take the opportunity to flesh out some of the complexities of issues related to the museum. Many do in fact reflect greater attempts to avoid traditional, problematic frames. Some journalists (though not un-problematically) tried to explain the phenomenon of modern day Indian people celebrating their traditions in a modern forum in which they would, as expected, attract quite a bit of media attention. Beads and feathers were not the only focus. Moreover, not all reporters dwell on the juxtaposition of tradition and modernity as though it is exotic. Several articles are feature stories that attempt to get at complexities like one on the Eastern band of Cherokee from North Carolina by Bob Thompson (*The Washington Post*, Cherokees, tribe’s survival is no game of chance. Bob Thompson. Section: Style. Sept. 14, 2004). Like Thompson’s story, which ties in Cherokee survival with the message of “survivance,” many of the stories relate the opening of the museum with broader themes important to American Indian people including holistic ways of looking at health, diet, plant life, and environment (Michel, Karen Lincoln, 2004, “The New Focus…” *The Washington Post*, Sept. 22). Another article identifies trends in popular culture as problematic and the ways in which the museum is working to dispel popular stereotypical characters perpetuated in the media like Tonto and terms considered derogatory like “Redskins” (Stuever, 2004, “In Tonto…,” *The Washington Post*, 18 Sept.). David Montgomery writes a feature story on a young Hupa girl and other Hupa people attending the opening ceremonies and involved as community curators of the “Hupa Universe” in the NMAI. He describes her experiences celebrating traditions while doing things other girls her age are doing, regardless of their ethnic background. While describing the pride in the museum felt by some, the article also explains the ambivalence felt by others. While Hupa people are excited for it,
some are inevitably skeptical in light of the National Museum of Natural History’s track record of including in their exhibits misinformation about the group. But, as the article suggests, some Hupa families involved consulted with the NMAI to “get it right” this time.

Other feature stories in The Washington Post attempt to take broader, ambivalent issues and relate them to the museum, like a feature story on the pros and cons of gaming revenue and casinos, in particular for the Citizen Potawatomi Nation of Oklahoma (although many live in cities rather than on the reservation) (“Walking the Land With Pride Once More,” Harden, The Washington Post, 19 Sept. 2004). The article reviews various attitudes about the casino by members of the Nation as well as the infrastructural benefits it allows reservations.  

Other articles took a historic approach, and emphasized the dehumanizing treatment of Indian people by the NMNH in the past, such as the possession of Ishi’s brain in a jar until it was finally repatriated to a California tribe (Achenbach, 2004, The Washington Post, 19 Sept.) and the misrepresentation of various groups and the possession and use of their ancestors for scientific testing (Montgomery, 2004, The Washington Post, 21 Sept.). (In Ishi’s case, it was both while he was alive and after he died that he was in the possession of various museums).

The NMAI is also compared in some (generally more critical) articles to the Air & Space Museum. For instance Kennicott (19 Sept. 2004, The Washington Post) compares the exhibit of the Enola Gay (the airplane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima) in the Air & Space Museum in the mid-nineties to the NMAI’s tendency to challenge the status quo.  

Not surprisingly, New York Times museum reviewer Edward Rothstein complains that so much casino money had gone to fund the NMAI. He claims that one third of the money raised by the museum was from wealthy casinos (“Museum with and American Indian voice.” Edward Rothstein. The New York Times. Sept. 21, 2004. Section: E). Rothstein is likely referring to the $10 million donated by the Mashantucket Pequot Nation as described in an earlier section.

Secretary Heyman wrote in a newsletter relating NMAI exhibition to the Enola Gay: “In my
that while the first was unable to provide critical commentary because of various pressures, the NMAI at least challenges what is thought of as inevitable and patriotic. Bob Thompson similarly draws the parallel with the Air & Space’s exhibit of the Enola Gay, but suggests not that the NMAI necessarily pushes the status quo, but simply has a different constituency to which it must answer (as alluded to at the beginning of this chapter) (Bob Thompson. 19 Sept. 2004. The Washington Post).

There is no doubt that the pressures of competition drive museum planners to see museum-visitors as customers. Phillip Kennicott (2004), who acknowledges the NMAI’s mission, criticizes other reviewers who want the museum to cater to visitors by avoiding critical commentary. He characterizes coverage in The National Review the following way: “Instead of worrying so much about the native perspective, the critic argued, the museum should put forth ‘a maximum of objects with a minimum of distraction.’ —like housewares in a department store, where the customer is always right.” Here, Kennicott is suggesting a critical perspective of museums that are too timid to challenge history and the romanticism of view, interpretation has an important role to play in a national museum involved in education as well as in the simple display of objects. Most visitors seem to like interpretive exhibitions when they are well done.” But, he continues, “Sometimes, interpretive exhibitions create substantial controversy. This is not necessarily a bad thing—the public’s attention can be gripped by sharp disagreement. But controversy can also be destructive to learning and to perceptions of a museum’s integrity” (Smithsonian Perspectives, January, 1995). However, many argued the end result had, in fact, lacked interpretation and critical edge, presenting the Enola Gay in a kind of apolitical monotone, despite Heyman’s insistence that consultation with “historians and interest groups” helped remedy the exhibit’s initial “inefficiencies” (Smithsonian Perspectives, January, 1995, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 04-170, “RC Response for NMAI Editorial Board). Critics disagreed and resented the fact that “interest groups” like the Air Force Association had managed such a healthy impact on the Smithsonian (The Washington Post. Thompson, 19 Sept. 19, 2004. Where myth and museums meet; The Washington Post. A particular kind of truth, 19 Sept. 19, 2004. Kennicott). One article reported, “The Smithsonian’s Air & Space Museum was so shellshocked by the attacks on its proposed exhibition questioning the dropping of the atomic bomb that it jettisoned its original plans and simply put the Enola Gay on view, without interpretation” (U.S. News & World
anthropology. But, while recognizing what the museum is “trying to do,” he identifies the museum’s tendency toward “positive” inversion of discourse and images (as described further in Chapter III). He writes, “They have been reappropriated with positive connotations.” And, he makes reference to Disney, but suggests the museum has greater ambitions than celebrating Mead or “becoming a Disney-style happy magnet for native peoples.” (Kennicott, 2004, “A particular kind of truth…”; The Washington Post, 19 Sept.).

A few print press stories also identified important topics apparently excluded because they did not fit overall themes. For example, Joel Achenbach points out the fact that ancient mound builders, the Cahokia, were not included because they did not fit the “living cultures” theme. In addition, Achenbach explains information on the Trail of Tears was not included because those Cherokee forced to march West did not have a cultural area in the museum, while the Eastern Band of Cherokee from North Carolina were consulted on their cultures (Achenbach, 2004, “Within these Walls, Science yields to stories”, The Washington Post, 19 Sept.). As Thompson, writes “By choice or necessity, they skipped over a great deal” (Thompson, 2004, “Where myth meets reality…”, The Washington Post, 14 Sept.).

While the building and exhibits were critiqued, and the article mentioned by Higgins criticizes the Disney-like effect of the surrounding transplanted nature, other articles take a more positive approach by following broader themes. For example, a Washington Post article by Karen Lincoln Michel, president of the Native American Journalists Association, describes the connection between American Indian health and eating habits and the types of plants placed in the NMAI habitat areas. She describes the role of Donna House, an American Indian ethno-botanist who was hired as part of the team that created the “habitat areas” surrounding the

Stories in the general press ranged from those that rejected the museum’s mission, those that celebrated it uncritically, to those that took the opportunity to flesh out some of the complexities and broader themes involved. As mentioned, reaction to the museum in the general press was also the subject of many academic articles. In several journals, intellectuals and museum professionals were provided the opportunity to respond to critics as will be discussed in the following section.

Academics: Debates and Emerging Themes

If anything can be said of the National Museum of the American Indian, it is that it has sparked conversations among the general public and academics alike about the exhibition of American Indian culture. Several American Indian and non-Native scholars have been engaged in ongoing discussions about the museum for the past several years, including Sonja Atalay (Ojibwe, Postdoctoral Scholar, Stanford University), Amy Lonetree (Ho-Chunk, Portland State
University), Amanda Cobb (Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma, University of New Mexico), and Ruth Phillips (Carleton University, Ottawa and former director of the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology). There have been at least two academic projects on the NMAI, although more focused on the George Gustav Heye Center in New York and completed prior to the opening of the Mall museum. Like those reflected in the general press, academic opinions about the museum range from the critical to the celebratory. However, rarely is the mission of the museum out-rightly rejected as with some of the more critical general press editors, but its success on its own terms is frequently debated.

Several academic journals address these topics and more, including *The Public Historian* and *American Indian Quarterly*, both of which dedicated entire issues to the topic in 2005 and 2006. Amy Lonetree (2006c), who edited two issues of *American Indian Quarterly* dedicated to the museum, suggests there were three waives of responses to the museum by press and academics including, 1.) critical reviews by journalists; 2.) scholarly articles celebrating the museum, accepting its articulated mission, and defending it against criticism; and 3.) scholarly articles recognizing and acknowledging there were some important points raised in the first waive of press reviews (albeit frequently raised in stylized and sarcastic tones).

It is clear from the first Summer/Fall 2005 edition of *American Indian Quarterly* scholars were much more inclined to come to the museum’s rescue when it was criticized, but

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later, saw some validity to the initial critiques. Many of the articles, such as those from Kauanui, Hinson, Kuckkahn, Cobb, and Archuleta describe the solidarity felt at the opening ceremonies. They praise the museum’s function in bringing them all together (despite their political differences, as Kauanui suggests). Overall, they expressed the immense sense of pride, joy, and excitement felt in joining friends and family during opening ceremonies. Even some of the apprehensive Native scholars found something of themselves in the museum (Hinson). A few of the articles also defended the museum against stylized and critical reviews, including Cobb (2005a & b), Archuleta, and Reinhardt. They pointed out the adamant refusal of some reviewers (like Paul Richard from The Washington Post) to understand the museum on its own terms. In addition, an interview with Director Richard West by Amanda Cobb appeared in the issue, and generally, the transcript consisted of West’s commentary about the museum. Cobb also basically channels West in another article (Cobb, 2005b). Therefore, not only were most articles appearing in the first issue of American Indian Quarterly positive third party responses from academics, they also included a piece primarily in West’s own words. Akim D. Reinhardt’s article (described above) responds to negative press coverage, questioning the reviews rather than the museum itself. Archuleta and Reinhardt both indicated critics generally refused to acknowledge the museum’s mission and operated according to obsolete musicological understandings and perceptions of Indian people.

While the first academic responses provided very little critical commentary on the museum, there certainly were pieces in which dissent was apparent. Articles in the Summer/Fall 2005 issue of American Indian Quarterly by James Lujan and Judith Ostrowitz were two of the few academic articles featuring more critical engagement. Lujan questioned
whether the museum was actually created for American Indian people, writing, “As I walked out of the museum on grand opening day, I couldn’t help but think that this is a museum of the Indian and by the Indian, it’s just not necessarily a museum for the Indian. At least, not for me” (Lujan, 2005, p. 516). In addition to the question of audience, one concern raised in both the Summer/Fall 2005 issue of AIQ (Ostrowitz, 2005) and the later issue (Conn, 2006; Berry, 2006) is the fact that while community curators were relied upon heavily in the consultation process, they only provided one perspective from their group. They were frequently comprised of very small (and sometimes homogenous) segments of that group including community leaders who do not always agree with the majority (Berry, 2006), but the information presented was legitimated through association with such experts. Another problem, Ostrowitz argues, is that the perspectives presented (in exhibits, architecture, public relations, etc.) were also highly influenced by others, including NMAI curators outside the communities being represented. She concludes:

Although the NMAI has gone to great lengths here and elsewhere to argue for the great range of difference among contemporary Native American individuals, in fact their planning and curatorial processes necessitated the selection of a limited number of representative voices and defining themes. One may point to the initial selections and evaluate them as a small sampling (Ostrowitz, p. 416).

She also expresses concern over the generalizations taking place within the museum through its design and architecture (also very much influenced by “Euroamerican” standards). She continues:
There are micro-identities on view in these boothlike spaces, illustrated by the idiosyncratic choices made by the community curators. Ironically, at the same time, similar general themes about seasonal cycles and directional symbolism are reiterated in each of the presentations. It is unlikely that outsiders register enough nuance or difference among them. There is a genuine effort here to empower these small groups of individuals who wish to tell their own stories, but this is largely subverted by the repeated, unifying themes (Ostrowitz, p. 414).

Here, Ostrowitz seems to be in agreement with Rothstein that broader themes about Indian identity are generalized within the museum despite attempts at demonstrating specificity.

While Ostrowitz raises some important points about the planning and curatorial process, she was in the minority in terms of her critical academic engagement in the beginning. However, as Lonetree (2006c) points out, while the majority of initial academic responses supported the museum with less question, the next waive articulated various concerns. Lonetree (2006b&c) herself, while celebratory of the museum’s attempt to provide a space in which American Indian people can present self-articulated histories, is critical of the museum’s failure to adequately address issues of American Indian genocide. She writes:

Perhaps the most challenging critique is that the museum fails to tell the hard truths of colonization and its lasting impact by only emphasizing survival without sufficient context on what Native people were fighting to survive in the first place. For me this remains the most significant omission and it frames my critiques of the museum.
In response to the criticism for not including more on genocide (and in response to Camp’s argument), Richard West told the press, colonialism comprised “at best only about 5% of Indian history.” He argues, “We do not want to make the National Museum of the American Indian into an Indian Holocaust Museum” (Achenbach, 2004, “Within these Walls, Science yields to stories...” The Washington Post, 19 Sept). Responses in American Indian Quarterly to West’s statement argue colonialism, while only a small fragment of American Indian history had a “disproportionate impact” on American Indian people and should therefore be given greater attention (Lonetree, 2006b, p. 639). Lonetree (2006c) writes, “…the emphasis on contemporary survival does not have to gloss over the more painful and difficult aspects of the indigenous past and present” (p. 59). At least two authors in the second issue of American Indian Quarterly (Lonetree and Atalay) cite West’s comments that post-colonization has only comprised a small portion of Indian history (and should therefore not be the focus of the museum). Respondents indicate resentment about his minimization of colonization, arguing that the NMAI itself mostly focuses on the period of post-colonization, but does so uncritically.98

In the second issue of American Indian Quarterly, Isaac (2006) and Vicenti Carpio (2006) provide critical reviews about inaugural exhibits, what they saw as serious omissions, and the greater understanding that could have been achieved through the exploration of more

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98 Evelyn and Hirsch (2006) sum up the museum’s position succinctly: “The NMAI is not a holocaust museum; our mission is not to memorialize the dead. It is, instead, to advance knowledge and understanding of the life-ways, languages, literature, history, and art of Native Americans, to celebrate the living cultures of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. That mission argued for exhibitions that show how Native peoples survived in the face of adversity.
particular histories and greater context. Carpio argues the views reflected are ahistorical and provide an excuse for visitors to merely engage with exhibits rather than with actual Indian people. Similarly, Lonetree (2006b) and Atalay (2006) point out the museum’s many “missed opportunities.” Atalay suggests that while exhibits were created in consultation, there is a particular “tone” determined by NMAI curators that lacks a sense of struggle (Lonetree similarly argued that despite consultations, the exhibits ultimately reflect themes determined by NMAI curatorial staff). Atalay complains that rather than really emphasizing “agency and survivance,” “…curators made the choice to provide visitors with benign representations of guns, churches, and government” (p. 607). In addition, she points out the lack of information on the Smithsonian’s role in acquiring Indian cultural patrimony and human remains, the process of repatriation, and the somewhat controversial battle over Kennewick Man, or “The Ancient One” (pp. 607-608). Atalay writes:

   I strongly believe that along with the NMAI’s gift of voice, which is the result of financial, political, and community support from Native people, the U.S. government, and both private and corporate donors, the museum also carries a serious responsibility to (re) present our stories to its several million visitors each year, both U.S. citizens and an increasingly large global audience (p. 598).

Comments from Atalay and Lonetree reflect particular expectations of representational adequacy in indicating the museum has a responsibility to better represent its constituents. On the other hand, Isaac explains reactions from her museum professional colleagues reflected another attitude about the museum’s representational responsibilities. Isaac suggests the rather than exhibitions that recite a litany of abuses” (p. 87).
aversion to the exhibits felt by her colleagues is a reaction to the ways in which the exhibits defy the museological convention of cultural context established by Franz Boas. In particular, she suggests her colleagues viewed Window on Collections displays as cabinets of curiosity reminiscent of the nineteenth century, suggesting they had the trappings of “amateur collections.” Because such items are not ordered “logically” (on a timeline or with other objects from another group), but rather, according to themes like “animals” and “projectile points,” they are not considered representative by some museum professionals.

Robin Maria DeLugan explains yet another expectation about representational adequacy. DeLugan draws the important parallel between American foreign policy in Central and South America and the museum’s failure to provide adequate context as to how this relates to the indigenous people there and their political and economic environments. In addition, while the museum projects its own American notion of Indianness onto Latin American countries, DeLugan points out the socio/political/historical situations of mestizo culture in Latin American varies greatly with that of Indianness in the United States. She suggests the overarching function of the national museum is always nation-building rather than serving the interests of indigenous peoples and therefore finds it problematic that the NMAI projects its own understandings onto the Indigenous peoples of other countries. She writes:

…a national museum (such as the NMAI) is not a tribal museum. By definition a national museum exists to serve the nation-state and to advance nation-state interests, and the national museum functions as a powerful tool for promoting official ideas about national history, culture, and society. Regardless of whether or not a national museum makes reference to the region’s indigenous population, the museum as an extension of
modern nation-building and nation-state authority will always congeal ambiguous or tension-laden historical and contemporary relations between Native people and the nation-state. The official narratives that national museums promote are palimpsests of Native invasion, colonization, oppression, and exclusion (p. 559).

While providing the space for critical commentary on the museum and its relationship with “the production of knowledge,” *The Public Historian* also provided space for responses from those participating in the curatorial process, Doug Evelyn and Mark Hirsch, exhibition script writer/editor of the NMAI. Some articles in the issue, including that of Ruth Phillips (2006), celebrate the NMAI as evidence of a broader paradigm shift in museological understanding. Although various critiques of the museum were raised, all essays seemed to appreciate the “participatory” approach taken by the museum.

Among the arguments addressed by Evelyn and Hirsch are those suggesting the NMAI does not effectively convey important aspects of American Indian history to visitors. In particular, they respond to Conn’s (2006) critique that visitors will “likely leave the NMAI having learned little about Native American history and culture.” As a counterpoint, they cite a visitor survey conducted by the Smithsonian. They write, “Many visitors to the museum said that they would remember something they had learned or found something they had not expected” (p. 88). However, they do not question whether the survey asked visitors exactly what they learned or the limitations of surveys in which museum-goers self-report. Moreover, they explain, “visitors especially value” the presentation in the Lelawi Theatre. Indeed, their findings are consistent with my own from surveys conducted during the summer of 2006 (as will be discussed in the next section).99 However, while Evelyn and Hirsch are correct in

99 While effectively evoking an affective reaction, the film “A Thousand Roads” has been
pointing out visitors exposed to the multi-media presentation, film, or guided tour most readily volunteer they have “learned” something, not every visitor will take the time or even be aware of the presentations, as explained in the section on interviews. Out of the 50 interviews I conducted during the Summer of 2006, only 40 percent had seen “Who We Are.” In addition, NMAI planners are aware the average visit will be no more than 90 minutes. Therefore, if visitors saw both the Lelawi presentation and the film “A Thousand Roads,” they would have less than a half an hour to visit the three permanent exhibits, moving exhibit, and/or to take a guided tour. Such a short amount of time certainly does not give museum-goers an opportunity to co-construct meaning with the museum, an essential part of the NMAI experience, according to Richard West (Cobb, 2005c, “Interview”). In addition, responses to the above question revealed vague and general understandings like “pride” and “connection with the land” as will be described further.

Evelyn and Hirsch respond to another critique from Berry (2006) and Conn that the “NMAI exhibitions are not ‘object-based.’” Arguably, the NMAI has attempted to make it clear their approach is less focused on objects and more focused on people from the beginning. However, Berry suggests the focus on people and other factors that compete for the attention of the visitors (including the virtual hosts Berry refers to as “talking heads”) distracts from the collections themselves. Berry suggests, from her observations, most visitors do not pay attention to the objects, and are challenged to link information provided with the appropriate

criticized by reviewers for generalizing, like the spines and other common areas in the museum. Ann Hornaday of The Washington Post suggests, “There’s nothing particularly objectionable about ‘A Thousand Roads…” but, “…in reducing such a storied and diverse reality to a brief survey, the filmmakers have created a portrait that either glides superficially over a complicated history or labors under too much symbolic weight” (Hornaday, 2005, “‘Thousand Roads’: Paved with good intentions” The Washington Post, 12 April).
Moreover, she suggests there is a “paucity” of information for those who do find the object (p. 66). Berry agrees that while a less “object-oriented” approach more focused on American Indian people is justified given the history of exhibition, the NMAI still holds the world’s “premiere” collection, and should be more effective in informing the audience about it.

As Evelyn and Hirsch point out, one of the easiest places in which to integrate feedback is in the moving exhibits. For example, in “Listening to Our Ancestors,” they attempted to integrate more “strong narrative flow” and “a focused design” (p. 89). Indeed, other exhibits seem less prone to change. For example, the same information was provided about “Nations” by Jenny Chapoose in the “Window on Collections” during the summer of 2006 and one year later in 2007. As of May, 2007, nearly three years after inaugural exhibits were first shown, community cultural areas were also all the same, despite West’s suggestion they should change every one to two years (Cobb, 2005c, “Interview”). Critical reviewers like Paul Richard have provided a much more positive response to the second changing exhibit, “Listening to our Ancestors,” suggesting curators have taken some of the critiques into consideration (Richard, 2006, “At the Indian Museum, Evidence of Abundance”, *The Washington Post*, 6 February). The very nature of the moving exhibit also seems conducive to a more flexible arrangement in which tribal museums might better be able to share collections and conveys a less static sense of culture as “frozen in time.”

There is a marked difference between the majority of academic articles first appearing in *American Indian Quarterly* and subsequent articles in the same publication and in *The Public Historian*. Even those who are generally positive about the museum in the latter publications

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100 See my discussion in Chapter VI on virtual kiosks accompanying the “Window on Collections” displays for further discussion about linking information and virtual objects with physical collections.
like Ruth Phillips raise some concerns they suggest should be addressed by the museum.

**NMAI Visitor Reception**

The last stakeholders to be discussed are visitors to the museum and issues of reception with this group. During the summer of 2006, 50 open-ended short surveys/interviews were conducted with NMAI visitors 18 years of age or older. There were several limitations to the surveys (see more in the methods section in Chapter II), however, several fruitful discussions with visitors yielded various themes discussed below. The following passages provide only a small summary of what was revealed in the interview process as many of the themes are mentioned throughout other chapters and sections in this project. Visitors ranged in demographics. Three people identified themselves first as American Indian. Each suggested their ancestry also included another racial/ethnic group, including part “White,” Irish, or Latin American. Six others, who identified primarily as another racial category, also mentioned their Indian ancestry or potential Indian ancestry. It is not surprising that visitors would readily make such a claim after experiencing the NMAI’s affirmation of Indianness and the fact that their possible Indian heritage would likely be top-of-mind after visiting the museum. Of those surveyed, 23, or 56 percent identified primarily as White/Caucasian/Anglo-Saxon with no American Indian ancestry. Another 7 (14 percent) said that they did not identify with any racial category (but it is likely that several of these people do not consider Caucasian as an actual racial category). Three participants identified as Jewish, three identified as Hispanic/Latino, and three identified as African American or Canadian/Black. One identified as Asian American and another as Eastern European.

101 For example, one man, who identified primarily as Caucasian emphasized the “mystery” in
Permanent exhibits had a fairly large turnout, although, again, not all visitors could recall the names of exhibits they had visited. While 80 percent of respondents said they had been to “Our Lives” and/or “Our Peoples,” 76 percent reported going into “Our Universes.” Those who took a guided tour with a cultural interpreter or who saw “Who We Are” or “A Thousand Roads” seemed to most readily have an answer for the question “What does the museum say about what it means to be indigenous or Native to the Western Hemisphere?” Most who had been exposed to one of these three presentations were very positive about the museum. However, only about 28 percent of visitors received a guided tour, while 40 percent saw the multimedia presentation “Who We Are” (despite the fact that the museum recommends visitors start with the presentation), and only 4 percent saw “A Thousand Roads.” In addition, at least one visitor mentioned seeing part or all of the introductory film projected on the wall outside the “Listening to our Ancestors” moving exhibit.

In response to the question about the ways in which the museum articulates Native identity, 20 percent of visitors said they did not get a sense of what the museum was saying about Native identity. While a little less than half with this response were apologetic for not paying attention or for “not being tuned in that way,” others simply said they did not know or it was not clear in the museum what it meant to be Native or indigenous to the Western Hemisphere. Visitors who were willing and/or able to answer the question frequently used very general terms like “pride” and “nature,” and described the sense of connection Native people feel with the land. Two of these respondents said they got their understanding from “A Thousand Roads,” while another said the cultural interpreter on the tour made it clear by

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102 The low turnout to the longer 43-minute film is not surprising as many people said they had a very limited time in which to visit the museum.
speaking about his own identity. Some said there was a commonality between various cultures, and in general, they named this as either having to do with culture, struggle and harsh treatment by Europeans, connection with nature and earth, very old pre-European cultures, and struggle to maintain identity despite harsh circumstances. Some mentioned ancestry, particular spiritual understanding, and struggle to maintain traditions and to “reclaim land.” One respondent presented an explicit binary, saying that this meant that they were “not European.” However, other visitors emphasized the museum’s message of commonality for all human beings, and one visitor interpreted the message as, “We are all one.” While some respondents made it a point to emphasize (as the museum has) that Native people are “part of today,” other respondents kept referring to American Indian people in the past tense. For example, one respondent suggested the goals of the museum were to “let us know what people were like” (emphasis added). Most of the themes typical of Native or indigenous identity identified by respondents were themes repeated throughout the museum in media texts like the multi-media presentation or in the film projected outside the entrance of “Listening to Our Ancestors.” The latter emphasized themes of connectedness for Northwest Coast groups. As one woman in the video suggests, the groups, although different, are connected like the root systems of trees entangled underground.

While visitors were generally positive about their experiences with presentations like “Who We Are,” not all thought the interactive devices were helpful. Some of the reasons 34 percent of respondents who did not use the devices cited for not accessing them were time constraints, crowds, broken devices, and one said she was unaware they were there. Several described the devices as “fun,” “interesting,” and “informational.” However, at least one
complained it was difficult to connect “real things” with the touch screen or that they were “confusing” or “chaotic.” Another said that while aspects of the devices were “cool,” the museum needs “more direction.” At least two respondents said the devices were especially attractive to children as “Children need something ‘hands on.’” Conversely, some people said it was difficult for their children as it was “not that interactive for them.”

The museum gift shops and Mitsitam Native Foods Café were popular topics on which museum patrons commented. At least one interviewee was carrying a gift shop bag from the museum. Other patrons commented that the gift shops were extremely expensive. Reviewers have made similar critiques (Stewart, 2004, *Dayton Daily News*, “History; Pricey gift shops obscure Museum of the American Indian’s message,” 21 Nov). The Mitsitam Native Foods Café was by far one of the most popular topics for 2006 visitors interviewed. While visitors almost always remembered what they ate (explaining in detail sauces, side dishes, main courses, desserts and beverages), many did not remember which exhibits they had visited. Half of the visitors interviewed visited the café (compared with the 40 percent who went through the “Preparatory” Lelawi Theatre). Several visitors also reported only having gone to the museum to visit the café because they believed it to be the “best” museum café on the mall. Most

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103 It is possible many parents have become accustomed to museums like The Children’s Museum of Chicago in which interactive devices are readily available around every bend. The Field Museum’s “Ancient Americans” is another example in which newer exhibits on “Ancient” people can include an overwhelming number of interactive devices. Upon a recent trip there, one small girl complained, “It’s broken!” as she tried to access a panel that was not in fact interactive. The expectation for interactivity by parents and children is apparent.

104 A *Washington Post* article cites Dennis Shepard- a Potawatomi from Wisconsin, suggesting it is wrong to have such an expensive gift shop. Shepard states, “If this is our place why are they trying to sell it?”(Roberts & Thomas, 2004, “An early peak, with some valleys…”, *The Washington Post*, 21 Sept.). However, less critical comments about the gift shop also appeared, and sometimes from the same reviewers. One compared the gift shop to dessert, “the final sweet course after a meal” (Diamond, 2004, “Shopper; at the Indian museum, acquiring Native aesthetic”, *The Washington Post*, 23 Sept.).
comments about meals eaten at the café reflected sentiments that it was “authentic,” “good,” or “the best part” of their visit. At least one visitor commented, “It was expensive!”

Visitors were mostly positive about the museum. About 80 percent indicated a favorable reaction to it. Of those positive reactions, about 54 percent said they were not disappointed with the museum in any way. Some commented that it was “educational”, while others said they liked the space because it was “well laid-out,” “peaceful,” and “comfortable.” Several suggested it was “about time” a museum like this one be built. One person indicated it was “relaxing but sad” and really “eye-opening” as to the history of the treatment of American Indian people. Many of the more positive comments complimented the beauty of the architecture, the educational content, and the feeling that Native people have long deserved to be honored in this manner.

Of those positive responses, 46 percent provided some form of critique. One person said there was “no overall context.” One man said it was “difficult” because he had only been provided with “bits of information”…“like a sampler.” Another commented that it was “fragmented.” At least two visitors used the term “disappointed” to describe their experience and one said they “got lost.” Several critiques came from visitors not being able to find enough information on objects or particular groups they had hoped to see represented there. Others said important issues like health or government restitution were not discussed enough or at all. Some comments reflected a more traditional museum paradigm, and suggested it was not “historical” enough.

One Self-identified American Indian man commented he would have liked to have seen more American Indian artists within the museum. He suggested some artists dominated, and
there could have been more diversity. His comment is consistent with a review in *Sho-Ban News* in which Jim Echo reported a Shoshone woman’s experience with the museum. She also said that while she was pleased with the Native Modernism exhibit, she thought the museum could have featured more American Indian artists (Echo, 2004, “NMAI receives mixed reviews…”, *Sho-Ban News, 7 Oct.*). The museum in fact has featured several well-known artists like George Morrison, Alan Hauser, and Emile Her Many Horses. In addition, the museum had an exhibit featuring the jewelry created by Senator Nighthorse Campbell included in inaugural exhibits. The NMAI tends to endorse well-known artists like Luiseno performance artist James Luna. Not only is one of Luna’s performance pieces the subject of commentary within the Our Lives exhibit, his book *Emendatio* is for sale in the bookstore (Haas et al, 2006). The museum also sponsored the “big name artist” as a delegate to the Venice Biennal festival in 2005 (Gopnik, 2005, “Indian artists in Venice…”, *The Washington Post*, 24 July). Well-known Artist/Donna Karen designer Virgil Ortiz also graced the front cover of the museum’s *American Indian* magazine. Such endorsement of big-named artists also seems consistent with the goals of the museum’s Chesapeake Gift Shop to become the “Premiere destination on the East Coast for Native art collectors,” as stated by the museum’s director of merchandise (Diamond, 2004, “Shopper; at the Indian museum…”, *The Washington Post*, 23 Sept.).

When comparing the NMAI to their experience with other museums dedicated to American Indian people or other indigenous groups, visitors suggested the NMAI was “grander” or “larger.” Another frequent comment was that while other museums were “specific” or “focused,” the NMAI demonstrates the diversity of Indian people by featuring many groups together. Some were surprised at the number of tribes or Nations in existence.
While one person commented that the other museums they had visited were more “historical,” the NMAI shows “what Native Americans are doing today.”

Generally, visitors raved about the architecture and building itself. As one visitor said to his children as he visited during the summer of 2006, everyone he had talked to who had visited the museum had said the outside of the building was the best part. However, at least one summer 2006 visitor, who identified himself as a Big Ten University professor of Architecture, critiqued the museum’s design and treatment, suggesting it was a “shopping mall” and “not terribly imaginative.” For example, when one enters, some of the first things they encounter are the gift shops and café. He commented on the rotunda, an empty interior space he suggested “should have been a nice space,” but was instead un-detailed. In addition, he pointed out that the dome was influenced by neo-classical style, one he suggested has a history with imperialism. He commented that he wished the museum would “make space” rather than “fake space.” (He also pointed out unused “site furniture” outside).¹⁰⁵

Another important theme raised in the interviews was the issue of ethnic museums and representation. Several museum-goers asked why there could not be a national Irish immigrant museum, as they believed the experiences of their forefathers had also been difficult. This request reflects a difference in American policy from forced assimilation (melting pot) to one of the salad-bowl (multi-culturalism) in which the official discourse of the state is one of tolerance. However, the experience of immigrants, and the desire to assimilate in the United States, is at odds with those who do not wish to assimilate. Some who underwent the process seem resentful to those who resist such assimilation. But, as a whole, those museum-

¹⁰⁵ This critique of “empty space” is consistent with one visitor’s experience cited in Sho-Ban News (Echo, 2004, “NMAI receives mixed reviews from tribal members and others”, Sho-Ban News, 7 Oct.).
goers interviewed suggested White people are adequately represented by museums in the United States. A few Irish people interviewed said they felt underrepresented by museums in America. One respondent also related the challenging experiences of his Austrian heritage. At least one Jewish person suggested museums could represent a greater perspective of their overall history. One of those who identified strongest as American Indian said museums in America do not represent American Indians adequately. The others indicated museums had improved. One woman said museums represented American Indian people adequately, “Now, but never before.” Another said that they’re getting better, or “Ameliorating” past injustices. (I assume they are referring to efforts by the NMAI).  

Another interesting theme was that of humanism. Several visitors indicated that the NMAI had demonstrated how visitors and American Indian people were similar as human beings, a concept that “brings us together,” despite the focus on one particular race. Others suggested the NMAI reflected a national history, “Helping America understand who she is.” One said the museum shows “Where Indians are from and where they are going,” a statement fairly close to that used in the introductory video projected outside the entrance to the “Listening to our Ancestors” exhibit. Certainly, the major theme of “survivance” was not lost on visitors. When asked what the goals of the museum were, several people said the museum was attempting to show that Indian culture is still alive (while two or three said the goal was to show how Indian people “were,” using the past tense as mentioned). For the most part, respondents suggested the goal of the museum was to educate, teach, inform, and raise awareness about current culture and history.

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106 One self-identified African American said museums in the United States do not adequately represent African Americans, while one self-identified Black Canadian said that from his limited experience (he also does not live in the United States) they do, and he primarily based
Final Discussion: Representational Adequacy and the “Ethnic Museum”

For every different stakeholder in the National Museum of the American Indian, there is a different response to the museum. While NMAI planners did what they could to speak directly to each audience/constituency segment, it is impossible to meet everyone’s expectations all the time as Richard West’s comments indicated at the beginning of this chapter. Because of the magnitude of the project and the number of disparate stakeholders involved, critics have suggested the potential for critical commentary about American Indian history has been compromised. While most reviews, with the exception of those from the harshest critics, appreciate attempts to integrate a more collaborative process, others question overarching themes, omissions, and the overall “tone” of the museum (Atalay, 2006).

Considering the various segments the museum attempted to target and the NMAI’s fundraising priorities, it is clear why the museum took particular approaches and materialized the way it did, physically and philosophically.

Situated within the “ethnic museum” trend described by Davis Ruffins (1997, 1998), the NMAI’s audience is not necessarily the ethnic group it ostensibly represents, but the broader majority culture. Naturally, proponents of contemporary ethnic museums tend to assume all museums present a form of interpretive history, and the modern museum should work to problematize the Western paradigms of the past. However, various concerns including those of history, competition, economics, and politics also play a role in shaping the museum, and therefore, the articulated mission does not reflect the museum’s primary goal to come into being and to stay afloat by keeping its stakeholders happy. Assumptions are also made of the

his understanding on the Smithsonian’s African Art Museum.
ethnic museum including those of representational adequacy, just like museums of the past. As Bennett (1995) suggests, the “public rights demand” continues to be the focus of museum reformers, but it has taken on a new shape with the most recent attempts to “democratize knowledge.” It is assumed that such sites reflect the view of the “ethnic” constituents they ostensibly represent, especially if the museum claims to present self-articulated histories. As Ruffins (1997, 1998) suggests, not enough critical work has been done on the rise of such ethnic museums, although their presence and necessity has become naturalized.

The NMAI, like any other modern museum, has various stakeholders it works very hard to please. While the ethnic museum assumes representational adequacy by its very nature, it is shaped just as much by the economic, political, and historical climate under which it has emerged. Each and every stakeholder has a view of what representational adequacy means, pulling the museum in various directions. In the end, the museum has catered to the most agreeable middle-ground it can muster. Despite the assumptions inherent in the modern ethnic museum, a project of this magnitude, driven primarily to sustain itself, simply is not an unfettered site of democratic, dialogic representation, despite expectations.

While this chapter has provided an overview of the NMAI’s stakeholders, fund-raising efforts, public relations and reception, the following chapter will explore the museum’s material manifestation, looking at the use of media, space, and various texts within the NMAI. Finally, Chapter VII will provide a summary of the project and will situate it according to social theories addressing institutions, including those of resistance, revolution, and reform, but will then explain the ways in which concepts like governmentality and cultural sovereignty might further inform the project and multiple disciplines between which it rests.
CHAPTER VI: THE MEDIASPACE OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

The Museum as/and Media

“We move decisively from the older image of the museum as a temple with its superior self-governing priesthood to a forum committed not to the promulgation of received wisdom but to the encouragement of a multi-cultural dialogue” (NMAI Director Richard West citing former Smithsonian Secretary Robert McCormick Adams in a September 9, 2004 speech to the National Press Club).

Introduction: Dialogic Space and the NMAI

The new museum sees itself not merely as a disciplinary mechanism or site of static transmission, but prompter of dialogic engagement (Phillips, 2005). The museum, the people represented within, and museum-goers, are considered active participants in the meaning making process according to the new, reflexive understanding. Perhaps one of the most visible places in which the shift is apparent is high-technology, big budget national museum projects like the National Museum of the American Indian. The NMAI proposed the use of multi-media/multi-sensory experiences coupled with particularly “Indian” ways of configuring space and architecture in order to “give voice” to “Native” people of the western hemisphere (West, Sept. 2004, C-SPAN). The above statement in which Director West commits the NMAI to “multi-cultural dialogue” reflects the museum’s new self-understanding, and the proliferation of new media within suggests dialogic encounters can be fueled by communications technologies. As market model notions of “free-choice” learning involving new media have been heralded for their democratic potential (Falk, 2005), museums face increased pressures to adopt media/digital technology in order to attract visitors (customers) and stay “competitive” (Bruce, 2006).
The combination of market-driven pressures and discourses with the subject of United States/Indian relations has facilitated the following situation: Within the NMAI, museum-goers are “free” to engage with information exempt from controversy through the lens of the museum, its largely commodified spaces, objects, architecture, and the technology devices ostensibly acting as “portals” into Indian Country (West, 2004a). Although the majority of visitors will be non-Native, the idea is that visitors will come closer to understanding the experiences of Indian people through “telepresence,” a means of figuratively projecting one's-self into the space of another. McCarthy (2001) suggests place-based media can actually transport viewers into various social positions through spaces of “empowerment.” If such a notion is true, the implications for highly mediated social institutions like the NMAI mall museum are great. But, exactly where museum-goers are projecting themselves has not yet been adequately explored.

In the following passages, I critique the NMAI and “multi-sensory” technologies as parergon, or framing devices (McTavish, 2006; Marstine, 2006). I examine the spatialization of the museum (Hooper-Greenhill, 1990), and the ways in which the building, its spaces, architecture, and multi-media are used in the process of displaying objects and their function within museum space. I look at the practices of the museum; the ways in which material objects are framed and articulated as well as the ways in which arguments are delimited and organized. Similarly, I discuss the ways in which such devices work to (re)create existing spaces, the special importance of the role of media in this particular museum, and the dialogic model by which the museum understands itself (Hooper-Greenhill, 1990). Various points raised in *The Way of the People* (1991, 1993) the NMAI’s planning documents, will be
discussed in order to frame a broader understanding of the material manifestation of the NMAI Mall Museum. The following passages attempt to prompt a greater exploration of the ways in which the NMAI employs media and space and the resulting spatial materialization of the idea of pan-Indian identity.

The Physical Landscape

The National Museum of the American Indian sits on the last plot of the National Mall, facing the Capitol Building. As one approaches from afar, it is clear the architecture of the building is distinct from that of surrounding structures. Its coloring is of natural sandstone, and its smooth design moves in waves and tiers, as though it has been weathered by the elements (although the museum itself has been only been open since September of 2004). If heading down the National Mall from the Washington Monument, as the Capitol Building looms closer and closer, the NMAI also comes into focus with the neo-classical styled domed building in the background. Although assuming few characteristics of a “classically” styled building in its exterior, the NMAI is also topped with a more discrete dome, alluding to the hybrid style of the building and what visitors will find inside.

I reviewed several volumes included in The Way of the People in the summers of 2006 and 2007 at the Suitland, Maryland NMAI Cultural Resources Center (CRC). In addition to The Way of the People binders, I reviewed CRC archival materials. The materials were contained in several cardboard boxes, and although largely bound in binders, there were also many more “free floating” documents such as post-it notes, a paper napkin with sketches, etc. All were included in the Center’s archive, and from what I understood from the CRC’s archivist at the time of review, copies of these materials had not been archived in the Smithsonian Institution’s main collections.

The same classic designs characterize the American History and Natural History museums at the other end and side of the Mall and the National Gallery of Art’s West Building, but it is still clear the NMAI is distinct from any other Mall museum. This particular feature of the design reveals a subtle “Neo-classical” influence. The Smithsonian Castle, the African Art Museum, and the round Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden also deviate from the
The sharp contrast to the classical influences of the physical landscapes surrounding the building becomes part of the affect of the space before one even enters the museum. Four “habitat areas” (wetlands, hardwood forest, meadow, and traditional crop area) including 150 species of plants surround the building. Spread throughout the grounds are a series of “Grandfather Rocks”, or boulders that have been specially blessed by Indian elders and placed in correspondence with particular geographical directions (National Museum of the American Indian Map and Guide, 2004). Along the south side of the building, the “crop area” is landscaped with the corn and bean plants associated with indigenous lifestyles. The stalks shoot up along the path leading to the Museum’s general entrance. Along the north side flows a stream-like water feature, which ends just as one approaches the main entrance facing the Capitol Building on the east side. In front of the building, in an area called “the wetlands,” is a pond in which ducks and other water fowl often bathe among lily pads and tall and short water vegetation. When standing inside the “Welcome Plaza,” in front of the Museum, one can gaze across the pond at the Capitol Building. The center of the plaza floor is adorned with a celestial design of concentric circles, a theme that can be found throughout the museum. On a typical summer day, visitors rest on benches lining the perimeter of the plaza as they wait to meet companions, and children take advantage of the large, flat surface and patterns in the ground to run around and play.

The NMAI transplants non-indigenous “nature” onto its grounds in order to represent Greco/Roman-philia that is the par excellence of the Capitol city. Multiple influences are exhibited on the Mall as exemplified by the obelisk-styled Washington Monument. (Although obelisks are Egyptian in origin, they were also a popular appropriation of the Romans). If walking down the mall or driving down Independence Avenue, one will also pass the Air and Space Museum, and may very well be cognizant of the valorization of science, technology, and American nationalism within. Many visitors who will spend time in the NMAI will also visit in the Air and Space Museum. No doubt, their dual visits will yield radically different
indigenous cultures, making for a strange and ironic contrast. At the same time, it emulates several specific geographic regions in which indigenous people live. The NMAI is a semiotic archetype of “pan-Indian” identity just as the Luxor in Las Vegas is a sign of what Western culture has come to recognize as “Egyptian.” It embodies one possible compilation of “Indian” identity as envisioned by Architect Douglas Cardinal, signifying throughout that it is “Indian.” (For further discussion, see the section on “The Native Theme Park”). In order to be successful in terms of semiotics, it also had to achieve a quintessential form to be easily recognized by mostly non-American Indian visitors.

**Surveillance and the Panoptic Environment**

As Bennett (1995) points out, the idea of surveillance is part of the museum experience regardless of whether visitors are actually being surveilled. The panoptic museum visit in part revolves around the notion that the museum space is one of self-regulation and that other visitors will also cast a watchful eye your way, should you deviate from the behavioral norms of the museum. Liberal museum projects of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries proposed the “democratization of knowledge,” and in the process, the museum became a disciplinary device (Bennett, 1995). Despite the dialogic emphasis, museum-goers continue to understand their purpose in the museum as refinement and self-improvement. Similarly, visitors believe museum spaces are prone to surveillance, and therefore act appropriately, instructing younger patrons to do the same.

The NMAI mall museum reminds visitors of their panoptic situation in several ways including carefully monitored entrances and exits, uniformed security officers, “maybe experiences and feelings.
cameras” throughout exhibit galleries, not to mention the watchful eye of other visitors and staff. Visitors may gain admission to the NMAI only through one general entry. As soon as one passes through the door, their bags are searched by security guards in uniforms (black pants/white shirt/police hat). On busy days, one can periodically hear the shouts of security guards commanding people over the hum of conversation to open their bags for searching and to form two lines in front of the metal detectors they invariably must pass through. Likewise, as visitors exit out one of two doors, there is generally a uniformed security guard at a station desk clicking a small hand-held counting device to monitor the number of visitors who have exited. But, the creation of the panoptic situation may not be as successful as planners frequently intend. Uniformed security guards wander throughout the museum making their presence known by dropping into exhibits now and then, but seem indifferent for the most part.

All of the networked communications systems within the NMAI are controlled by the UCC (Universal Communications Center). In addition to maintaining “security control,” the UCC also helps to maintain environmental controls for the mall museum and stored collections, all museum media, and cables for voice and data for transmission both on and off-site (The Way of

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109 I borrow the term “maybe cameras” from Steve Mann (2001) to refer to the panoptic, semi-spheres in ceilings that indicate a camera may or may not be hidden within.

110 In the NMAI, security guards and other workers manage small resistances in the mostly minority-staffed jobs that are likely grossly underpaid and infrequently rewarded. Guards often lean on museum furniture and chat with one another, paying attention to visitors peripherally if at all. In other instances, they can be found making personal calls on cell phones while lounging on benches in some of the darker galleries where such behavior is more discrete. The one exception to the rule is an individual who is likely the head of security, a robust and commanding white man with a mustache; For the sake of anonymity, we can call him Officer Krupke. Where other security staff seem to only reprimand visitors who have brought in food to exhibit areas, Krupke takes his job more seriously and has been known to bully innocent researchers seeking comments from visitors (with all appropriate permissions mind you) on at least one occasion.
The NMAI surveils itself and all of the people inside through the UCC. The Communications Center not only helps to maintain a climate appropriate for museum objects, but also for the self-disciplining “ideal” museum-goer. Such a climate is consistent within the national museums and the Mall itself as a heavily surveilled location as well as The Washington D.C. area with its government “communications towers” spewed unambiguously throughout the surrounding metro areas and cement bollards designed to prevent terrorist attacks and unfettered movement throughout the capitol (Dvorak, 2006, “Fashionable barriers…” The Washington Post, 8 Feb.).

Visitors tend to move in and out of the permanent exhibits and divided alcoves quietly, and when someone comes in speaking loudly, it seems to disturb those already in the alcove quietly listening. In one instance, it was particularly distracting when a boy (about 10 or 12 years old) came into an alcove in “Our Universes” shrieking, “Those are the real Indians” (It looked as though he was referring to a nearby diorama including some expressionless mannequins). His mother informed her companion (husband?) that they had been looking for Indians from Oklahoma, but with no success. She spoke in a hushed voice, as if she had sensed what her son said not only exceeded the appropriate decibel level but was also not entirely politically correct. On another occasion, a younger patron (around 13) with an older man (around 30) could be heard stating, “Yeah, Christopher Columbus! He found America, didn’t he?” “Shhhhh!” The older man hissed, clearly embarrassed and glancing around, “There were already Native people here and he took a lot of land.” In another instance, younger adolescents chasing one another through the alcoves were met with disapproving glances as patrons remarked to one another that their parents should really keep them under control. Reprimands
and disapproving responses from adults work to discipline younger patrons into more ideal museum-goers.

**Movement and the Museum**

Upon entering the National Museum of the American Indian, one continues to see the influence of circular, swirling motion found outside in the internal architectural design. There is a large round seating area, half partitioned off by a metal sculpture, surrounded by a circular wall moving loftily up into a dome, illuminated by light shining in through an oculus adorning the ceiling. Stairs on one side bring visitors up and around from the first floor to three higher floors. These floors include enclosed and open spaces for a circular theatre, an educational workshop area, three permanent exhibits, a moving exhibit, gift shops and café.\(^\text{111}\) The Potomac, the large space in the center of the main ground level room, is considered the “heart” of the building (National Museum of the American Indian Map & Guide, 2004), and tour guides or “cultural interpreters” can often be heard telling visitors the word Potomac translates roughly into “where the goods come in.”

In the middle of the Potomac, a small circle marks the center point at which the axes of the building cross (and each is marked by rocks from various directions of the earth built into the museum design) (National Museum of the American Indian Map & Guide). A larger concentric circle outlines the entire Potomac space. In keeping with the celestial themes of the building, the Potomac is designed to celebrate the sun, and patterns within the floor represent the equinox and summer solstice. Prisms cast light into different areas of the rotunda during various times of the year. According to the NMAI Map & Guide, “The building is aligned

\(^\text{111}\) Also included on the third level is the Resource Center complete with 18 computers used to access further information about the exhibits, collections, and people represented within. This is coupled with a small, physical resource library for research on the Smithsonian collections.
perfectly to the cardinal directions and the center point of the Capitol dome…” (p. 27).

Entrance doors and elevators are also designed with patterns such as images of birds, whose flights similarly correspond with the sun and cardinal directions (National Museum of the American Indian Map & Guide, 2004). Lining the Potomac is a gift shop, and out of the line of sight from the entrance are located the café, restrooms, elevators, and the Main Theatre. However, as one follows the ramp or stairs around the circular space, they intuitively walk in the general direction of the gift shop and café, as the building helps to move people through gravitational pull (like the Guggenheim). Museum guides also suggest people begin on the top level and work their way down, ultimately ending, again, near the gift shops and café.

Various media such as sound, lighting, and television monitors direct visitors through the spaces, providing information to them as they go. Among the pre-recorded audible signals are the voices of people from several indigenous nations (or tribes), speaking, chanting, and singing. One may also hear sounds of nature; including the hum of crickets, ocean waves gently washing to shore, crashing storms, etc. Among the permanent exhibits are “Our Lives,” addressing the contemporary lifestyles and issues of Native Peoples; “Our Peoples,” providing a history of important events and factors that affected Native people according to their own stories; and “Our Universes,” describing the ritual and spiritual beliefs of Native peoples, including “philosophies related to the creation and order of the universe” (http://www.nmai.si.edu/). Many Indian groups are represented within each of these exhibits, and 24 small, partitioned spaces within each of the asymmetrical exhibit rooms provide narrative accounts and artifacts informing visitors of the traditional cultural practices, clothing, subsistence activities, spiritual beliefs, and geographic location of particular groups within the and American Indian and other indigenous cultures.
Western Hemisphere.

As people move through the museum, they tend to move circularly, as many of the exhibits are sectioned off into round alcoves. Motion within the museum could be likened to the swirling current of many tiny tide pools, as opposed to linear movement. For example, the “Our Universes” exhibit immerses visitors in darkness, with an overarching, simulated starry night sky. Once museum goers find themselves within an alcove dedicated to a particular Indian nation along the exhibit’s exterior, their visit is generally narrated by the voices of indigenous people and sounds of nature. Television monitors built into displays provide visual cues to keep visitor attention and to guide movement. Visitors, rather than progressing through the museum, experience each space based on its own particular logics.112

Circular rather than linear movement is a theme that suits a portion of the exhibits as many are not presented in a progressive fashion based on chronological temporality. Temporality and spatiality are, after all, viewed quite differently according to many indigenous versus European-influenced traditions. As Deloria (1973/2003) suggests, Western thought, privileges the notion of “time” as a progression while many American Indian traditions privilege the notion of “place,” or “space” in the form of the lands that indigenous people inhabit. Deloria, in part, attributes the Western conception of linear time and the fascination with historical progress to the influences of Christianity. He suggests that time is presented as both human and divine within Christian faiths, which contend that “divine purpose” is “gradually unfolding” throughout history (p. 103). Eventually the “nature” of the end of time,

112 Because there is no uni-directional flow of traffic through many parts of the museum, it seems increasingly more difficult to move through various spaces within while the museum is crowded. A trip to the museum on Thanksgiving Day, 2005 proved to be distracting as people were continuously crossing paths and at times tripping over one another. The affect is lost there.
or the Second Coming will be revealed, and it is no wonder then, that those predominately influenced by Christianity, are fascinated with recording history as a deterministic chronology (p. 105). Similarly, the temporal and spirit worlds are thought to co-exist in many American Indian traditions. For example, one’s ancestors are thought to remain on the earth after their death, and therefore one is not waiting until their death for validation as with Christian faiths (Nicastro, 1996). Such circular rather than linear movement helps to emphasize the notion that American Indian tradition does not view time as a progression as do more Western traditions. Accordingly, items throughout the NMAI also do not seem to be placed in a “logical” fashion to one who is so inclined to think in terms of temporality. The items displayed in curved glass cases outside of the asymmetrical exhibit rooms exemplify the non-chronology and deviation from the schema-laden syntax of other museums by their grouping within.

If visitors wind around to the stairs connecting the higher levels, rather than taking the elevator, they have an excellent view looking down at the Potomac. As an older woman could be heard saying to her companion during a visit in 2005, “It’s like Wuthering Heights.” From that higher vantage, the big ambiently-lit space in fact appears to be the center, or the heart of the building. People swarming around the circular area or seated on benches around its edges below seem drawn to the wide-open space, even without the demonstrations that frequently take place there.

“Window on Collections”: The Interactive Virtual Kiosk

As visitors make their way to the Lelawi Theatre and the exhibits on the fourth level via stairs or elevator, the “Window on Collections” located in the passage along the way become
visible. In front of these cases containing Indian objects are a series of interactive touch screens extending up from a base attached to the ground. Although no physical labels are provided behind the glass, the kiosks allow visitors to virtually navigate through the displayed items and pull up corresponding information, including some short video and audio clips. “Window on Collections” displays like these are found throughout the third and fourth levels where the themes by which items are grouped include beadwork, dolls, projectile points (arrowheads), containers, animals, and peace medals. A case located outside of the hallway leading to the exhibits on the fourth floor includes animal-themed items.

Inside the hallway’s animal-themed case, there are numerous Native artifacts of many different kinds from disparate time periods. Next to some of the more “traditional” looking pieces (which could have been created two years or two hundred years ago) built from stretched, treated leather and wood, hangs a plastic construction helmet painted with a variety of images by artist Richard Glazer-Danay (Mohawk Nation), titled “Pink Buffalo Hat.” A touch-activated computer screen several feet in front of the case allows visitors to navigate through virtual space for information about the helmet. The artifact reflects the artist’s “life experiences,” featuring several painted illustrations, from Betty Boop to a buffalo. How the helmet has been placed topically in this case with others created hundreds of years before it is made apparent by a nearby sign that explains the importance of animals to the lives of Native peoples. The artifact combines a form of totemism, popular culture, and a dominant form of contemporary Indian labor. Such a placement and collection of items is just one of the ways in which the NMAI breaks with the conventions of traditional museum presentations.

However, one might ask why NMAI planners incorporated high-technology devices and
categories for organizing information even as they attempted to break with museum conventions. Although items are not set along a temporal progression, kiosks provide “typical” types of information like the dating of objects and where they came from, even including a map so that visitors can place the items globally. The functioning of the interactive devices (aside from the occasional video and audio clip) is to provide dates and facts. Therefore, while an alternative means of presenting information in terms of ordering and non-labeling to visitors exists in the NMAI, the museum does not deviate in providing to visitors the kinds of information they are used to receiving. Thus, while the NMAI groups items together alternatively, the mechanisms used remain the standard.

Visitors using virtual kiosks to navigate through information are engaging in a process of “self-education” with carefully scripted messages. According to McCarthy (2001), a similar tactic is used by marketers utilizing the ethos of the Protestant Work Ethic in American consciousness: that one is able to improve themselves socially by investing labor in self-education. The museum itself and the interactive devices invite visitors to “learn” the pre-positioned messages that the museum has constructed. Some celebrate the use of technology for what is called “free-choice environmental learning” or “…learning experiences where the learner exercises a large-degree of choice and control over the what, when and why of learning…” (Falk, 2005, p. 265). The assumption with the valorization of “free-choice” learning is that people better retain information when they have learned it of their own volition, a notion very much based on a market model. What thinkers like Falk (Falk, 2004, 2005) do not consider is that this “self-directed” “free” learning occurs according to the materials and information provided within ideologically shaped social institutions where visitors know what
is expected of them. As mentioned previously, critical museum scholars are still very much concerned with the “new” museum and valorization of technologies within to create more “interactive” environments and the ways in which digital technologies act as parergon, or frames for the objects and truths presented (McTavish, 2006, Marstine, 2006 employing Derrida’s 1987 concept).

McTavish (2006) suggests that while proponents of virtual technologies emphasize interactivity, they often merely encourage users to “point and click,” and she questions the efficacy and driving technological determinism behind their use. Similarly, although once popular in the nineties, “insipid” and “uninspiring multimedia kiosk-type installations” have largely been removed, according to Ciolfi and Bannon (2003). They write, “These kiosk installations tended to separate the person from the actual artifacts, and called attention to the computer interface itself as the object of interest, rather than the actual artifacts” (p. 1). We can also suggest that while immediacy or “dialogue” are implied with interactive devices, these devices also work to separate visitors from actual people. Doug Evelyn and Mark Hirsch (2006), exhibition script writer/editor at the NMAI, argue the museum’s goal was to make visits less “object-oriented” and more “people-oriented.” However, by attempting to mediate both objects and people with interactive kiosks, they may have created experiences that are more “technology-oriented” as the device or virtual objects become the attraction.

What Ciolfi & Bannon suggest, that kiosks do not merely augment objects, but become the object itself, is consistent with my observations of the NMAI’s virtual kiosks conducted over the summer of 2006. In my experience, the greater interest in virtual objects over actual ones was especially pronounced in younger children. Observations, taking place over the span
of several days during different times at each of the “Window on Collections” exhibits revealed younger children seemed much more inclined to access the interactive technologies first rather than approaching cases for a better look at the artifact. To some of them, the virtual object BECAME the object as they never lifted their heads from virtual devices to see the actual items represented. Several visitors interviewed commented that their children were especially attracted to the interactive devices, and this phenomenon was well noted during observations as children often approached the kiosks first (sometimes running up to them), while adults frequently went straight to the object in the case. In one instance, a girl about eight years of age remained at a kiosk without looking up for four and half minutes. (This must be an eternity for a child!) In another instance, an adult chaperone with a group of about ten children demanded they link the virtual object with the actual object, attempting to emphasize the connection between the two. “Ok, find it! Where is it? Where is it?” she repeated as the children toggled. It is entirely possible children do not always fully comprehend that the virtual image they are viewing is actually a picture of what is displayed in the case. During the observations a dad got impatient with his young daughter who seemed to miss this important point. “What do you think you’re looking at?!?” he snapped at her. The touch screens also seem to condition visitors (especially children) to “interact” with all kinetic screens. In various parts of the museum, children and adults have been observed attempting to access information by touching monitors that were not in fact touch-screens because such a feature is available throughout other parts of the museum. But, again, this phenomenon seemed especially pronounced in children, whereas older patrons at times seem less comfortable with interactive devices. On one occasion, an older man reprimanded a small girl of about seven (perhaps his
granddaughter) for running up to a kiosk, shouting, “Don’t touch anything!” She patiently explained to him visitors were “supposed” to touch the screens. I also noted several occasions in which younger patrons ran up to the screens to touch buttons only for a few seconds as they passed by, with impatient parents nearby urging them to stop playing with the devices.

While children who used the kiosks sometimes did not look at actual objects, most of those who started by looking at the actual object eventually accessed a kiosk. Frequently, they were waiting for one to open up as another patron left, and appeared to be burning time by getting a closer look at the cases.113 While children tend to crowd the four available kiosks (especially on the third level), at least three adult visitors interviewed outside of the museum during the summer of 2006 said that they had a hard time connecting the virtual object with the actual object, two complained that the kiosks were too crowded, and one said she had been unaware that they were even there. Only 62 percent said they had actually used the touch screen kiosks. A common explanation for not using them was that visitors were constrained by time. Because one must go through three layers in order to find limited information on a particular item, it is likely that many will not bother. While the virtual kiosk may present more immediacy by allowing visitors greater “interaction” with a virtual version of a particular object, the medium itself generates its own problems. Those who bypassed the devices altogether may never get any further information aside from a look at the object itself as no labeling is provided behind the glass.

The “Window on Collections” kiosks have implications for both the specific ideological meanings of certain exhibits as well as a larger separateness of objects imposed by virtual display. For example, the beaded work “Nations” by Jenny Chapoose, a Ute Indian, is

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113 Children were also often attracted to the pull-out drawers containing additional objects
displayed in a third level “Window on Collections,” and gets quite a bit of attention from visitors. Chapoose writes in a 2005 letter addressed to Director Richard West, “Although I continue my beadworking, I feel I will never do anything else so powerful as ‘Nations’. Thank you for giving it such a fine and honorable home” (Chapoose letter housed at and supplied by NMAI Resources Center). However, Chapoose’s work, a back-lit American Flag made of 130,910 seed beads, also incorporates a critical edge not made explicit by the museum. If one looks carefully, they can see words and phrases between the stripes, and Chapoose explains in letters to the museum that she hopes her work will bring to light “lies” she has found in mainstream libraries about American Indian people and the “arrogance of European invaders,” and she explains that this work, the most powerful she will ever do, is in part a “mourning’ tribute” (Chapoose letter housed and supplied by NMAI Resources Center). When visitors access a virtual kiosk nearby, they do not get a sense of Chapoose’s message. They merely find out who the artist is, of what, when, and where the piece was created, its dimensions, catalogue number, and title. When using the looking glass feature to get a closer look at the virtual object, the words printed within the stripes are blurry and illegible. In my experience observing the “Window on Collections” case where the item is stored, visitors also do not appear to get a sense of what the artist intended. While the art piece attracts quite a bit of attention, conversations about the piece would suggest that guests recognize it is an American flag and that one can make out abbreviations of states in the place of stars. They do not seem to understand the critical commentary.

Just because the museum includes the latest high-technology information devices does not mean they will be equipped with adequate information. Also, because all of the located below the cases.
information provided by the interactive kiosks is uniform and the items are grouped according to themes, it does not allow for additional, idiosyncratic information about particular items. The political and critical messages Chapoose is attempting to convey with her artwork and those words written between the lines are not made apparent in part because the digital image is pixililated, blurry, and un-detailed. Only when one looks carefully (bumping her head against the glass as the researcher did) do they notice that something more is going on with the piece than merely a celebration of American patriotism. In the information provided by the kiosk, there is no attempt to emphasize the significance of the object on a deeper level or to engage its critical message. While Director West (Cobb, 2005c) suggests it is the visitor’s job to co-construct meaning, the average stay of 1.5 hours means it is doubtful visitors will have the time to understand the kinds of complexities involved in art like Chapoose’s.

As mentioned, the “Window on Collection” kiosks also only provide certain kinds of basic information that says little of the significance of objects. In addition, whether the display of such items is consistent with the understandings of various Indian groups is also not clear. For example, one respondent in a NMAI focus group prior to the construction of the museum, suggested, “Traditionally, most groups do not display their art objects. They tend to be kept in trunks until needed for a ceremony” (“The Way of the People,” 1991, p. 19).114 If it is true that “…no experience can take the place of seeing the objects” as George Horse Capture suggests, then the museum’s efforts to recreate such objects virtually also seems counter-productive.115

The goal of using multisensory environments was to enhance Native perspectives. But, the phenomenon of the virtual object becoming the focus itself seems to be contrary to the goals of

114 Conversely, as Phillips and Johnson (2003) point out, others feel honored at displaying their art works in such an important place.
115 Meeting Minutes included in CRC Suitland, MD archives: “Ottawa- Mall Master planning
the museum, especially according to the following comments made in *The Way of the People*:

Although collections of Native American objects held by the Smithsonian are unsurpassed it should be acknowledged that Native American people are not ‘object oriented.’ As important as these individual objects are, especially to Western-trained art historians, scholars and collectors, to Native Americans they possess a much broader significance. The picture of Native American life should be a holistic one careful not to over emphasize the objects themselves over the people and cultures that produced them (*The Way of the People*, 1991, p. 40).

Similarly, consider the following comment:

The veneration and investigation on inanimate material objects separate from their original contexts is contrary to Indian viewpoints. Indians see objects as living and as part of a larger environment, and museums as places that separate things which ought to be seen as part of ongoing life. Indian objects derive their importance from use, contact with natural elements, and their relationships to people (*The Way of the People*, 1991, p. 35).

Despite the above comments articulated to museum planners before the NMAI’s construction, the “Window on Collections” create an object-oriented experience (whether the technology, digital image, or the artifact are the focal point). Although objects are arranged by “theme,” they are not placed according to their cultural context, but rather, according to an abstract “pan-Indian” idea of what is important to the people who made them. The compilation meeting, 16/17/18 Feb, 1995.”
of these items by George Gustav Heye was an object-oriented exercise that continues its legacy in the NMAI. Moreover, the technophilia demonstrated throughout the NMAI suggests ambivalent messages about the nature of the technological imperative and the drive to create an interactive experience as well as the conservation of traditional habitats and activities. Although many Western technologies have been attributed with the destruction of indigenous lifestyles, they are inadvertently valorized through their prolific use (Dickinson et al)\textsuperscript{116}, even as they facilitate a kind of “Faustian Contract” (Ginsberg, 1999). As Parks (2004) suggests, the built-in obsolescence and components used to create kinetic screens and other high-technology devices are detrimental to the environment and toxic to humans as they degrade. However, their pervasiveness goes unquestioned within the NMAI as mostly Non-native viewers are encouraged to engage with electronic objects and to include in their virtual communities images of the Indian people represented there.

While the museum emphasizes its “dialogic” function, it is clear that in some cases, the “self-education” in which visitors participate occurs via a one-way flow where they choose from a menu that allows them to decide whether they will view certain data and in which order they wish to view it. The biases of particular communications technologies continue to shape visitor understanding. Visitors also understand their social relationship to the museum in terms of their obligation to engage with the supposedly improved high-technology communications devices that allow them to self-educate. The control of space in order to “deliver” data on particular objects to visitors assumes the same transmission model of communication as the wall label. But the interactive devices lining the “Window on Collections” constitute just one particular communications technology within the museum, and perhaps we can understand such

\textsuperscript{116} They examine the use of technologies in the Plains Indian Museum.
technologies and the museum as a whole along a dialogic spectrum. West’s emphasis on the dialogic function of the museum will be further explored through discussion of other particular spaces and communications technologies used throughout the museum. As I will argue, the ritual, affective reaction multi-sensory devices evoke are as important to the museum visit as the “facts” accessed through the interactive kiosk.

**Preparation Theatre: The Fourth Floor Multi-Sensory Experience**

If visitors have heeded the advice of museum guides, without becoming too distracted by the “Window on Collections” along the way, they have begun their visit by traveling to the top level of the NMAI, the location of two of the three permanent exhibits, “Our Peoples” and “Our Universes” as well as the Lelawi Theatre where the multi-media presentation “Who We Are” starts approximately every twenty minutes. As Cultural Resources Center archives suggest, the Lelawi Theater was meant to provide a “super-wow audio visual experience.”

Like several other spaces in the museum, the Theater’s multi-sensory/multi-media presentation helps to facilitate an immersive, affective atmosphere. “The Way of the People,” refers to the Lelawi Theatre (before it was so named) as “Preparation Theatre.” Planners envisioned a space that would orient visitors to the atmosphere of the museum before working their way through it, in essence to set the mood. According to Beverly R. Singer (2005), an associate producer involved in the making of “Who We Are,” “The prep theatre was always viewed in the museum planning as the gathering place to prepare visitors to shed their preconceived ideas of ‘Indians’ by immersing them in a full-bodied experience of contemporary Indigenous life” (p. 468). As Singer suggests, planners worked several themes into the film:

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117 Meeting Minutes included in CRC Suitland, MD archives: “Ottawa- Mall Master planning
Indigenous peoples’ relationship with the earth or homelands; beliefs associated with spirituality; learning from and practice of traditional knowledge related to subsistence life ways; demonstration of Native nationhood as recognized as the right to be self-governing; and Indigenous accomplishment in various professions including the arts, firefighting, dance, music, literature, and sports, to name a few (Singer, p. 469).

The multi-media presentation involving the projection of images onto a variety of surfaces illustrates such themes in its 13-minute span by following disparate people from Native groups all over the Western hemisphere and showing the corresponding places where they live. The presentation, produced by Batwin and Robin Productions and approved by NMAI Executive managers and Director West, highlights the lives of individuals from several groups, including the Inuit of Alaska, the Dakota of Minnesota, Haida Gwaii of British Columbia, Hopi of Arizona, the Lakota Sioux of South Dakota, and the Muscogee Creek of Oklahoma. Film crews visited the home-lands of these people to capture footage of them in their everyday lives (Singer, 2005).

The Lelawi Theatre is a circular 360 degrees (rather than the typical 190 degrees), and has been constructed to resemble a more outdoor-like viewing space with seating for up to 125 people. In the middle of the room, four poles with white blankets stretch across to form a square. These act as screens easily viewed by those seated around the room. A half spherical object is below, and throughout the presentation, images are projected onto it. A dome arches overhead, and acts as yet another surface onto which images are projected. Throughout various points in the presentation, the ceiling provides corresponding images with those projected on
the blanket screens and the spherical object. For example, while the dome overhead shows the forest canopy, the screens show the people who live there, while sounds of the forest seem to be coming from everywhere. The spherical object below reflects corresponding images like rocks and fire. Embedded in the walls and dispersed throughout the room are a series of cases containing collections objects that light up during appropriate times in the presentation.

Fiddle music plays gaily in the background as people find their seats. An attendant says a few words to the crowd members once they have situated themselves, reminding them that they should not take pictures in the theatre (likely because flashes might break the suspension of disbelief). Sound is a very important aspect of the presentation, and images are augmented by loud music, fiddling, drumming, chanting/singing, a crackling fire, flags being whipped around in the wind, thunder, falling rain drops, and the underwater sounds of Barrow, Alaska as a boat bellows by overhead. A narrator speaks English, but the sounds of various indigenous languages are also included. Overhead, silhouettes of people dancing in traditional clothing move around in a circle and flags wave. The sights, sounds, and atmosphere stimulate the senses, and excitement builds with each narrative and the crescendo of music, and finally, a montage of Indian people as the film sums it all up with a pop/rock song in the background incorporating drumming. The presentation ends on a definitive note with one final beat of the drum, and the lights come up, signaling to visitors that they can now exit through the doors opened by attendants into the “Our Universes” exhibit (as though signaling the ride is over). The darkness of both the theatre and the first exhibition space (on the spiritual beliefs of several Indian groups), with its overarching fiber-optic night sky, create an atmosphere of being suspended somewhere in a mythical neither-world.
“Preparation Theatre” reproduces the importance of media to modern Indians and attempts to re-create Indian country through the use of high-technology devices. But, while the technological imperative is represented here, as in the other exhibits, still never addressed is the Faustian dilemma of indigenous media (Ginsberg, 1999) or the irony of simulating nature through devices that are actually detrimental to it (Parks, 2004). Moreover, the media used convey a theme-park like atmosphere, blending entertainment and emotion-evoking subjects, allowing visitors the fun and affective experience of superficially engaging in American Indian affairs. However, multi-sensory presentations serve a kind of ritual communication function for museum-goers as well.

While museum-goers are aware they are to “self-educate” by activating “facts,” via interactive kiosks, perhaps the most important function of more multi-sensory devices is in the capacity to evoke the emotions visitors are aware should be evoked during their time in the museum. The affective reaction allows visitors to confirm their role in particular social relations. That is to say, visitors understand they are obliged to feel. Those who are more comfortable confirming their role by engaging with facts (as with the more detached traditional museum) are uncomfortable in their new role as feeling subjects responding to their partners in dialogue. Those who accept the museum’s self-understanding as a forum for dialogue rather than a conveyer of static information understand that their function is to make sense of their visit via the communications and affective technologies offered. The museum emphasizes the experiential or ritual model of communication through multi-sensory technologies. As part of the new understanding, visitors must listen to and feel the museum. As described in Chapter V, this often means visitors describe what they learned in very vague terms, but seem to most
readily volunteer that they have learned something when they have gone through one of the presentations or tours. They have fulfilled their role as they understand it by experiencing the museum.

“Our Universes”

As one first steps into “Our Universes,” it is clear the celestial theme and mysticism predominant throughout the NMAI extend into this permanent exhibit. “Our Universes” is dark with dim lighting illuminating some of the displays and a simulated night sky twinkling with stars overhead. The “sky” does not just appear above, but also extends to the curve between ceiling and wall to provide the perception of being outside. Throughout the exhibit are “Star Objects,” or objects adorned with stars. Air is pumped into the space creating a chilly and night-like environment. As one enters, the sounds of sub-exhibits are heard including various kinds of music, the humming of crickets, and pre-recorded narrator voices (in English and indigenous languages). Spaces are partitioned off in order to feature several groups (or

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118 In Our Universes, artifacts are deemed “Star Objects” apparently because they are adorned with stars in one way or another. As a guide explains, this is not merely because they are “pretty,” but because they have some kind of spiritual significance. Beaded items or birch bark masks are in one case as well as a “Bowl in the shape of a human skull” made in Arkansas, AD 1200-1600 (23/980). There is a star on his forehead. No additional information is provided such as which tribe this is from or what the object might have been used for. Items themselves have no labels, and are suspended on black poles so that they blend in with rest of the background, and the head just seems to be floating in space.

119 The languages of many indigenous groups in spoken words and songs can be heard throughout the exhibit gallery, and several of the alcoves also provide English narration and translations. Within the Lakota Universe, one can hear several words articulated in Lakota and then translated into their English equivalents, sometimes explaining a concept rather than just a literal translation. Within the NMAI, the importance of maintaining traditional languages is emphasized in several places, and clearly this is also demonstrated in hearing indigenous people articulate their own understandings of their world in their own language. Most of the features of the museum are named with Indian words as well. The National Museum of the 221 American Indian Map & Guide (2004) available through the gift shop for about five dollars
tribes/nations) exclusively in separate “universes” or sub-exhibits. Predominant themes within each of the sub-divided alcoves include the spiritual beliefs or “tribal philosophies”, “relating to the creation and order of the universe” (National Museum of the American Indian Map & Guide, 2004, p. 47).

Of the 24 cultural areas dedicated to particular groups throughout the museum, eight are included along the left side of the “Our Universes” exhibit representing individual “universes.” Between these are three smaller alcoves that explain widely celebrated indigenous traditions, including the Denver March Powwow, the North American Indigenous Games, and Day of the Dead, or Dia de los Muertes. On the inside of the corridor are a series of small benches facing the curved interior wall where short stories are projected. Cut-outs in the shape of mountain silhouettes line the backs of benches where patrons can sit to see the short stories narrated (in English) with chalk illustrations. The presentations appeal to adults and children alike, and the short clips and night-like atmosphere set the mood of story-telling in an oral tradition.

The groups represented within individual alcoves lining the exterior of the exhibit include the Pueblo of Santa Clara, New Mexico, the Yup’ik Nation of Alaska, the Anishinaabe people of the Great Lakes region, the Hoopa Nation of Northern California, the Lakota Nation of the Dakotas, the Mapuche of Chile and Argentina, and the Qeq’Chi Mayans of Guatemala. Localized concerns are expressed within the alcoves, and several kinds of devices are used to articulate these concerns including kinetic touch-screens, non-interactive monitors, aural cues, explains the importance of maintaining language. Quoting a *New York Times* article by Louis Erdrich, it explains, “Language is a carrier of culture” as words for the same item in different languages have entirely different connotations (p. 33). For example, Erdrich explains the significance of the word for “stone” in Ojibwa has a quite different connotation than it does in English, making her think about stones in a completely different way. In her Native language, the word suggests the stone is alive. In addition, there are concepts in different languages that have no direct or literal translation.
lighting, diorama-type displays, photos, written texts, and of course objects from the collections. Many of the alcoves suggest similar problems and themes, and give the impression community curators were provided a list of issues to address, including spiritual practices and political struggles over the environment. Exhibits re-create the “atmosphere” of the actual communities represented by building the kinds of structures one might encounter there into their displays.

The HUPA Universe alcove, for example, is built to resemble a wooden log Hoopa house. It includes a short film projected on the back wall of the display in which several Hoopa Valley Reservation people emphasize the importance of their traditions. Burt George Senior explains traditional Hoopa lands are the “center of the earth” for his people, and a bulk of the video shows George on the reservation. Others in the video describe the disruption in the natural flows of the Klamath and Trinity rivers and their cultural activities, for which they work with the Bureau of Reclamations in Sacramento. Wendy George, a traditional Hoopa basket weaver, explains the ways in which pesticides have presented a challenge in creating baskets as the weavers run many of the materials for baskets through their mouths to moisten them. The overall theme of the video suggests that in order to stay strong as a community, the group must preserve its lands and traditional activities, and that doing so can be a formidable task because outsiders do not understand and because their natural environment has been disrupted on many levels.

Visitors can view pictures of Community Curators as they enter or exit the alcove, and images of Hoopa people participating in traditional dances can be found throughout. The objects and mediating devices help to create an experience for the visitor that is not completely
detached from physicality, even though virtual hosts are disembodied. However, the means of mediation also suggest a conflicted message. Despite efforts to “humanize” these contemporary people, inside the Hoopa House are expressionless, stoic mannequins in traditional clothing set in a diorama-type display, illustrating the museum’s continued dependence on established exhibitionary practices. The mannequins, used throughout several of the displays, including the Hupa, Mapuche, and Anishnaabe Universes, seem to be made of a kind of adobe or clay rather than plastic, but their appearance remains expressionless.

The Santa Clara alcove is mannequin free, and a varied approach is taken with aural cues. As visitors enter the dim, but lightly colored circular alcove, they hear both male and female voices of apparently disparate ages overhead. These represent four stages of life, including infancy, childhood, entrance into adulthood, and the stage of becoming an elder. The voices rotate between four speakers overhead, leading the visitor in a circle in the order of life stages from the youngest cycle (baby) to the eldest (elder) through aural cues. The rotation starts with a baby, simply heard giggling, and ends with an elder explaining that he knew he was in the last life stage when it increasingly became his responsibility to give guidance to the younger members of the community. These voices are completely disembodied with the exception of photos placed throughout the display.

The Yup’ik group of Alaska utilizes enlarged photos in its cultural area. Videos include interviews with elders and explain the ways in which traditional subsistence activities help to nourish the Yup’ik people and the ways in which different members of the family participate (the grandmother, for example, counts food for the winter to ensure there is enough). A glass case uses various objects and enlarged photos of people to set the environment, making the
entire display three-dimensional, combining actual objects with black and white photos of objects and people. The display has the feel of a newspaper story, as though the pictured people have just been caught in an action shot.

In the Denver March Powow alcove, a video shows dancers participating in a dance contest. During summer, 2006 observations an older man came in with a little boy and said, “Those are fancy costumes, aren’t they?” “Yes,” the little boy replied as he was glued to the screen. He beat his brochure in unison with drummers for a few seconds as the video showed powwow dancers in brightly colored traditional outfits. A mother wandered in with baby in arms and said, “Wow! Isn’t that amazing?! Aren’t their clothes beautiful?!” The baby was transfixed by the dancing, clapping and waving her arms back and forth. The Quechua Universe shows a similar video in which dancers are shot in slow motion, allowing one to see jerking movements.

As Sanchez (2003) argues, American Indian people are frequently depicted in this way in the popular media, and there is a tendency to focus on the beads and feathers rather than contemporary lifestyles. The camera techniques here similarly represent Western techniques of time manipulation (Gabriel, 1989), making beads and feathers the focal point. Like other media in “Our Universes,” the style of video footage tends to frame Indian people and particular “exotic” activities as objects of the gaze. However, the “Our Universes” exhibit also provides visitors with a sense of immediacy in terms of their contact with average American Indian people through sensory cues. Pre-recorded messages, while somewhat static as they remain the same for years, are a part of the dialogic ritual assumed by the museum.

Upon exiting the darkness of “Our Universes,” visitors find themselves again in the
main hallway. The mysticism created through sound, lighting, touch, and visual cues is disrupted as the visitor breaks into the light of day and enters into the next permanent exhibit.

“Our Peoples”

While the NMAI has been criticized for its omission of controversial issues like genocide and oversimplification of Indian struggles (Atalay, 2006), critical discourse exists within “Our Peoples” regarding European invasion, ethnocide, religion, the introduction of capitalism and European monetary systems, weapons, disease, greed over natural resources, and the failure of the United States to uphold treaties. In addition, some of the technologies enabling inequitable relations of power become the subject of critique. However, such critique takes place through rather abstract approaches.

The use of monitors, visual, aural, and lighting cues help to convey the turmoil that erupted as a result of European contact. As one enters the exhibit, a curving wall to the right contains unlabeled objects made of stone, clay, and gold, leading to a tall, monitor-embedded kiosk. The display has as its background a foamy seashore, while the monitor exhibits a picture of the beach and the sound of the water lapping the sand. Written passages explain the disruption and violence done to Indians via contact, the words contradicting the peaceful scene in the background. Beyond the kiosk and to the left, a giant map lights up with corresponding information regarding European contact and the spread of diseases like smallpox, wiping out the majority of the population. The dramatic color change from blue to bright, neon red eludes to what had washed ashore (Europeans and their diseases and technologies) and resulting tragedies.\(^{120}\) The map indicates the death count and spread of disease as different areas light

\(^{120}\) A comparison might be drawn between this more abstract approach and that of the
up, indicating the “biological catastrophe” that took nine out of every ten lives, according to a
written text near the map attributed to curator Paul Chatt Smith, 2003. But it is debatable
whether a glowing map and soothing sounds of the beach might adequately address such a
tragedy.

Beyond, is a horse-shoe shaped case containing portraits by George Catlin, hung two
deep in a half circle. Depending on the timing of the viewer’s arrival, however, they will
eventually realize that at least two of the paintings are actually stills shown on flat screen
television monitors (also apparent by the fact that these are of a slightly different color than the
others). After a moment, several of the monitors run images that correspond with one
another on a loop. Floyd Favel a Canadian Plains Cree actor recites a script written by Paul
Chatt Smith (Comanche) and Herbert R. Rosen. Favel tells museum-goers to “view what’s
offered with respect, but also skepticism.” He suggests that rather than take what is presented
for granted, museum-goers should “argue with it.” This kind of invitation again suggests the
dialogic understanding of the museum. Favel explains “history and the past” are “two different

Holocaust Museum, where the violence and horrors of genocide are explicitly illustrated with
pictures of victims and death camps. Several museum planners including George Horse
Capture visited the Holocaust Museum in the years prior to the opening of the NMAI, but made
explicit their different vision for the new museum (CRC Suitland, MD archives). Some
museum planners who visited the Holocaust Museum commended it for its ability to “engage
visitors and manipulate feelings through content and architecture,” but made clear the
Holocaust Museum was not the model the NMAI would follow (“Warm Springs, OR, Meeting
Minutes Exhibition Master Planning Meeting, 3 & 4 May, 1995,” Included in CRC, Suitland,
MD archives). The Holocaust museum does attempt to encourage visitors to identify with
victims, but through very different approaches than the NMAI. For example, visitors can pick
up a card at the beginning of their trip through the museum which describes the lives of either a
man or a woman (usually matched with the gender of the visitor). The card traces the person’s
history and experiences as related to the Holocaust, and by the end of the journey through the
museum, the visitor finds out whether that person has survived.

One interesting observation about these Catlin paintings is that while the other physical
portraits are labeled, the virtual images are not, almost as though they are not “real” objects.
While museum planners use virtual objects as substitutes for the real, it is telling that these
things” because history is contingent on the perspective from which it is told and understood.

Rather than suggesting the museum presents “truth,” Favel states, “We offer self-told histories of selected, Native communities. Other communities, other perspectives, would have achieved different results.” Perhaps more than in any other area, the video featured in the Catlin gallery expresses the reflexive and dialogic self-understanding of the museum. It suggests history is socially constructed and agreed upon rather than a series of facts that can be transmitted by the museum.

Also a predominant theme throughout “Our Peoples” is “the storm,” and it is represented literally as a natural disaster in an installation in the middle of the exhibit. The metaphor represents the turmoil encountered as a result of European contact and the influences detrimental to American Indian people and their traditional belief systems. The perseverance and agency in facing the storm is also emphasized. A circular alcove in the middle of the exhibit is dark, and the walls surrounding change colors from varying shades of vivid blue to green. Surrounding the space and facing inward, staggered television screens of various sizes virtual objects are not thought of with the same importance as they are not even labeled here.

Ironically, in the spirit of the classic ethnographic museum, objects from George Gustav Heye are placed nearby along with a somber portrait of him in a gray suit ornamented by an ornate gold frame. Heye is holding a cigar. His portrait juxtaposes nicely next to #71, another Catlin painting in a rustic wood frame, his subject in traditional clothing. In a case located below are items that belonged to Heye including a typewriter, instruments used to weigh Indian artifacts in order to measure their value, and a half-smoked cigar. This space dedicated to Heye and his material possessions seems ironic in light of his tendency to collect and display Indian culture in a similar fashion. Favel says, “Much that is preserved would have disappeared” as he’s talking about Heye, who had the “wealth, the wherewithal, and the desire” to gather thousands upon thousands of American Indian objects. Favel’s reference to Heye corresponds with the excerpt posted nearby by Lawrence Small, former secretary of the Smithsonian described in Chapter IV. Small announced he would resign his position in March 2007 due to an emerging investigation allegedly implicating him in misappropriation of funds and mismanagement of the Smithsonian museums.

This perseverance or “survivance” is articulated throughout the museum, including in one cultural area dedicated to the Eastern band of the Cherokee Nation whose banner overhead
embedded in the walls show different images; at times they are the same, and at other times, the images vary from screen to screen as the color of the walls change. At the same time, one can hear a man’s voice softly providing a narrative augmented by sound effects that emulate a storm, church bells, shouting, and a gavel being pounded. He explains American Indian people have been caught in the storm between the forces of acculturation and contact between Europeans, missionaries, etc., and the screens show crashing waves, churches, etc. Within the circle on the floor is a round, flat glass case divided into pie-like sections. It contains rocks with pages from Genesis tied to them with twine, several kinds of beans and nuts, and a black hat. A tacked-on looking kiosk stands to the side, explaining that this is an art installation by Edward Poitras (Saulteaux/Metis) entitled the “Eye of the Storm.” The metaphor of the storm is a not so obvious, but artistic way of critiquing mass genocide and ethnocide.

Firearms introduced to American Indian people with European contact, treaties that were never upheld, various forms of currency, and Christian relics including Bibles translated into indigenous languages line the walls of Plexiglas surrounding the installation. Each are sub-captioned differently according to their ambivalent relationship with Native people. For example, “God’s Work” is sub-captioned with “Instruments of Dispossession and Resilience”; and Treaties, or “Stated Intensions” is sub-captioned with “Treaties as Instruments of Dispossession and Survival.”

The “Our Peoples” exhibit also contains alcoves that represent particular indigenous groups. Several of the sub-alcoves, including that of the Ka’apor people of the Amazon, address the issue of land rights and the need for group action in order to pressure the government on various issues. In another alcove, a video shows members of the Nahua Council reads, “We’re still here.”
talking about their success using collective action to stop the installation of a hydro-electric dam that would have flooded the lands on which their communities reside. The theme of cohesiveness for the sake of social justice and in order to gain a platform from which to enter public discourse is common throughout the museum. The Museum reproduces its own message of being “mutually participatory” (West, 2004a) and the fact that Indian people are not merely victims through such messages. As one exits the “Our Peoples” exhibit, they are left with both the sense that agency is achieved through perseverance and resistance, “resilience” and “survivance” in the face of “dispossession.”

However, upon closer consideration, one might see there are some major differences between the various groups represented in “Our Peoples.” For example, some refuse to adopt writing into their cultures like the Tapirape people of Brazil, while others celebrate the advent of technologies like the Cherokee syllabary, allowing them to record and teach their language in written form. The Nahua suggest that a written form of pictograph documents were an important form of communication for the Aztecs, who held their people in oppressive debt, imposing taxes on them with the help of the written records. The Aztecs flourished into a huge civilization, while smaller indigenous groups like the Nuhua suffered twofold (they were oppressed by the Aztecs and later colonized by the Europeans).

The museum occasionally essentializes American Indian experience. For example, although it is widely believed indigenous people held and still hold a different notion of time than Europeans (See section on “Movement and the Museum”), timelines are used to organize almost every cultural area in “Our Peoples.” Most start with some kind of creation story. Other common themes include games, art, language, and struggle over land and natural resources, and
dates and places of political struggles are often cited. Also pervasive throughout museum videos is the interview style as people shown typically state their names first and where they are from (as though responding to interview questions). There seems to be a standard format for the questions asked of Indian people shown in many of the cultural areas. By providing categories through which each group presents itself, and by offering responses to particular types of questions, the museum is providing a pre-established framework of what pan-Indian identity means. These interview techniques and common categories for organizing information are examples of the framing devices or parergon described (McTavish, 2006; Marstine, 2006). Omissions were also made through the use of these particular frames. For example, while several groups from South and Central America describe the oppressive situations they have faced as they were colonized by Spaniards or Europeans, American foreign policy and its remaining effects on indigenous people is not discussed (De Lugan, 2006).

The museum struggles with the particular and the universal, attempting to fit into a particular framework of what it means to be Indian. Even the tiny pebbles from each community placed in a band lining the alcoves are uniform in size. Like the information presented within alcoves, they are somehow clean and dirt-free.

“Our Lives”

“Our Lives,” located on the third level of the NMAI, addresses contemporary American Indian issues. The exhibit disparages the ways in which American Indian identity has been

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124 I would also like to thank a fellow museum patron who shared his opinion about the museum with me when he noticed me doing observations in the summer of 2006. He commented that when the museum talks about European invasion, it seems to blame the Conquistadores from Spain, but seems to spend less time criticizing the role of Anglo invaders.
imposed through appearance, blood quantum, and other more quantitative measures used to determine who would receive tribal certification, recognition, and benefits from the United States government. As with many NMAI spaces, the exhibit includes a variety of communications devices, attempting to employ telepresence to project visitors into the environment of Indian people from reservations to cities.

When entering the hallway into the “Our Lives” exhibit, it appears as though visitors are walking among other people. However, upon closer observation, it becomes obvious those caught by peripheral vision are pre-recorded images of American Indian people walking in and out of the exhibit dressed in modern street clothes, professional apparel, and uniforms from the United States Navy. The exhibit demonstrates American Indian people are not archaic, but they live modern lives, and a plaque nearby suggests you might be walking alongside an 21st century American Indian person and not even know it. At first glance, the images appear to be shadows. However, because the speed of those walking in the same direction is slightly delayed, one’s attention is drawn to the fellow walkers. The effect is slightly disorienting as when one cannot tell whether they or the objects around them are moving. First time visitors are often caught off guard by the optical illusion.

The topic of blood quantum and use of scientific methods in order to measure identity is addressed in depth in one display. It is titled “Body and Soul” and has a series of sub kiosks with several passages describing the process of defining who was Indian with visual images used to exemplify the arbitrary ways in which this was and is done. They include the

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125 The walls lining the exhibit entrance are similar to the Atlanta Rio Shopping mall’s “Rio Videowall” (McCarthy, 2001, FIG. 46) as one’s reflection seems to be captured on the screen walls as one passes, incorporating their presence into the mediated environment with televised counterparts. A similar effect can be seen in Disneyland’s haunted house when the lights come up and it appears as though one is surrounded by ghouls as they see their reflection in the
subsections, “Numbered”, “On Display”, “Documented”, “Charted”, “Appearance”, “Blood”, and “Who is Native and Who Gets to decide?” Photos and art are used to exemplify this point, and on one panel is also a back-lit picture of performance artist James Luna who laid in a museum exhibit case in the Museum of Man in San Diego in the 1980s in order to denaturalize the practice of studying “savage” people.\textsuperscript{126} Nearby display text reads: “…Luna subverts the practice of regarding Native Americans as objects or artifacts. By placing his living body on display, he criticizes museums that display cultures as dead or solely part of the past” (Jolene Rickyard, Guest Currator and Gabrielle Tayor NMAI, 2004).

But, not all “subversion” is celebrated within the museum. Near the center of the exhibit is a display on the “Red Power” movement of the 1960s and 1970s, including several popular-cultural items emerging during the era (including an album cover from Canadian First Nations singer/artist, Buffy Sainte-Marie, and a Seventeen Magazine with a young American Indian woman gracing its cover). These items are encased in a display adorned with images of “Red Power” events including protests; however no information about the American Indian Movement (AIM) or associated events is provided. While the museum valorizes collective action in several places and the museum itself is positioned as a site of collaboration, one of the most significant collective Indian movements of the Civil Rights era is never overtly mentioned. Perhaps it is because this group was “radical” and loosely structured. However, although challenging the acceptable boundaries of resistance, the American Indian Movement was considered by many to be important in raising awareness about Indian concerns (Deloria, 1973/2003). Struggle with the Bureau of Indian Affairs is apparent in a photo as a protester mirror.

\textsuperscript{126} Many of the displays are back-lit boxes, and as McCarthy (2001) suggests, although only containing still pictures, such displays resemble television monitors further naturalizing the use
holds up a sign that reads: “BIA I’m not your Indian any more.” However, no explanation or description is provided about what the BIA is.

This particular display is also troublesome in its conflation of important Indian texts with attention to Indian people in popular culture. For example a January 1973 issue of Seventeen Magazine with a feature story on “Today’s Young Navajos” hangs alongside Akwesasne Notes’ “A Basic Call For Consciousness”, Red Power (Josephy, Jr., Nagel, & Johnson [Eds.], 1971/1999), and Deloria, Jr’s Custer Died For Your Sins. Certainly, such attention by popular culture cannot be compared to such manifestos for sovereignty. And yet, there they hang side by side, Deloria’s profound work, God is Red and Life magazine’s December 1967 “Return of the Red Man.” (Where precisely had “the red man” gone? Perhaps he had just been ignored by mainstream print media?)

Along the outskirts of the “Our Lives” exhibit are several smaller alcoves dedicated to eight particular groups including a group representing the “urban Indian community of Chicago”, the Pamunkey Tribe of Virginia, the Kumeyaay nation of California (a band of which also extends into Mexico) and several First Nations groups of Canada including the Saint-Laurent Metis and their lives in the 21st century. These groups raise an array of issues, and especially those that pertain to the ambivalence of identity. Not only is the use of high-technology or new media prolific throughout the alcoves, but other forms of media are similarly used to articulate important issues including tribal and non-tribal radio, television, film, and newspapers. For example, discussed in the museum is the Yakama Nation’s use of a radio channel, KYNR 1490 AM, to provide language lessons. Similarly, the alcove dedicated to the Igloolik people describes the importance of their Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) of television in public spaces.
founded in 1981. Text within explains while the group had for years banned the use of television, the new station allowed them the opportunity to promote their traditional Inuit language and culture. They have also produced a feature length film in their Native language on display in the alcove (discussed further in the section on “Fourth Cinema”).

Newspaper articles are used in several of the cultural areas in order to tell stories about important historical events for many of the groups, providing a kind of record or validation of important happenings. One example is of the Campo Band of Kumeyaay Indians alcove. A video explains that debate surrounding the use of the group’s reservation as a waste disposal facility and environmental concerns, and a corresponding article from The Times documents the issue. Similarly, the Yakama alcove includes a newspaper article from Sunday Herald Republic from May, 21, 1972 titled, “Indians get Mt. Adams.” President Richard Nixon is pictured. The Mohawk (Kahnawake) Confederacy also includes several newspaper articles throughout its displays, including its own newspaper The Eastern Newspaper. Another from the Gazette Montreal, dated September 7, 1976 marks the important date in which several members of the group decided to boycott mainstream schools and to begin their own “Survival School” where children could learn the Native language. In a different corner, Time magazine is displayed with Olympic water polo player Susane Schwartz pictured on the cover. She poses naked (without revealing anything “indecent”) with a feather in her hair. “We put out good athletes,” one of the signs associated with this glass case suggests. The Seminoles of Florida also include several newspaper articles within their cultural space, including a Miami Daily News story titled “Seminoles Vote” dated Aug 21, 1957. The Chicago Tribune (almost as though a product placement) is also a part of the Chicagoland area Indian display. A man in a
NAVY t-shirt stands against the backdrop of a *Chicago Tribune* newspaper stand, and his legs are transparent allowing viewers to see the newspaper’s logo.

Like those in “Our Universes,” several groups attempt to “re-create” their tribal spaces in the museum through the combination of technology and objects. For example, a view through the living room window of a modern American Indian home in the Chicagoland area reveals a television picturing “urban Indians” describing their experiences, illustrating a kind of reversal on the “window on the world” (Spigel, 2001). The Pamunkey Tribe of Virginia allows visitors to “take the wheel” and navigate through the wetlands of Virginia as if steering a speedboat.

The French/Indian influenced Saint-Laurent Metis First Nations group of Canada included and reproduced several items signatory of their community experience, including the welcome or “Bienvenue” sign that is posted as one enters the town, picturing some of the activities in which the group participates, including ice-fishing, dairy farming, and trapping. A giant illustration of a cow adorns the side of the billboard in addition to an illustration of a tractor and an ice-fishing vehicle. A Bombardier with embedded video monitors is placed in the center of the display, and a large screen shows Métis people dancing and fiddling is featured on the wall.127

“Our Lives,” perhaps more than any other NMAI exhibit, alludes to some of the issues modern American Indian people face. For example, it fleshes out some of the complexities of

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127 Pictures of the vehicle moving across the icy ground surround the vehicle and are used as the backdrop walls of the display, and television monitors are also embedded in both sides of the vehicle showing videos of ice fishing crews. A local organization presented an award to the community curators stating, “The challenge was to bring about a feeling of being in the community… The exhibit is a testimony that Métis people are very much alive and have a very distinct culture and language that is uniquely Métis” (retrieved from “Smart Partners of Manitoba,” http://www.smartwinnipeg.mb.ca/awards2005.htm).
identity and the ways in which it has been quantified. While it does not dwell on the fact that some nations still use such measures as blood quantum to determine tribal membership, the exhibit at least troubles the rise of such instruments. Conversely, while parts of the exhibit allude to various conflicts in Indian communities, problems are never really raised. For example, while the ambivalent relationship indigenous people have with media is alluded to in the Igloolik exhibit, rather than denaturalize their proliferation and some of the problems they can introduce, media are prevalent throughout the exhibit to re-create Indian communities. Similarly, the exhibit uses American Indian Movement photos merely as background to set the tone for social movement, but never describes the tensions felt during the 1960s and 1970s and confrontations with the United States police and military. As discussed in Chapter V, some AIM members also objected to the NMAI itself. The NMAI’s dialogic self-understanding clearly privileges particular participants in the conversation.

The Rasmuson Theatre and Fourth Cinema

“A Thousand Roads,” a 43-minute film by American Indian director Chris Eyre, is shown twice daily in the NMAI’s Main/Rasmuson Theatre. The fictional movie follows four Native Indians: First, Amanda, a Mohawk stock broker (who looks to be in her twenties or early thirties); Dawn, a little girl from Seattle (about 8 years old) traveling to Barrow Alaska; Johnny, a troubled 17 year old from New Mexico; and Don Santos an elder Incan healer from South America. The disparate main characters demonstrate various life experiences, and yet

128 Another film called “Welcome Home,” is also shown several times daily. The film is narrated by Director Richard West and provides a short introduction to the museum. (Perhaps for those who have not started on the fourth level?) Interviews with Indian people attending the Opening Ceremonies on the National Mall in 2004 are included. The short film is very promotional in nature (not unlike an infomercial).
share a kind of pan-Indian identity (for example, connection with community). It starts by showing some of the landscapes where Indian people live and is accompanied by loud, powerful music and narration. We see coastlines, mountains, deserts, forests, cityscapes, etc. The narrator says, “Good morning Indian Country. Wake up and shine.” “We are thousands of nations strong” “We Indians are everywhere.”

Chris Eyre has long been associated with “Native” cinema, especially since the success of “Smoke Signals,” the 1998 film directed by Eyre and written by American Indian author/poet Sherman Alexie. Movies like Eyre’s might be referred to as fourth cinema, or those made by indigenous people mostly for indigenous audiences (Gabriel, 1989; Ginsburg, 1999). Films that might be considered in this “fourth cinema” category include the 2001 film “Atanarjuat- The Fast Runner,” made entirely in Inuktitut, the language of the Inuit people of Canada. Part of the purpose of such texts is to subvert the same mechanisms used to maintain power relations for the benefit of indigenous people. Gabriel suggests Fourth Cinema films frequently utilize styles that reflect non-Western belief systems and folkloric and oral traditions. Some of these styles include panned shots that capture a sense of place, greater emphasis on one’s responsibility to community rather than one’s individual achievements and psychology, non-linear sequencing, and greater incorporation of unfolding narrative rather than fast-action shots (Gabriel, 1989).

“A Thousand Roads” may be considered different from other fourth cinema texts because it is shown to mostly non-Native NMAI museum-goers. In addition, while all media

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129 Ginsberg is most positive about the possibility of aboriginal filmic projects that include less involvement from Europeans including film crews, styles, and conventions. But, discarding pre-existing cultural forms when it comes to media and media texts is easier said than done as Bird found in her studies of Native and non-Native audiences of media texts about Indian people. She found that creative choices are often based on the conventions of the cultural
have certain constraints, those associated with the production of museum texts should be more thoroughly investigated; for example, the avoidance of controversy, as explained by Singer (2005). As described in Chapter V, when asked how the NMAI articulates what it means to be an indigenous or Native person of the Western Hemisphere, those who had seen “A Thousand Roads,” or “Who We Are” seemed to draw their examples from these presentations, generally citing the importance of nature, traditions, and communities. At various times throughout the year, the Rasmuson Theatre features other indigenous films throughout the day. In addition, the NMAI’s George Gustav Heye Center in New York houses an extensive collection of more independent “Fourth Cinema” films by various indigenous people, generally documenting the experiences of one particular group rather than a montage that attempts to lump together very disparate peoples and experiences.


Three physical structures comprise the NMAI including the Mall Museum in Washington D.C., the George Gustav Heye Center (GGHC) in New York, and the Cultural Resources Center (CRC) in Suitland, Maryland, where the collections are stored. Museum planners early on were well aware of the difficulties many American Indian people would have in accessing NMAI resources and the museum’s physical locations (West, 2004). The Mall museum and GGHC are considered the interface with the “general” public whereas the Suitland forms with which we are familiar.

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130 The NMAI does have an extensive collection of more “independent” films available for viewing to guests in the George Gustav Heye Center (GGH) in New York. (Generally, one must gain permission in advance to plan a screening). Through an online site called “Native Networks,” the NMAI provides a list more than 160 titles of indigenous films shown by the NMAI Film and Video Center during various festivals and other screenings. The museum also hosts film festivals at which several of these films have been showcased, providing them with a
facility is designed as a site where American Indian people might visit to do research or access objects in the collections. However, the majority of American Indian people will only access the museum’s resources remotely, and programs and networking opportunities were necessary to include Native people. The non-physical component of the museum, deemed the “Fourth Museum,” (joining the three physical structures) includes community outreach, technology, publications, and various programs. Director West is fond of referring to the entire project as “the museum without walls” and emphasizes the importance of extending the museum beyond its “proverbial bricks and mortar” (American Indian Magazine, West, 2007, p. 17). As one might expect, communications technologies are considered an important component in reaching remote constituencies and in establishing virtual and social connections. The virtual imaging of objects for online access by Indian people also raises some interesting questions, especially in light of the historical circumstances and implications of their accession and exhibition and the fact that they may allow the only opportunity many native people have of viewing them.

According to Pat Neitfeld, the NMAI’s CRC Collections Manager, all of the museum’s collections have been imaged virtually, and those images have been compiled in a virtual database. Although these virtual images are currently only available via on-site computers at the CRC, she estimates the images will be online and available to the “general public” by 2008.131 Two virtual tours of some of the collections were also created in collaboration between the NMAI, the Four Directions project, and the US Department of Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and were funded through the U.S. Department of Education (http://www.nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/all_roads_are_good/Index.htm, “A virtual Tour...”). The

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tours, “All Roads Are Good” and “Creation’s Journey,” allow users with Internet access to learn about various objects housed in the GGHC remotely, providing a 360 degree perspective of some museum objects. Children from Indian schools participated in the creation of the site and in the writing of some of the information about museum items from their own knowledge of them (Jones & Christal, 2002).

While digital collections and tours might seem especially helpful for those who cannot travel to museums, a lack of access to the Internet and high-speed connections is a challenge faced by many American Indian people (Anderson, 1999). Many tribal governments are working toward greater connectivity, but are ambivalent about the technology because of the commercialism and non-traditional ways it can introduce into their communities (Monroe, 2002). Some scholars have argued digital media have been especially useful for reproducing oral, collective cultures and such benefits of digital technologies should be considered more seriously (Welch, 1999; Ong, 1982). However, as Brown (2004) points out, such technologies have also enabled the sharing of sensitive indigenous information with greater ease. In addition to challenges like the lack of access to the Internet and the introduction of commercialism, the expectations of literacy (both written and digital) inherent in digital technology use, and the privileging of the English language in the design and use of digital technologies also present problems for non-English speakers (Parks, 2004). This does not mean there is no democratic or inclusive potential with Internet use. However, its treatment as a panacea should be questioned. As Communication theorist James Carey (2006) wrote, “While technology overcomes many boundaries (of space and time, politics and economics), other social boarders may be created at the same time. It is easier to see old boundaries coming down than to see

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131 P. Neitfeld (personal communication, October 23, 2006).
new ones being erected” (p. 443).

The digitization of museums raises some other serious issues. McTavish (2006) comments half jokingly about the potential of virtual exhibitions and the threat of such technologies to actual museums and museum employees. But, her half-joking comment might have real implications for Indian objects, especially in light of the history of their acquisition by museums. Is it possible that the virtual museum would render the physical museum and the debate over the display of Indian objects obsolete? If it is true that virtual images BECOME the object, do majority museums need to house physical Indian objects at all? McTavish (2006) suggests it is not likely virtual objects will take the place of actual objects because they are often blurry and un-detailed. This is especially ironic in light of the fact that while the general museum-going public might enjoy them, most Indian people themselves will not make it to the museum to see the actual objects, and therefore, their only opportunity to see them might be in the inferior virtual form.

In addition, McTavish (2006) questions whether a more “democratic” version of the museum emerges when everyday people begin to take on the roles of curators and the traditional museum is questioned. Moreover, while not denying the more “inclusive” nature of the virtual museum and increased access to collections, she suggests that users are treated online as customers as they are encouraged to “shop” for online content. She writes, “The representation of autonomous visitors who select and manipulate objects, making them their own, is inseparable from the liberal individual imagined by capitalism. Insisting that digital exhibitions and collections empower visitors—serving their diverse desires and identities—reinforces a particularly western conception of the ideal visitor or ‘client.’” While the virtual
museum is oriented around interactivity and user, the object itself and its significance in lived space become less important. Many virtual museums combine digital collections with commodified spaces, blurring the distinction between online museum and online shopping mall.

Large museums are now expected to produce digital collections and are frequently rewarded with grants for doing so (McTavish, 2006). However, this does not make it easier for American Indian people to actually get the Internet, and it does not mean entrance into cyberspace equals entrance into unfettered democratic discourse. When we speak of democratic utopias, we should be cautious. Cyberspace is often treated as the par excellence of unparalleled democratic potential because users can shed their “corporeal malediction” or logistics through disembodied public discourse or access to information (Saco, 2002). But, many communication theorists foresaw the increased commercial implications of the Internet long ago (Gurak, [1997], 2001; Volkmer, 1997) and have predicted the Internet’s role in facilitating a shift from a “culture-debating public” to a “culture consuming Public” (Saco, p. 65 citing Habermas, 1989, p. 159). Couldry (2004) reminds us the digital divide was first problematized as a means of addressing markets that could be potentially served by their “participation in the digital economy” and that the goal of suturing such a divide was to fuel markets (p. 187). And, more specific to Indian concerns, communication theorists have

\(^{132}\) The term corporal malediction was used by Frantz Fanon to describe the challenges faced as one was judged for their visible racial or ethnic characteristics.

\(^{133}\) Take for example, the recent 1 billion dollar copyright lawsuit launched by Viacom against Google, who recently acquired You-Tube. Many criticized the digital file-sharing site even before that for removing potentially offensive videos prior to the acquisition.

\(^{134}\) Couldry writes, “…the point of raising something as gloomy as the digital divide was to focus more clearly on the possibilities for market growth: short-term political ‘pain’ for long-term economic gain” (p. 187). He suggests the New World Information and Communication Order of the 1970s as well as the movement toward less western and United States domination
predicted the inevitable difficulties introduced to some groups and their struggles over cultural sovereignty with the proliferation of the Internet (Volkmer, 1997). As the NMAI enters the “marketplace of ideas” (West, 2007) through cyberspace, further “democratizing” Indian objects and justifying the maintenance of NMAI collections and exhibitions, one wonders whether this digital repatriation is an adequate substitute for the physical objects once so important to lived Indian spaces.

The Native Theme Park: Generic and Commodified American Indian Spaces

At times, the hyper-real spaces of the NMAI achieve suspension of disbelief, re-creating Indian country not according to banal realities, but in a condensed and super-concentrated, ideal and entertaining form. Media simulations create spaces of pastiche, facilitating experiences that are even better than real (Jameson, 1991). The ritual function of the museum as heterotopia (Hooper-Greenhill, 1990) and the ways in which it shapes information as a result of the broader purpose of reproducing itself and reaffirming the audience’s role there is apparent. Although participants in the planning process recommended the museum not “water down” polemical topics, obvious omissions exist. One example is the peripheral manner in which the museum addresses more radical acts of resistance and genocide (Atalay, 2006). As Singer similarly suggests, in her experience working with the NMAI on “Who We Are,” decisions about museum texts frequently reflected an “avoidance stance taken by NMAI with regard to overly controversial or contested issues involving Indigenous communities,” (p. 468).135

135 Singer lists as an example decisions to omit information about the whaling controversy in which the Wakahs of Washington State are engaged (p. 468).
The emphasis on the “fun factor” (Bruce, 2006) within the NMAI should also be considered when examining the ways in which the museum acts as a frame. It reflects the new popular appeal in museums toward the “service economy ideal,” combining “educational” spaces with theme park “entertainment strategies” (Bruce, 2006 quoting Anon, 2000, p. 132). As with other new museums, the NMAI focuses various aspects of the museum on the visitor/consumer and their “pleasure.” Even the museum café suggests Indian culture can be bought and consumed at the pleasure of the consumer like the buffalo burger made from real buffalo. The theme-parkish environment facilitates a mystical, romanticized version of Indian country, oriented around visitors and their engagement with sanitized versions of history. Consider, for example, the ways in which planners anticipated the movement of people within their museum. “Space Relationships” and the use of human senses within the NMAI played an important role in facilitating traffic flows, guiding visitors seamlessly through spaces of varying commodification from multimedia presentation, to exhibit, to gift shop, to café (The Way of the People, Volume 3, VI. 236). Like Emile Zola’s Au Bonheur Des Dames (The Ladies’ Paradise) the museum’s planning documents included strategies for the predetermined movement of visitors past spaces where goods could be purchased.

Of course, visitors frequently move through spaces of their own volition, taking whichever paths suit them. (In fact, they have been known to skip the exhibits entirely and go straight to the café as discussed in Chapter V). While museum goers are not devoid of agency, the museum itself naturalizes the processes in which they engage, and much planning went into strategies to motivate their behaviors, gain and maintain attention, and move bodies. The museum consulted with experts to predict behavior from the flow of automobile traffic outside
to the various “types” of learners likely to visit the museum.\textsuperscript{136}

The use of the department store as analogy for predicting and encouraging traffic flows is useful.\textsuperscript{137} Through a “fluid planning system” based on scientific, psychological approaches called “The Gruen Transfer” (after mall mogul Victor Gruen) shoppers can be moved through “free-flow” spaces in order to encourage “productive” behavior (Backes, 1997). Similarly, while NMAI visitors become engaged in various mediaspaces, they experience a kind of “disorientation effect” (Backes, 1997), experiencing stimulation of the senses and alternative social positions (McCarthy, 2001) and at the end of that journey, they are led to gift shops. Planners even anticipated the smells of the restaurant would attract visitors there.\textsuperscript{138} Gravity, as in the Guggenheim, leads visitors down, in a swirling, circular motion from the rim of the tide-pool to the commodified sink-hole below.\textsuperscript{139}

The NMAI’s various “fun factor” strategies and mediated environments were in part a response to the competitive environment the mall museum would inevitably face. As described in Chapters IV and V, the government expected the museum to find alternative, private funding

\textsuperscript{136} For example planners reviewed the “4Mat System Model” (copyrighted by Excel, Inc.), which differentiates learners into four “types”: common sense, innovative, dynamic, and analytic. The consulting firm Venturi, Scott Brown, and Associates generated reports for NMAI planners including one on the “Geotechnical, site traffic, and visitation investigations.” (Both included in the CRC Suitland, MD archives).

\textsuperscript{137} The department store and the museum are similar in many ways. Artist Andy Warhol among many others have made this comparison (McTavish, 2006).


\textsuperscript{139} Many have lamented the disappearance of the “public” spaces now replaced by spaces described as highly commodified, branded, gentrified, synergized, and sterilized (See the collection of essays in Sorkin, 1992, for example). Specifically, Crawford (1992) suggested such a transformation was reflected at the Smithsonian years before the NMAI opened in her comment that the Capitol Mall itself had been “malled” (p. 30). But, while it might be true the NMAI is merely following the trajectory set in motion long before its inception, as I argue in Chapter IV, the national museum complex was never a space of egalitarian public discourse,
sources. Such demands have implications with regard to issues of framing, space, and museum practices, and facilitate the idea that the museum visitor is a “paying customer” and the museum is “market-driven” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1990). As was described in Chapters IV and V, the NMAI Act demanded that one-third of the museum costs were to be raised by outside (private) non-governmental sources. According to “The Way of the People,” the legislation assumed a cost of $106m for the construction of the Mall Museum, leaving it up to planners to have $35.5m “in hand or pledged” (“Funding”, 1991 II.5, p. 33). Some critics complained that the funds from the private sector came from rich tribes and casino revenue (Rothstein, 2004, “Museum with...”, The New York Times, 21 Sept. - See chapter V for further discussion).

In a report created for the Smithsonian Institution by the Harrison Price Company, NMAI planners were advised they would be competing for the attention of 25.1 million visitors (data from 1991) with 14 other museums. Aside from the pressures of competition and funding, the planning of the Mall museum also required consideration of the ways in which the NMAI could serve as a “good neighbor” on the Mall. Planners were forced to adhere to the “original intent” of L’Enfant for the Mall, and the law dictated plans for the building be approved by at least four governing bodies including the Commission of Fine Arts, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the National Capital Planning Commission (The Way of the People, 1991).

considering its relationship with American Indian people.

140 The Suitland facility was federally funded, and construction costs were estimated at $44 million. The GGH Center in New York was funded through a combination of funds from New York State, New York City, and federal funds.

141 According to a report included in the CRC Suitland, MD archive prepared for the Smithsonian Institute by the Harrison Price Company (San Pueblo, CA), the “primary market” for the museum as being 1-25 miles away. Also, it was suggested that education was the only “independent variable” in predicting who was likely to visit the museum (based on visitor data to the Smithsonian in years past).
As The Way of the People suggests, it was decided very early that the museum would not resemble the other clearly European-influenced designs on the Mall, but creating a structure that reflected “the” pan-Indian identity proved impossible. Also a challenge was the fact that the last spot on the mall, actually once the dumping ground for a Civil War brothel (Himelfarb, 1999), had been so clearly marked and surrounded by imperial power. One comment suggests the ambivalence felt by planners: “A wolf in the sheep’s clothing of even the most beautiful Classical box will not do; nor will a marble tipi” (The Way of the People, Master Facilities Program: Mall Volume III, 1993, p. v. 6). But, consider the following comment made: “…Yet, the architectures of the Indian nations are multiple and a single, generic Indian architectural form or style does not exist” (The Way of the People, V. II, “Philosophy”).

The challenge in merely determining what comprises “Indian” style is reflected in some of the comments made by unnamed Indian participants in focus groups conducted by museum planners (The Way of the People, 1991). One participant commented, “Programs that reach Indian communities are more important than buildings” (p. 17). Yet another comment was, “I see a sign not a building. A building that says something—a billboard” (p. 16). Consider the difficulty in deciding where to place the museum’s door: “Some tribes would want entry from the east—the sunrise” (p. 19). “Our (Southeast Alaska) door has to face the beach” (p. 19). “If the entrance is on the East, then it will also face the only hill around” (p. 20). Or, what shape the museum building should take: For some groups (Apache): “Everything we do is round”. Whereas another comment suggested, “Don’t generalize from one tribe’s architecture. For Northwest peoples, the rectangle is the main shape of rooms and buildings” (p. 19). And another comment: “The circle is almost universal and dominant. It is the shape of Kivas and
ceremonial spaces for Pueblos and Hopi” (p. 20). Or, consider the difficulty of deciding how to run tours of the museum: “Kodiak people like informality. They protest having agendas at meetings” (p. 19). “Tlingit people like structure” (p. 19). Or, which numbers are important for Indian people. While duality is stressed in the Quechua Universe, the number four is emphasized throughout the “Our Universes”, and as one tour guide stressed, this number was different from the “trinity” so important to Western Christian culture. Conversely, a respondent in the museum focus group suggested, “For Keetoowah Band of Cherokee, seven is the critical number…” (p. 20). Although Indian spirituality is a major theme of the museum, especially in the “Our Universes” gallery, consider the following comment made by one participant: “A reverence for things like planting corn and beans is important but don’t reinforce the stereotype that Indians are the spiritual gurus of the world: People want our ceremonies; its complicated” (p. 19). This comment reflects the ambivalence of groups whose cultures are fetishized by the mainstream and value some degree of privacy while feeling somewhat validated by the museum’s attention. This is not to say there are no similarities among these groups, but those material similarities are more difficult to generalize than the museum suggests.

Although it is clear that planners considered many of the perspectives expressed in the focus groups, others seem to have been completely disregarded, including the comment about the fact that many Indian people do not display their art works and another that suggests important objects be placed in buildings that are still “alive,” rather than ones with

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142 For example, the “Our Universes” floor plan is designed to emphasize the number four, including metal strips in the floor marking the four directions.

143 Quotations listed are from “consultation participants” in The Way of the People (1991), pp. 16-22. No context as to what sparked these quotations/sound bytes was provided and the responses were not attributed to respondents, almost making it appear as though the focus
“environmental controls.” Overall, it would seem impossible for museum planners to have taken seriously all of the input from its participants. Consider the juxtaposition of the goals of the museum with the following comment: “The building designs should draw on the symbols and traditions of many people and yet not be ‘pan-Indian’ designs” (p. 20). And, yet even the name of the museum suggests there is such a thing as “the” American Indian.

NMAI designer Douglas Cardinal was faced with the challenge of choosing the particular semiotics that would communicate to outsiders that this space was “Indian Country.” Many visitors would have little knowledge of Indian traditions aside from their experiences with popular culture. When thinking about the ways in which planners had envisioned the quintessential “Indian” space, Venturi et al’s Learning From Las Vegas comes to mind. It is not hard to imagine, then, why NMAI planners chose to consult with the Venturi Scott Brown and Associates considering their understanding of semiotics and quintessential spaces. But, as Wakeham (2006) suggests, the architecture does more than just articulate what Indian-ness is. It conflates the representation of American Indian people with National recognition of Indians and therefore nation-building. And, the semiotics themselves, while supposedly representing Native identity, also generalize it. Wakeham points out the similarities between the NMAI and Canada’s National Museum of Civilization, both designed by Douglas Cardinal (Blackfoot/Metis). She argues that both museums work to build nation-hood by representing “national” spaces: The United States’ South West mesas and Canada’s glacier-sculpted group itself assumed a “generic” and inter-changeable Indian perspective.

144 One respondent said he kept his father’s pipe in a building that was “alive.” He stated, “…The pipe is kept in a frame building without environmental controls—I don’t call it a museum…It is still alive” (p. 20). But of course, natural decay would defy the museum’s agenda of preservation for the sake of “posterity” as West (Sept. 2004, C-SPAN) suggests.
She writes, “While both museums are hailed by their respective patriotic publicists as unique national monuments, they are, rather, marked by a conspicuous architectural doubleness that raises several vexed questions about the inter-relations between museology, monumentality, and nation-building, particularly as they regard the representation of Indigenous peoples in neocolonial states" and their similarities “…complicates the buildings’ symbolic importance as federal monuments.”

Similarly, a visitor, who identified himself as an Architecture professor at a Big Ten University interviewed during the summer of 2006, pointed out the neo-classical influence reflected by the dome and rotunda; a type of architecture commonly associated with imperialism. He suggested that the museum was “not terribly imaginative” and was, in fact, “a shopping mall.” He would have preferred that the museum “make space” rather than “fake space.” (See further discussion in Chapter V).

Also, part of the discourse included within the NMAI itself and in planning documents expressed a kind of “common” human experience, and this seems to be the result of conflating so many disparate groups. The question, though, as Rothstein (2004) and Richard (2004) point out is if such experiences are human ones, what is it that makes this space particularly “Indian”? Indeed, discourses about the “similar and dis-similar human experiences” within

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The Museum as Architectural Monument: The Material Politics of Nation-Building at the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the National Museum of the American Indian. The Web link is an abstract for an unpublished paper Dr. Wakeham graciously agreed to share with me. See De Lugan for further discussion on the NMAI and nation-building.

146 The similarities were also recognized and discussed in a round table sponsored by the NMAI on February, 2007, “Comparisons and Critique of Three Unique Museums: Canadian Museum of Civilization, Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, and the Musée de Quai Branly.” Those involved included Gerald Vizenor, Robert Houle, and Suzan Shown Harjo. (http://www.nmai.si.edu/calendar/index.asp?month=2&year=2007&day=22)
“The Way of the People” and museum texts like those that suggest we are all 90% water connote a contradiction; that Native people are distinct, yet just like everyone else. As Favel states, “Rarely are we seen as human beings,” while the existence of the museum itself suggests, “We are different from other human beings, ie: Europeans.” A museum text in “Our Lives” suggests “We are the sum of all our parts. All human. One hundred percent. And fully Native” (Jolene Rickyard, Guest Curator and Gabrielle Taylor NMAI, 2004). This statement, like the others, reflects the ambivalent messages of humanist discourse mixed with a politics of recognition. The museum struggles in articulating particular messages about Indian people while attempting to bind them to larger universal themes like nationalism and humanism, but a binary exists in the non-European yet humanist discourses articulated (as discussed in Chapter V). Similarly, as discussed in Chapter IV, these ambiguities raise another tension; the group rights claimed by those supporting differential politics are often at odds with the individualistic discourses of human rights and humanism, arguments often projected onto indigenous issues from groups such as the United Nations.

Similarly, an apparent struggle within the museum is the effort to articulate the commonalities between indigenous people of the United States with those of other countries. Their socio-political-historical situations are completely different (Miller & Yudice, 2002), and as De Lugan (2006) points out, United States policy and its effects on groups from Latin America are never addressed. “The Way of the People” suggests there was some debate over whether museum planners had access to enough cultural experts from South and Central America. In a May 1998 memo, Bruce Bernstein, Assistant Director for Cultural Resources suggested, planners had agreed 25 percent of the exhibits should be dedicated to indigenous
people from Central and South America.\textsuperscript{147} Certainly, such an arbitrary number was not proportionate to the amount of actual indigenous people from these areas in the aggregate indigenous pool of the western hemisphere. In addition, virtual technologies offer information in English rather than Spanish, or Portuguese, suggesting the Anglo bias. Indeed, as described in Chapter IV, it was Heye’s collection itself that set the agenda for who would be represented in the NMAI: “Native” people of the western hemisphere whose material cultures he sought.

\textbf{Conclusion}

After showing Richard West’s National Press Club speech to a one-hundred level public speaking course, one student raised her hand and wanted to know why West (a Washington lawyer in a business suit reading perfectly crafted prose in English from a teleprompter) kept referring to “we” when talking about “Native people of the Western Hemisphere.” Her question was asked in the spirit of genuine curiosity. How individual indigenous groups can be summarized under an umbrella term, or how one can delimit a pan-Indian group, is not made clear. If the majority of Smithsonian visitors will be White, as “The Way of the People” forecasted and high technology is what keeps the museum “competitive,” mediation must take place in order for indigenous people to enter into cultural dialogue at the Smithsonian. But, the repercussions for representing such disparate people and their vital issues through the frame of the highly mediated museum and the national museum complex have not been adequately considered. Moreover, a great deal of determining factors helped to shape the museum and technologies within including technology biases and economic pressures. Therefore, while the NMAI might present a semiotic presence in ongoing national dialogue, it is clear there are some limitations to the dialogue occurring on the mall.

\textsuperscript{147} It actually wound up being eight or one-third of cultural alcoves dedicated to these groups
According to West, the Smithsonian will continue to invest resources in outreach projects benefiting Indian people as part of the “Fourth Museum.” But the location of the NMAI suggests it will not become the kind of “community center” that tribal museums are often considered (Clifford, 1991). In the past, material objects have taken precedence in the museum, and such has also led to systems of classifying those objects in a typology. The NMAI suggests its politics of collection are different than the traditional museum and wishes to place greater emphasis on American Indian people rather than objects. But, NMAI curators still frame the “dialogue” within the context of the museum and privilege the collection of material culture. Given the acknowledgement by the museum that many Indian people will never visit Washington D.C. or the Cultural Resources Center in Maryland, and the excuse that digital collections will reach this remote constituency (West, Sept. 2004, C-SPAN), it is clear who the target market/customer is within the NMAI. Monetary pressures have pressed the museum into a further commodified state and perpetual funding drives. While the highly visible building as “billboard” and interactive devices are meant to dispel negative myths about indigenous people and to augment positive public relations, they have created their own problems by attempting to (re)create and represent problems experienced by people lumped together as Indian within spaces that serve ulterior functions.

What the NMAI does work to do is to prop up a model we can consider similar to Carey’s (1989) cultural or ritual model, while troubling a more static one Carey would describe as the transmission model. The museum itself assumes a semiotic presence, as though the building is in dialogue with the others on the Mall. Its communications technologies present a spectrum of dialogic possibility from the fact driven interactive kiosk near the Window on included in the inaugural exhibits.
Collections to the Cultural Interpreter conducting tours. It acknowledges the role of museum-goers not only in their capacity to receive “facts,” but to co-construct meaning (Cobb, 2005a-c) by experiencing the museum. The museum self-reflexively acknowledges its own ritual function in a dialogic model. As a whole and in its various mediated spaces, the NMAI invites media/communication scholars to broaden their definitions and objects of study by understanding and identifying itself as a communications technology.

The preceding sections have described the ways in which space and media are used to (re)create “Indian Country” in the NMAI and the ways in which we can understand such spaces. The following chapter will ask how the notion of survivance and Michel Foucault’s governmentality can further augment our understanding of the museum. It will explore the concept of agency as it pertains to the NMAI. In addition, Chapter VII will summarize the points made in previous chapters on pan-Indian identity in popular consciousness, cultural policy and cultural sovereignty, NMAI reception, and the museum as/and media. Finally, I will offer some interdisciplinary implications of this project.

148 See Chapter V for further discussion.
CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION
Governmentality and the Dialogic Museum

“I can’t change the system, but the system won’t change me”

“Reform is always afoot in the field of Indian affairs”

Introduction

How can we summarize the various productive capacities of an ambivalent space like the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)? While there is always the temptation to gravitate toward an over-determined interpretation of institutions like the museum, its situatedness within a complex web of economic/socio/political/historical circumstances makes its existence an extremely complicated and undulating phenomenon. As I have argued throughout this project, there are two broad trends setting a context for the NMAI: 1.) The neo-liberal economic formation and 2.) A shift in museums as object-oriented repositories to sites of subjective enforcement, voice/dialogue, and participation conveyed through a discourse of empowerment. How can we better understand such a shift?

Michel Foucault (1983, 1989) suggested power helps to produce subjects that think and act on themselves and one another in particular “normative” ways. Institutions like museums, also taking social cues, work to prescribe such normalcy. By avoiding a “bipolar model of power,” or the notion that power is repressive and works only to further the aims of a dominant class, we can better understand the ways in which the museum concerns itself with
the administration of life and encourages citizens to undergo the process of “subjectification” (Greene, 2000, pp. 32-33 citing Foucault, 1983). I suggest Foucault’s notion of governmentality is a model that will help us to better understand the transforming complexities of the NMAI and its relationship with power. The NMAI understands itself in terms of a dialogic model whereby visitors/cultural citizens reaffirm their role in the social formation by activating, listening to, and feeling messages from their dialogic partners via communications devices. The museum’s remote constituents also enter into dialogue through semiotics and such devices. The museum sees itself as a response to the many years of the iconographic American Indian embedded in popular consciousness and perpetuated through the media (as described in Chapter III). As with any expressive, communications technology, there are limitations to the dialogic potential of the NMAI, especially considering the determining factors in which it has arisen and the biases of the communications technologies it employs (As described in Chapters V and VI). However, the museum challenges its own existence, invites museum-goers to “argue with it” (Favel video in “Our Peoples”), and is centered on a collaborative model, reflecting a shift in power/knowledge formation and the discursive order.

There are some useful models for understanding how the state becomes involved in nation-building within a neo-liberal formation through museums. For example, Mary Coffey (2004) described the rise of neo-liberalism and governmentality in Mexico in the 1980s as the state partnered with community museums (micro domains) to help create the national discursive order of “the mestizo.” Toby Miller (1993) also gets at some of the complexities I wish to explore with the following comment about the partnership between the state, “diverse” groups, and private interest. He suggests:
The state needs to produce a sense of oneness among increasingly heterogeneous populations at a time when political systems are under question by new social movements and the internationalization of cultures and economies. It works to forge a loyalty to market economics and parliamentary democracy, as well as a sustainable society through the formation of cultural citizens, docile but efficient participants in that economic-society mix (Miller, 1993, p. xii).

Discussions by Coffey and Miller are helpful for understanding state interest in cultural identity and its situatedness in neo-liberal formations. Citizens understand themselves as subjects within a larger social formation through institutional mechanisms. In settler-societies like the United States, the state also works to help citizens understand their role as multicultural citizens and in relation to indigenous people. The economic is thought to enable or advance the goals of multicultural cohesiveness by offering citizens the means to signify their participation.

But what makes the NMAI different from many of the national museums of the past involving race and identity is its self-reflexivity and self-understanding as a communications technology engaged in “the process of giving voice” (Favel video in “Our Peoples”). Indeed, the NMAI reflects a broader trend as other recent national “ethnic” museums now assume this reflexive self-understanding, including the Canadian Museum of Civilization and New Zealand’s Te Papa Museum. These national big-budget museums are increasingly integrating high-technology communications devices by which museum-goers make sense of their visits, and these ostensibly “give voice” to aboriginal constituents.
There are a number of contradictions within the NMAI that come along with the attempt to articulate American Indian “voice.” For example, despite the museum’s resistance to such a teleology, the emergence of the NMAI is positioned as an enlightened form of progress, even at times by its critics (Cobb, 2005a-c; Lonetree, 2006a-c). The Western notion of evolutive time, while troubled within the NMAI, continues as the museum signifies “a step in the right direction.” The NMAI assumes the discourse of reform. As Nikolas Rose (1999) points out, such a discourse continuously perpetuates itself as the past is problematized along with its institutions. It signifies the same Western notion of progress that constituted traditional museums and the idea that the visitor can continue their never-ending training as a (multi)cultural citizen there. The nation-building occurring through the museum’s presence suggests the United States has now established a more progressive relationship with American Indian people although greater visibility has a great deal to do with greater financial, legal, and political pull by American Indian activists and lobbyists, not merely the benevolence of the United States government. The uneasy process and system has been rendered invisible by and within the museum even as the president of the United States stumbles over the meaning of American Indian sovereignty.149 Moreover, the overly simplified pan-Indian identity used as an over-arching category for the various groups within is largely constructed via an American understanding of “Indian” people. The use of architecture to indicate “pan-Indian” identity and the repetitious and abstract themes of “connection with nature” and “pride” as reflected in surveys are just a few examples.

149 Several politicians, including Rev. Jesse Jackson poked fun at G. W. Bush after he was asked what tribal sovereignty meant by Seattle Post-Intelligencer reporter Mark Trahant (Shoshone-Bannock of Idaho) to which he replied, “Tribal sovereignty means that. It's sovereign. You're a ... you're a ... you've been given sovereignty and you're viewed as a sovereign entity,” indicating he did not have a deep understanding of the concept (Bush on
This project has situated the NMAI within its particular historical conjuncture. Chapter III described the construction of American Indian people by non-American Indians in popular cultural texts, to which the NMAI sees itself as a response. Unfortunately, the same dominant frames for describing American Indian people in popular culture described in Chapter III were still present in coverage of the museum’s grand opening, as described in Chapter V, despite the museum’s efforts to dispel stereotypes. Chapter III goes on to suggest pan-Indian identity is culturally constructed by a Western paradigm, but has nonetheless shaped the NMAI. Chapter IV described cultural policy prescribing the material manifestation of the NMAI and the particular political discourses shaping that policy. The chapter ultimately suggested we need new approaches in order to address the problematic ways in which current, Western policy reacts to indigenous issues. Movement in this direction might include a better understanding of what cultural sovereignty means. Chapter V described the economic/political/historical circumstances shaping the physical and philosophical manifestation of the museum and the ways in which it has been received by its various stakeholders. From fundraising to reception, the chapter described the ways in which the drive toward sponsorship constituted the museum from the time of its inception and the importance of positive relations with various stakeholders in the process. Chapter VI provided analysis of the actual physical manifestation of the NMAI itself, investigating the ways in which space, media, architecture, and texts are utilized and relate to the philosophies articulated by the museum. Finally, in the following sections, I will address expectations of the museum and the ways in which analytics like Foucault’s (1991) governmentality help further our understanding.
of it and inform discussions within various disciplines including museum studies, cultural studies, communication/media studies, and American Indian studies.

Perhaps, part of the difficulty in understanding such an institution as the NMAI is the limited frames through which we see it. What would it mean to accept the ambivalent nature of such a site, and to understand its functioning beyond the common deterministic discourses by with which we currently explain institutions? What would it mean to understand the complexities of the museum as part of the solution by which populations are managed?

**Economic Logic and Power/Knowledge Formations**

The particular economic logic of the NMAI and the Smithsonian Institution reveals a great deal about the ways in which the museum has manifested itself. Museum directors are now more likely to be business savvy-CEO types rather than academics (Packer & Coffey, 2004). This was certainly the case with Smithsonian Secretary Lawrence Small, the Smithsonian’s first non-academic/scientist secretary. Small was appointed in 2000, but resigned in March of 2007 due to ongoing investigations about his misallocation of funds (Trescott & Grimaldi, 2007). Although the Smithsonian was already feeling budgetary pressures (see discussion in Chapter V), Small brought with him an unprecedented corporate mentality that ultimately helped the complex to raise a record $1 billion in funds (Trescott & Grimaldi, 2007). In return, Small branded the complex and made exclusive deals granting access/filming privileges of the collections with corporations like Showtime Networks. According to Trescott and Grimaldi (2007), “The result was a culture clash...That offended longtime Smithsonian researchers who thought he was compromising the institution’s values” (Trescott & Grimaldi, 2007).
Congress eventually became suspicious of the “champagne lifestyle” Small was leading after The Washington Post began to publish stories about his spending, including $2 million for home cleaning/repairs and another $90 thousand in unauthorized expenses (Trescott & Grimaldi, 2007). Small, who also pled guilty to the illegal importation of endangered bird feathers for his personal collection, claimed he had to spend large amounts of money in order to court potential benefactors. For example, he oversaw the $80 million donation by Kenneth E. Behring to the National Museum of American History. (Behring is now the namesake of the museum’s building). In addition, Small oversaw the $15 million donation from Boeing Co. to the National Air and Space Museum (Neuman, 2007). Walt Disney World Co. also donated an African Art collection estimated in worth between $20 and $50 million during Small’s tenure (Neuman, 2007).

Certainly, the national museum complex had never experienced so much fund-raising momentum. Allies defended Small’s behavior in light of the money he had brought to the complex. As Roger W. Sant, a member of the Smithsonian’s Board of Regents and chairman of its executive committee, said, “The guy took over a place that was really short of falling apart…There was hardly any fund-raising capability. He’s raised almost a billion dollars personally. What more could we have asked for?” While the investigations into Small’s behavior make apparent the need for more “oversight and accountability” (Neuman, 2007), the nature of such an institution and the current state of political economic affairs is rarely questioned. Although plans for the NMAI were well in place as Small joined the organization, and the arrangement with Congress had already necessitated the drive toward fund-raising, Small oversaw efforts as the museum came to fruition and encouraged a kind of hyper-neo-
liberal economic logic at the Smithsonian. As Chapter IV argued, the neo-liberal turn in museums personified by Small reflects an understanding of culture instrumentally.

The NMAI underwent a series of compromises in order to see the museum materialize including partnerships with corporations and media moguls perpetuating the very same stereotypes the museum claims to be working to “dislodge.”\textsuperscript{150} Partnerships with Ted Turner (the owner of the Atlanta Braves and defender of the “Tomahawk Chop”) and Orion Pictures’ “Dances With Wolves” exemplified such compromises. The massive scale and lack of public funding made various relationships, marketing strategies, and commodified spaces a necessity as described in Chapter V. In addition, the audience for the museum was likely a consideration in decisions to present particularly polemical issues in an abstract manner in common areas of the museum. For example, the treatment of colonization, genocide, and continuing problems of poverty are never overtly addressed. Moreover, divisions in the “pan-Indian” identity are omitted, including information about the American Indian Movement (AIM), the struggle over repatriation and cultural sovereignty, and the United States’ relationship with indigenous people via international affairs. The great emphasis placed on sites of consumerism (the café and gift shops) and sites of affective multi-sensory/multi-media presentations also indicates the museum’s acquiescence to the broader trend seen in many contemporary museums as sites of “fun.” Each of these results are in part effects of their neo-liberal political formation and the various stakeholders to which the museum was responsible.

The value tied to particular objects also reflects the power/knowledge apparatus. In some cases, it is an aesthetic and political value that is attached to them. But, as Ruth Phillips (1998) suggests, the economic logic of American Indian art of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century emphasized the

\textsuperscript{150} As Floyd Favel suggests in an “Our Peoples” video, essentialist images from Hollywood...
value of those rarified objects (objects increasingly valuable because of the effects of genocide and forced assimilation). The same economic logic also drives tourists to “experience” these rarified objects in the NMAI, and the discursive shift signifying the authenticity of American Indian voice does not change that economic logic.

Raymond Williams (1977) calls such practices, which have been formed in the past and are still effective in the present, despite their alternative relationship with dominant culture, the “active manifestation of the residual” (p. 122). We might consider the drive to keep Heye’s collection intact, despite new understandings about collecting Indian culture, as a kind of residual practice, a throwback. Although understood variously, the collections signify something different for different constituents. The same practice still exists in preserving and exhibiting the collection to a mostly white audience. Although it is not the same kind of “salvage ethnography” that drives maintenance of the collection now, still, the collection remains in tact, with the United States Government as “steward.” However, economic logic does not explain everything as suggested at the beginning of this chapter.

Small and the NMAI also witnessed a major shift at the Smithsonian during his presence there. No longer are museums thought of as repositories, but as democratic sites of public dialogue where traditionally marginalized groups enter into public discourse. The same institution, now with more self-reflexive practices, signifies a new power/knowledge relationship where alternative modes of understanding are legitimized. In addition, the new understandings of the museum and the relative object status of its collections also reflect a shift and seen in popular cultural texts throughout the years are “hard to dislodge.”

151 In addition to overseeing the opening of the NMAI, Small was also director when George Bush signed legislation creating The Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American Art and Culture in December of 2003.
in the national cultural patrimony power/knowledge formation.\textsuperscript{152} No longer do Native
American Indian human remains signify national cultural patrimony, they are thought of as
ancestors of “culturally affiliated” groups who bear the right of repatriation. In the discursive
shift, Native human remains are no longer considered objects of study by the majority
culture.\textsuperscript{153} Although the same practice of collecting and preservation exists, it signifies
something else as American Indian people themselves are involved.

Many American Indian people also see the NMAI as a site in which they can gather to
build bonds with other members of their group as with the opening ceremonies. As suggested
in Chapter V, it is a source of great pride and a signifier American Indian people have a
presence in Washington, a site of power. It signifies American Indian people are stronger
players in the production of knowledge and in the power/knowledge apparatus. Although it is
the same institution (a museum), its relative status has also changed.\textsuperscript{154} Part of this, according
to Vizenor’s notion of “survivance”, is a subversion or a re-appropriation.

\textsuperscript{152} The idea of shift in relative object status is borrowed from (Packer & Coffey, 2004).
\textsuperscript{153} Conversely, other objects deemed non-sacred or non-funerary, as “art” (whether functional
or otherwise) or artifact, are still considered national cultural patrimony and part of a collection,
the largest of American Indian objects in the world amassed by George Gustav Heye. But in
considering itself merely the “steward” of these objects for American Indian people, the
museum has also suggested another shift, although arguably this is more of a rhetorical shift as
mentioned. Although Indian groups cannot physically have the majority of their collections
back, they are considered the rightful owners of them (Letter from U.S. House of
Representatives Committee on Resources, Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, Bill Richardson, and Tim
Johnson, March 1, 1995 to Bob Livingston and Ralph Regula, Smithsonian Institution
Archives). But really, while it may be possible for some American Indian groups to de-
accession some of the collections and to visit the collections in some cases, they will never
really have the majority of collections in their possession.
Survivance and Subversion

As described in Chapter V, one of the clearest messages articulated by the museum is the concept of “survivance.” This term, first coined by Gerlad Vizenor (1999) in the edited volume “Native North America,” suggests not only that American Indian people survived genocide, but that they did it with agency and dignity. Vizenor explains survivance is a kind of “tragic wisdom” that has resulted from having lived through the turmoil by subverting the mechanisms of majority culture (Vizenor, 1999, p. 58). As an illustration, he points to trickster stories, humorous tales suggesting American Indians fool White people into believing they are in control. Tricksters, like the crafty tacticians described by Michel de Certeau (1984), manage small, fleeting resistances. They act within the space of another when they do not have a space of their own, as with guerilla warfare. As Phillip Deloria (2004) suggests, this was like the American Indians performing in the Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West Shows or posing for a post-card photograph as described in Chapter III. While they were fetishized and treated as entertainment, they benefited mutually from the fascination majority culture had with them. By playing to the stereotypes, they were in essence “pulling one over” on majority culture, in the process maintaining their sense of humor. And as Vizenor suggests, the concept of survivance also downplays “victimry.”

Although the audience of the NMAI remains a largely White one, the museum differs from the classic trickster scenario because it attempts to dispel rather than play to particular stereotypes, but inherent is still the idea of subversion. The NMAI reproduces the discourse of survivance throughout its exhibits in actual verbiage on text panels and in the “tone” assumed

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154 I borrow the idea of relative object status from Jeremy Packer & Mary Coffey (2004).
155 In particular, Vizenor (1999) is referring to literature. He suggests the many texts produced by Native American Indian writers like Standing Bear, Momaday, Erdrich, and himself are
According to the museum, American Indian people took the tools of “dispossession” like guns and religion and subverted them (Panel in “Our Peoples”). Survivance, a discourse emphasizing “empowerment” by avoiding the articulation of victimization, is used as a technology of the self for the process of subjectification. Such discourses subscribe which particular normative modes of action are conducive to “empowerment” (Greene, 2000).

While some self-identified Native American Indian people argue the museum is not critical enough (Lonetree, 2006; Atalay, 2006), others reported feeling great pride and solidarity in response to the museum (See Chapter V). Some even see the museum as the material manifestation of cultural sovereignty (Cobb, 2005a). Compared to the construction of American Indian identity in public consciousness in the past (as described in Chapter III), the NMAI provided unprecedented opportunities for American Indian people to contribute to texts articulating their identity to majority culture. In this sense, the museum helps constituents to “transfer onto themselves” a sense of “happiness” or “immortality” (Foucault, 1989).

The Expert Discourse, Techniques of the Self, and Governmentality

As mentioned previously, the power/knowledge formation described in this project legitimizes American Indians as experts of their own culture. Although this is now taken for granted, previous power/knowledge formations did not grant American Indian people such status (as described in Chapter IV). As Nicolas Rose (1999) points out, the rise of the expert with modernity and liberalism in the nineteenth century privileged the “rationality” of scientific discourse. Even as “freedom” for the liberal subject was celebrated, a form of “civility” was evidence of the subversion of tools by American Indian writers.
prescribed by which people could self-govern. They were invited to become “entrepreneurs of the self” by appropriating expert discourses into their own vocabularies (Rose, 1992). Science and medical discourses were thought to help people govern themselves. Although it does not privilege the scientific discourse, the latest notion of “giving voice” shifts expertise onto American Indians and validates a claim to authenticity. In addition, as with the community museums studied by Mary Coffey (2004), legitimacy is lent to the museum through the authenticated voice. Indeed, as Chapter VI suggested, such authentication is evidenced in the various photo and video technologies throughout the NMAI indicating its connection with Indian Country. The media within the museum function not only to indicate the museum is modern, but to demonstrate its connection with actual Native American Indian people with photo, video, and aural evidence. Visitors are encouraged to use the mechanisms and discourses provided by the museum in order to act upon themselves.

Governmentality functions through the voluntary participation of citizens following discourses of moral behavior. In order to more efficiently manage the “conduct of conduct” in a liberal government, it is necessary, as Nikolas Rose (1992) suggests, for citizens to act upon themselves.\(^\text{156}\) The process is perpetual as there is always something new a citizen (and an institution like the NMAI) can do to self-improve. For example, the contemporary museum provides increasingly more “interactives,” or communications devices visitors can use to self-educate. Such devices allow visitors to interact with experts (American Indian people) when experts cannot be physically present, and in some limited cases, visitors can consult live expert

\(^{156}\) Although, as Hannah (2000) points out, Foucault tried to avoid problematizing the concept of “the state”, I am conceiving of the state as diffuse, especially as it is entwined in various relations. As Hannah points out, “The state as a purely coercive power is not necessarily of much analytic interest, but a concept of the state which incorporates governmentality would greatly
tour-guides, or “cultural interpreters.” The NMAI provides various experiential forms through which the museum-goer can uncover particular predominant discourses. Some mechanisms are performative in that they literally exercise a particular discourse. For example cultural interpreters perform the museum’s discourse of “giving voice.”

Foucault (1979) calls such mechanisms through which citizens can act, “modern institutions for the improvement and administration of life” (Hannah, 2000, quoting Foucault, p. 2). As Foucault suggests, within governmentality, a historically specific form of power, citizens engage with social institutions, or “techniques of the self,” which guide them in the ways of managing their life. Within the ethnic museum, multiculturalism is considered a form of civility, and the successful cultural citizen (Miller, 1993, 1998) is one who effectively engages with sites that can help one signify multicultural understanding. Effective engagement might mean moving through museum exhibits using interactive devices and other cues, popping into the Mitsitam for a buffalo burger, or signifying a multicultural understanding by buying an expensive art piece from the Chesapeake gift shop. The museum provides the majority culture with the technologies to act upon itself.

As the quotation from Miller in the beginning of this chapter alludes, Foucault’s notion of governmentality includes the concern over how to govern political and moral economies and those micro-moral domains linked up with these larger systems. Ultimately, economy and morality are conflated as is clear in the title of the Dallas Morning Star article promoting an NMAI “cause marketing” fund-raiser, “Buying eco-snacks can save the earth,” (Munsch, 1993). Financial support of educational and multicultural institutions signifies morally upright behavior (and they benefit corporate sponsors with good public relations as described in
Chapter V). It implies it is okay to make profits, so long as corporations help to support moral causes.

One might assume that the analytic of governmentality does not give enough credit to those citizens who function within power relations. (Indeed, as Foucault suggests, nothing is outside of them). However, governmentality as a modality of power is not merely one of hegemony. It is much more fluid and changing, and does not necessarily mean top-down domination by the state. Within every power relation, resistance is inherently built in, and the process is efficient precisely because it involves a delimited amount of governance (Smart, 1983). As Matthew G. Hannah (2000) points out, “The core logic of governmentality involves careful deliberation about whether and how much to regulate, a nuance missed by too exclusive a focus on things like the fiscal mass of the state or tallies of its personnel” (Hannah, 2000, p. 37). Governmentality is an analytic that suggests power is diffuse and that it is not merely repressive, but dynamic and shifting. Within a “well regulated liberty” (Rose, 1992, p. 7), “Individuals…must come to recognize and act upon themselves as both free and responsible, both beings of liberty and members of society, if liberal government is to be possible” (p. 5).

The National Museum of the American Indian is indeed a deeply ambivalent site, and looking at it through one lens would provide only a reductive reading. As Ruffins (1997/1998) suggests, the NMAI, as with all “ethnic” museums arising in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries will require further investigation as new shifts become apparent in museological understanding. As Edward Rothstein (2006) aptly points out, “Museums are morphing,” and that will likely always be the case so long as museums exist. There is an expectation for contemporary museums to take on highly convergent forms, to include interactive, virtual
technologies, and to increasingly serve constituents beyond their physical structures (as with the “Fourth Museum”). Museums, in their convergent form sit at a multidisciplinary intersection, and the study of their relationship with culture requires an array of perspectives. From those concentrating on the aesthetic value of the museum to the ways in which space, media, architecture, and the ordering of objects are used in tandem to reflect multi-vocal understandings, to the collaborative process in which it now engages, the museum is in fact morphing, and it is all interdisciplinary scholars can do to keep up. Sitting at the crossroads of media, museums, culture, communications, policy, and American Indian issues, the NMAI is a complex phenomenon sure to evoke interest for years to come.

**Project Limitations and Areas for Further Study**

This study was limited in a number of ways, but attempted to express the complexities of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). The NMAI is just one specific cultural site, and this project emerges at a relatively young point in the museum’s lifespan. It captures one particular moment for the museum and the larger ethnically specific museum trend in which it sits. The NMAI will continue to change with new moving exhibits, and eventually, each of the cultural areas will change as well.

The majority of visits to the museum by the researcher took place during the summer, and a study during an alternative time of the year or a more longitudinal study might have yielded different results. A larger or different pool of interview/survey participants, archives, and texts studied would have changed the study. In addition, the researcher approached the museum through a particular theoretical frame and understanding of power. There were also
some serious barriers to entrance, especially related to the Cultural Resources Center in Maryland where the NMAI’s planning documents *The Way of the People* are stored as discussed in Chapter II. Better interpersonal relations with the staff there or networking may have yielded a more comprehensive understanding of the facility.

A different perspective may have resulted from a more focused study of the Cultural Resources Center in Maryland or the NMAI’s George Gustav Heye Center in New York. Other researchers may have been more attracted to different aspects of the museum like the café or individual objects within the collections to gain a different understanding. Yet another approach might have focused on the museum’s offerings to American Indians through “The Fourth Museum” and reception to it.

As I will describe below, a more comprehensive study of the ethnic museum genre might have compared the NMAI to some of the others emerging within this category like the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the future Smithsonian Institution National Museum of African American Art and Culture signed into legislation in December of 2003, or even to a larger-scale tribal museum like the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center in Connecticut. The NMAI is just one specific site, and other emerging museums may or may not reflect similar aspects of the same discursive order.

Because emerging ethnic museums like the NMAI understand themselves as dialogic, communications technologies, there is great opportunity for various disciplines for future study. The proliferation of media within present a new and unique opportunity for scholars to understand the ways in which museums act as media and are mediated. In addition, the naturalization of ethnic museums starting in the 1960s has largely gone unquestioned (Ruffins,
1997). Their importance in identity construction and nation building cannot be stressed enough, and the neo-liberal shift to private museum funding has many implications for such sites.

It appears as though some more recently emerging exhibits may have been influenced by the NMAI’s collaborative model. For example, the Field Museum in Chicago attempted to incorporate some degree of collaboration into the exhibit “Ancient Americas,” opened March 9, 2007. Clearly, Field Museum planners spent some time looking at the NMAI’s model (indeed, the exhibit features a photo and quotation from NMAI Director Richard West on one of its wall panels). Although the Field Museum privileges scientific discourse as a “natural history” museum, the exhibit does assume some of the same signifiers reflecting the discursive shift. It attempted to consult individuals who identify as Indian or indigenous and placed quotations from them throughout the exhibit. It is also apparent the Field Museum is articulating a form of pan-Indian identity, including all Indian people of the Americas (or “Natives of the Western Hemisphere”). As visitors make their way through the exhibit, they exit through some of the older sections yet to be updated and encounter a disclaimer from Field Museum curators. It suggests that what visitors are about to see does not reflect their current understanding of what is the appropriate presentation of American Indian culture and people. It includes linear halls, lifeless looking mannequins, and wall labels and is devoid of interactive devices.

The point in drawing this quick comparison is that while both sites are idiosyncratic, they reflect the shift in power/knowledge formation. The Field Museum’s exhibit places

157 Science and “rational” modes of communicating clearly win the day within the Field Museum exhibit. One video on ancient civilizations calls religion “ideology,” and suggests societies can be broken into three realms: ideology (religion), military, and government. (Clearly privileging the notion of separate spheres). Another interactive device allows visitors to act as archaeologist and put excavated shards together to make a virtual pot.
American Indian voice in juxtaposition with scientific discourse without really integrating it. (They are placed side by side as though two different theories are being offered). While the NMAI privileged American Indian perspectives from the beginning in its planning process, the Field Museum has been revising as it goes along, attempting to combine science with American Indian beliefs. For example, one video briefly relays several indigenous creation stories and then explains the Bearing Strait theory and DNA. Areas ripe for further study would include a more systematic analysis of efforts within the Field Museums and other like sites that attempt to present American Indian “voice.” In addition, comparisons between such museums and the NMAI would no doubt yield a better understanding of the entire phenomenon of “voice” and the ethnic museum as a whole. The degree to which such museums see themselves as dialogic sites and followed cues from the NMAI would also be points of great interest for scholars in a variety of fields.
APPENDIX

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Miranda J. Brady’s work addresses the intersection between race, gender, class, and identity construction in popular media and public/private spaces like the museum, cultural policy, and the relationship between power, knowledge, and discourse. This includes notions of discursive public utilities, platforms for dialogic engagement, and communications technologies broadly construed within a neo-liberal formation. She explores the socio/political/economic situatedness of such technologies and the various ways in which they are productive. Her work, although situated within media/communications studies, is interdisciplinary in orientation and also seeks to inform the study of culture, museums, and American Indian issues. She employs a variety of approaches in her work including ethnomethodology, interviews, surveys, archival research, and discourse analysis.

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