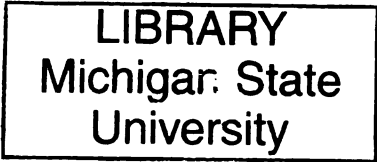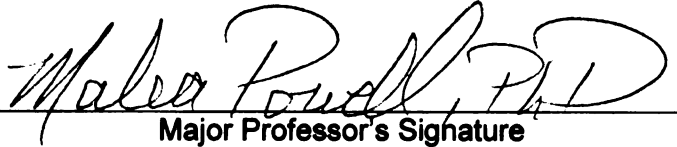This is to certify that the
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MEDIA PRAXIS: READING CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

By

Andréa Diane Davis

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
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for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

MEDIA PRAXIS: READING CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

By

Andréa Diane Davis

Media praxis is a useful interdisciplinary approach for reading and analyzing storytelling as a cultural institution in order to investigate *how* storytelling participates in the production of culture. The mechanisms and processes by which people and institutions negotiate discursive contexts and competing ideologies often remain invisible. And yet, it is these very mechanisms, processes, and negotiations that participate in the production of culture by shaping and influencing how culture is valued, taught, created, distributed, displayed, and so forth.

In this dissertation, I employ the media praxis approach to four storied sites involving the National Museum of the American Indian and its cornerstone collector Edward H. Davis. In each of the storied sites, I examine storytelling situated in the social, historical, and cultural discursive contexts in which it occurred in order to make visible the rhetorical processes that contribute to the production of culture. My purpose is not only to determine *how* storytelling participates in the production of culture in these storied sites, but also to test the effectiveness of the interdisciplinary approach. Ultimately, what my analysis shows is that the National Museum of the American Indian is a double-rhetorical space—a place of "both/and."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not be possible without the support and guidance of many people. First, I would like to acknowledge my committee for their tremendous support and contributions to my scholarship. Each of my committee members has provided me with a wealth of knowledge and amazing gifts of mentoring and modeling. I feel particularly indebted to Dr. Malea Powell whose guidance, mentoring, support, and friendship have had a tremendous impact on my life. Thank you.

I also wish to acknowledge my parents and family members whose support and encouragement have been the impetus for my success.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to acknowledge and thank my friends who have made graduate school possible. I would especially like to acknowledge Sue, Dundee, Aimée, Michele, and Angela. Without each of you, this project would not be possible.

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CHAPTER ONE

MEDIA PRAXIS: INTRODUCTION

Fadó

> *I will tell you something about stories,*
> *[he said]*
> *They aren't just entertainment.*
> *Don't be fooled.*
> *They are all we have, you see,*
> *all we have to fight off*
> *illness and death.*
> *You don't have anything*
> *If you don't have stories...*

I begin with these words by Leslie Marmon Silko (1977) not because they are a quaint and cliché entry into the discussion of storytelling, but because these words mark an origin in my journey. During my MA program, these words with which Silko begins her novel *Ceremony* intrigued me enough to launch me on an academic journey toward understanding storytelling.

In my Master's thesis, I studied the *what* of storytelling. I analyzed Silko's novel to show how, through storytelling, she linguistically, structurally, thematically, and narratively created a hybrid text. I argued with individuals who claimed that stories like Silko's belonged solely in folklore or literature. I brought Wallace Chafe, Deborah Tannen, and William Labov to the table to demonstrate structural and linguistic analyses of the narrative sequence as well as of oral and literate features of Silko's novel. I wanted

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to know *what* was happening in the text; and, as best as one can do in a thesis, I believe I understand how narrative sequence, structure, plot, character, theme, and so forth work together to create a story.

With my dissertation, however, I ask *how*. *How* does storytelling do cultural work? I believe that it is in the combination of the text along with its performance that is the *how* of storytelling. My focus in this dissertation thus is on this combination of *story* and *telling*. In this dissertation, I analyze four storied sites of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and its cornerstone collector, Edward H. Davis (my great grandfather). It is important for me to note here that while some readers may wish to see more of the museum and its objects in my dissertation, my dissertation is about *storytelling*. Specifically it's about those stories (and their telling) that the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) explicitly tells in the creation of "a Native place," in the presentation of "the authentic Native voice and perspective," and through cultural continuity. Furthermore, I situate the museum's stories through the story of my great grandfather's ethnological collecting practices and the social, historical, and cultural contexts his stories provide. In this sense, the storied sites I explore are a constellation of interwoven stories that inform and affect each other.

Research Interests and Background

In 1989, when the Smithsonian Institute first announced it had created the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and would be assuming responsibility

for the Heye Foundation[1] collection I was particularly intrigued. I wanted to know what would become of the objects that my great grandfather collected for Heye and how they would be used in this new museum. At this early stage, I sent correspondence to the Heye Foundation regarding these questions, but was informed that the planning process for the NMAI would take several years.

In November of 2004, shortly after the opening of the NMAI in Washington, DC, I had an opportunity to visit the museum. I knew immediately that there was something different about the museum, as they claim, and I knew that I wanted to do something related to the NMAI for my dissertation even though I had just started my PhD program at that point. I thought at first that I wanted to find objects on display at the NMAI that had come from my great grandfather. I wanted to examine how the museum contextualizes and displays these object in comparison to the ways in which my great grandfather represented them through his stories and documentation. And, there is some possibility for that type of study. Out of the approximately 8,000 objects on display in the NMAI, 38 of them are from my great grandfather's collection. Several are in the *Our Peoples* gallery representing the Tohono O'odham of Arizona, and the Huichol from Jalisco and Nyarit, Mexico. The rest are in the *Our Lives* gallery representing the Kumeyaay from San Diego, CA.

However, as I spent more time in the NMAI, I became much more interested in how the museum functions *as an act of storytelling* and how it uses various multimedia to accomplish the telling of stories. I had the most incredible fortune in meeting Craig

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[1] The Heye Foundation collection consists of those objects collected by George Gustav Heye and incorporated as the Museum of the American Indian, New York.

Howe and hearing of his utter disappointment and frustration in working on the *Our Peoples* gallery. And I also met curator Emil Her Many Horses who spoke in glowing terms of his work with the eight tribes represented in the *Our Universes* gallery. Rather than answers, these meetings provided a lot more questions about how the museum functions and what makes one gallery successful while another is so poorly received that it makes Native people angry and merely confuses non-Native visitors.

Then I met Robert Warrior and had the privilege of walking through the NMAI with Robert, Malea Powell, and several other Native individuals. I still vividly remember Robert's rising anger as he finally sputtered in disgust that there was just no politics in the NMAI. I told him of some of the "back story" that Emil Her Many Horses had related to me about the collaborative partnerships with Native peoples in the *Our Universes* gallery and about the long process the museum engaged in with Native communities to find more "equitable" representations of Native peoples. I hoped to convince Robert that while the museum wasn't "the answer" it had at least made some positive steps for Native peoples. Robert raised a good point. He demanded to know why that "back story" wasn't more explicit and visible to visitors in the museum. I left wondering if that "back story" *should* be more explicit and wondering what stories the museum *did* tell.

Although I did not originally set out to complete a dissertation on storytelling, it is perhaps not surprising that I have done so. The disparate strands of my research are unified through storytelling. I am interested in identity and representation and how they play out through digital and cultural rhetorics. In this dissertation, I ask *how* storytelling participates in the production of culture at the NMAI, especially where identity and

representation are concerned. Sometimes we *create* our identities through storytelling. Sometimes we *represent* our identities through the stories we tell. The connection between storytelling, identity, and representation is manifest in the way that the telling of stories shapes and influences the production of culture.

Developing Media Praxis

Figuring out how to analyze storytelling of this nature has not been easy. In order to examine storytelling as a cultural institution, I experimented with several possibilities. Institutional critique such as that offered by Porter, Grabill, Blythe, and Miles (2000) offers critique of institutions such as academia whose mechanisms are intimately tied to its physical manifestation and/or structures of hierarchy, so that didn't really help me unless I was studying the *museum per se* as my object of study. I found that folklore defined storytelling too narrowly to consider both the story and its performance through various genres, modes, and mediums. Similarly, discourse analysis focuses on the words and narrative structure. Narrative theory offers a rich and robust body of work, but here again it would be difficult to make a case for something like landscaping or architecture as telling a narrative. After much reading around, I found no suitable research methodologies to address the production of culture through something as ephemeral, yet complex and embodied, as storytelling *through the particular modes and media of my storied sites.* As a result, I chose to develop my own interdisciplinary approach to examine *how* storytelling does cultural work at the NMAI.

The interdisciplinary approach I developed to address this constellation is "media praxis," by which I refer to the ways in which visual, oral, aural, alphabetic, and digital "texts" are composed through/with multimodal means of production along with the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which they are created. In other words, I am interested in how discursive formations shape modes of production and the implications for identity and representation. I am especially interested in semiotic modes, multisensory perception, embodied practices, and multiple literacies. My interests boil down to a phenomenological approach to explore issues of identity and representation through a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices. All of this plays out through how we both read and produce through various genre, modes, and mediums of communication, perhaps especially through storytelling.

In assembling this approach, I draw from my interdisciplinary background and education. I've spent most of my life studying storytelling in one form or another. Along the way, my academic studies taught me about rhetoric, material culture, museum studies, colonization, post-colonial studies, Native rhetorics, archival research, visual and digital rhetoric, space and place, historiography, sociocultural theories, linguistics, discourse theories, and more. It is through these discursive formations that I develop media praxis as an interdisciplinary approach for examining the storied sties of the National Museum of the American Indian and Edward H. Davis. For example, during my MA program in Teaching English as a Second Language, I was exposed to linguistics through grammar, contrastive rhetoric, discourse analysis, and issues of second language acquisition. Three specific concepts from this time shape and inform media praxis as an interdisciplinary approach: Labov's theory of narrative structure, Goffman's concept of

face work, and discourse as socially constructed and culturally mediated, proposed by researchers like Vygotsky, Brice-Heath, Gee, Tannen, and Chafe, to name a few. In developing the media praxis approach, I also draw upon Foucault's (1972) concept of discursive formation, extending this concept to define discursive contexts as the broader social, historical, and cultural locations of discursive formations.

Dissertation Overview

In chapter two, I situate the National Museum of the American Indian in the context of the development of museums. I introduce the four storied sites I investigate, providing discussion for their selection. I define important concepts, including storytelling and cultural production. Finally, I describe and explain the media praxis approach and the methodological practices I employ.

In chapter three, I analyze the stories that Davis and the NMAI tell to create particular identities. Analysis of the creation of identity through storytelling in the storied sites draws in large part from archival research conducted at the Newberry Library and the Smithsonian Cultural Resource Center. I problemetize these stories using the media praxis approach in order to illuminate *how* storytelling consciously and unconsciously communicates values, practices, beliefs, knowledge, and ideologies. It is through making these mechanisms and processes visible that media praxis illustrates some of the ways that storytelling participates in the production of culture.

In chapter four, I analyze two additional storied sites at the NMAI. The first storied site is the construction of "a Native place" through architecture and landscaping.

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Additionally, I examine the NMAI's presentation of "the authentic Native voice and perspective" through their multimedia exhibitions of tribal cosmologies in the *Our Universes* gallery. I make a deliberate choice throughout my dissertation to privilege Native sources whenever possible. For example, in reading and analyzing the landscape and architecture of the NMAI, I draw not only upon the museum's press kits, publications, and staff, many of whom are Native, but also from Native scholars such as Craig Howe, whose work in ethnoarchitectonics provides a valuable theoretical lens.

Finally, chapter five reflects on the media praxis approach, summarizing my analysis of the storied sites, and providing discussion of the relative effectiveness of the interdisciplinary approach. I also discuss possible contributions to future scholarship including its contribution to institutional critique by directing attention to locations for fostering change or transformation.

CHAPTER TWO

READING CONTEXTS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO STORYTELLING

This dissertation investigates *how* storytelling participates in the production of culture at the National Museum of the American Indian through a media praxis approach to four storied sites explored in tandem. In the process of examining how storytelling participates in the production of culture, the media praxis approach also provides a means for critique by illuminating those stories the museum tells well, and those stories the museum fails in telling. The NMAI participates in a constellation of stories through which it tells stories to invent itself as a "new museological paradigm." The museum also participates in other stories simultaneously. Thus, in addition to three storied sites of the NMAI, I also examine the storied site of Edward H. Davis, cornerstone collector of the Heye Foundation. Davis' rhetorical practices as an ethnological field collector, along with the stories he tells represent a historical narrative in which the NMAI participates through its legacy of the Heye Foundation.

In this chapter, I situate the National Museum of the American Indian in the context of the historical development of museums. I introduce the four storied sites I investigate, providing discussion for their selection. I define important concepts, including storytelling and cultural production. Finally, I describe and explain the media praxis approach and the methodological practices I employ.

The Museum Context

The role that traditional[2] museums play in national cultural patrimony is important to understand in comparison to the National Museum of the American Indian. In claiming to usher in a "new paradigm of museology," the NMAI positions its identity in oppositional response to the ideological foundations of traditional museological models. Traditional museums function as educational and cultural tools that relationally define a variety of subjects, including other peoples, according to mainstream perceptions and views (Alexander, 1990; Anderson, 2006; Bennett, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Orosz, 1990). Thus, at any given time, a complex layering of ideological processes operates through museums. Perhaps the single most important ideological concept underpinning museums is that they perform as an apparatus of colonization and control, wielding knowledge as power, and exoticizing the "other."

Museums have a long history[3] from at least the Greek era to contemporary times. Over time, the museological models shift, but museums remain a tool of empire. Because the NMAI positions its identity in oppositional response to more contemporary

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[2] A note about terminology: I use "traditional" or "modern" in the sense of the model most commonly referred to as a "temple model" in which museums function in a transmission mode. This model remains contemporary in many museums, so I do not describe this as a "past" model. When describing the NMAI's museological model, I use the terms "new," (the NMAI's term) or "21st century." The NMAI model, also referred to as a "forum model" is a cultural constructivist model.

[3] For a history of museums, see Alexander (1996) and Bennett (1995). For further discussion of the function of museum models see also Anderson (2006), Hooper-Greenhill (2000), Karp & Lavine (1991), Morrissey & Worts, (1998), Orosz (1990), Richards (1993). Although museological models have shifted over time in concert with the political and ideological shifts in society, these shifts do not occur in linear process, but rather are recursive and overlapping. Often this failure to evince contemporary knowledge and understanding about representation and display is said to result from the enormous financial cost of revising and updating museum exhibitions.

versions of the traditional model of museology, I focus on the modern museum's

emergence through nationalism and the drive of manifest destiny for these issues are

most relevant to Davis' stories as well as to the Heye legacy the NMAI inherited. In this

traditional model of museology, museums became temple-like monuments to glory,

national identity, and imperial expansion (Alexander, 1990; Anderson, 2006; Bennett,

1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Orosz, 1990). Traditional museums function as tools of

colonization through discourse, legitimating power and control, and through

representation and display.

Traditional museological models function as tools of colonization through

discourse. Traditional museums are "celebratory narratives of European [and American]

superiority" (Pratt, 1992, p. xi). As Malea Powell (1992) notes, dominant discourse, and

its accompanying stereotypes, are a "paracolonial tale" through which "the colonized

'other' is created and maintained in discourse as well as in materiality" (p. 399). Stories

told about the self can be liberating and have transformational possibilities. However,

stories about "others" are often dangerous and have colonizing possibilities[4]. Stories

about "others" are often systems of domination. In this sense, I refer to a system in

terms of creation, valuation, distribution, display, and so forth. Thus, the processes of

selection, interpretation, representation, and display within a museum form a system of

domination. Emma Pérez (1999) notes that in colonial discourse, the "other" is spoken

about, spoken for, and ultimately deemed incapable of speaking (p. xv).

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[4] Pratt (1992) describes this differentiation as autoethnographic versus ethnographic texts.

Further describing the power of information to dominate, Richards (1993) notes that understood as an archive[5] of information, story about the "other" is "an apparatus for controlling territory by producing, distributing, and consuming information about it" (p. 17). The traditional model of museum-*cum*-colonization certainly applies to the Heye Foundation and the Museum of the American Indian, but also to the NMAI, which inherited the Heye objects and legacy. The NMAI only exhibits roughly 8000 objects— approximately 1% of its archive holdings. Thus, the rhetorical processes of selection, interpretation, discourse, and display of such a massive archive are even more salient.

Through the rhetorical processes of selection, interpretation, discourse, and display—the system of museum storytelling—museums also serve to legitimate power and control. A primary mechanism in legitimating power and control is the apparent neutrality of museums and the myth of objective truth. Anderson (2006) posits that the census, the map, and the museum are all signs of modernity believed to be objective and neutral, but that they are technologies that assert value and control (qtd. in Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 17). These technologies are extremely important because they are naturalized processes (Brady, 2007). According to Hooper-Greenhill (2000), "Museums thus have the power to remap cultural territories, and to reshape the geographies of knowledge. These are political issues, concerned with the opening up or closing down of democratic public life" (p. 21). In other words, in telling stories about the "other," museums control cultural interpretation for public consumption through normalizing its

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[5] In *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*, Thomas Richards (1993) defines the imperial archive as "not a building, nor even a collection of texts, but the collectively imagined junction of all that was known or knowable, a fantastic representation of an epistemological master pattern, a virtual focal point for the heterogeneous local knowledge of metropolis and empire" (p. 11).

own selection, interpretation, and display as neutral and objective. However, the idealized interpretations through discourses of supremacy often create a utopian state, or imagined community (Anderson, 2006; Richards, 1993). That is to say, museums create an anthropology of the imaginary. These mechanisms of domination, power, and control continue to be relevant to the NMAI because, despite its new museological paradigm that seeks an "authentic Native voice and perspective," the institution still exercises these mechanisms through its selection of which tribes to represent, how to represent them, the design of the facilities, and the discourses of interpretation and representation.

Finally, museums function as a tool of colonization by exoticizing the "other" in the rhetorical processes of selection, interpretation, display, and exclusion. Traditional museum representations result in "historicization of other peoples as 'primitive'" (Bennett, 1995). This is perhaps especially true for Natives whose bodies, art, and artifacts continue to be represented as objects for display. A primary mechanism in colonization through representation and display is the control and assertion of mainstream aesthetic values. Richards (1993) explains that some things, like another's culture, remain unknowable, "but even in its unknowability it remains fully susceptible to the conditions of containment imposed by the aesthetic means of Western representation" (p. 70). In its attempt to accumulate an archive of knowledge, to remap culture, and to affirm Western notions of aesthetic value, the dominant culture asserts hegemonic power structures inherent in the rhetorical act of defining and maintaining stereotypical representations of a subordinate group (P. Deloria, 2004, p. 8). This point is perhaps most significant for the NMAI because one of its primary goals is to counter such hegemonic stereotypical views. The NMAI claims that, through Native perspective

and collaborative community interpretation and representation, it counters traditional

models, in a sense creating what Pérez (1999) names a decolonial imaginary. The essence

of her claim is that representation has transformative possibilities when it is enunciated

outside of colonial ideology, or perhaps inside, but in opposition. However, Karp (1991)

notes, "The master narrative of the museums on the Mall still asserts the dominion of

nature[6] over *some* cultures. . . . and in the collection of what will be the National Museum

of the American Indian only serves to underscore how the aesthetics and history of the

dominant culture define the missions of these museums" (original emphasis, p. 384). In

other words, the NMAI cannot truly oppose or enunciate outside of colonial ideology

because of its mainstream institutional identity and ideological foundations.

Storied Sites

In this project, I employ a media praxis approach to investigate the production of

culture at the National Museum of the American Indian through storytelling in four

storied sites. The four storied sites serve to investigate, problemetize, and contextualize

different aspects of the NMAI's claim to usher in a "new museological paradigm." These

storied sites include identity-building stories told by Edward H. Davis; identity-building

stories told by the National Museum of the American Indian; the NMAI's storying of "a

Native place" through its architecture and landscaping; and the NMAI's storying of "the

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[6] Regarding institutional affiliations, the NMAI attempts to remain ambivalent about its disciplinary identities, sometimes affirming Natural History while at other times claiming Living History. By and large, the Smithsonian Institution falls under the genre of Natural History and many of the planning documents for the NMAI employ this term.

authentic Native voice and perspective" through the multimedia exhibitions in the *Our Universes* gallery. While the creation of "a Native place" and the presentation of "the authentic Native voice" serve the museum in developing a master narrative as a "new museological paradigm" of museum representation, Davis' story articulates the historical exigency of the NMAI, problemetizing their claims. Together, these stories, along with the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they operate make up story*telling* in this project.

Storied Sites of Identity-building

Edward H. Davis tells stories about himself, establishing his identity as a "friend," advocate, and ethnologist of Native peoples. Davis exemplifies many of the values, practices, and beliefs of mainstream American society at the turn of the 20th century. His practices are emblematic of many of the professed values of "rugged individualism," "self-reliance," and the belief that Indians were "a vanishing race." In addition to the ways in which his story is so typical of his social, historical, and cultural contexts, Davis is also intimately connected to the Museum of the American Indian, which later became the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. The archival records by and about Davis, the thousands of photographs he produced of Native peoples, and the articles he published in magazines and scholarly museum-related venues provide ample evidence of stories he told to create these particular identities.

Similarly, the NMAI tells stories to establish its identity as a "new paradigm" of museology that includes the "authentic Native voice," through collaborative partnerships with Native peoples, and correctives of damaging stereotypes. The NMAI's collaborative

partnerships involve the selection and presentation of Native communities employing tribal elders or other individuals selected by the tribes to serve as community curators. Additionally, the NMAI deploys what it calls cultural continuity through the inclusion and focus on contemporary Native peoples as well as historical representations in order to correct long-standing stereotypes of "a vanishing race." I examine the NMAI's stories through its mission statement, publications, brochures, and press materials.

In using the media praxis approach to read and analyze these identity-building stories (and their telling) at the NMAI, I use each of the storied sites to inform each other. Unlike a traditional case study that would examine these storied sites side by side, the media praxis approach allows for an interweaving of the two to show how each shapes and constrains the other.

Storied Sites of Representation and Display

There are also stories of representation and display. The NMAI claims to create "a Native place" through its use of landscaping and architecture. In establishing this Native place, the museum deploys specific landscape and architectural designs and techniques in order to recall pre-contact landscape and spaces. The museum alerts visitors to the exigencies for this aspect of the "new museological paradigm" through its publications, brochures, press materials, and a series of educational presentations offered during the museum's first two years in operation.

The NMAI also claims to provide the "authentic Native voice and perspective" through its use and display of the stories of Native cosmology in its *Our Universes* gallery. In the *Our Universes* gallery, the NMAI re-presents cosmologies of eight different tribes

of the Western Hemisphere. The museum tells stories of its collaboration with Native communities to present these cosmologies through its publications, press materials, and via presentations by the gallery curator. Additionally, the museum re-presents the cosmology stories in collaborative partnership with the eight tribes through multimedia such as interactive kiosks, audio recordings, photographs, video, and object displays.

I chose to examine storytelling at the NMAI through the media praxis approach because I am fascinated with the ways in which the NMAI utilizes so many modes and mediums to communicate its stories both literal and thematic. More importantly, in my research and investigation of the NMAI, along with the many conversations I have been fortunate to have with Native peoples and their experiences with the museum, I have come to believe the new paradigm of museology at the NMAI naturalizes colonization in perhaps new ways. It is my hope that using media praxis as an interdisciplinary approach for reading and analyzing these storied sites will create a space to foster change by making visible the naturalized strategies of colonization and control at the NMAI.

Storytelling as a Cultural Institution

Story

Although my focus in on story*telling*, I want to take a moment here to talk about stories. By story, I do not mean traditional notions of narrative. Narrative is a sequential and factual account of information. Narrative may employ flashback or dream sequences to break from a linear progression of time, but typically is linear. Some stories have narratives, but not all narratives are stories. I base my understanding of narrative as the

reporting of events in a sequence of "narrative time," designed to represent a "true" or "factual" event from common definitions in narratology[7]. Traditional narratology is very specific about sequence and structure, and in keeping narrative separate from storytelling, which is often relegated to folklore studies. Confusingly, however, more recent trends in scholarship conflate story and narrative, which suggest to me that scholarship is moving into a blended concept of story and narrative. For example, contemporary resources such as Wikipedia offer an accepted definition of narrative as "a story that is created in a constructive format (written, spoken, poetry, prose, images, song, theater or dance) that describes a sequence of fictional or non-fictional events." In other words, in some fields, recent scholarship no longer sees the need for distinguishing between content, context, structure, or its delivery, including form.

For my purpose in this project, I focus on *stories* as agents of cultural work through the combination of their content and the contexts in which they are produced and delivered. While stories contain narratives of events and the entities involved in the events, it is the act of telling the story and the contexts in which the story participates that I focus on in this dissertation. The difference, for me, lies in the cultural work that the telling of stories accomplishes. The fact that stories are alive and dynamic is an important concept for thinking about what stories and their telling can *do*. In her article describing the praxis of storytelling as an embodied and disembodied struggle between stories and theories, Devika Chawla (2007) explains that stories are alive, "stories breath their own breaths; they are organic and dynamic" (p. 19). A further example of this can be seen in the ethnographic work of Henry Glassie (1982) in which he studied the

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[7] See: Carter, 2003; Fisher, 1985; Mitchell, 1981; Ricoeur, 1981.

function of Irish storytelling as an integration of material culture and oral literature. In his study, he states emphatically that stories are "alive and throbbing with importance" (p. 33).

In many respects, my understanding of story and storytelling as a cultural institution is greatly influenced by the Indigenous framework of the stories I examine. Many of the stories told by the National Museum of the American Indian and Edward H. Davis incorporate or retell stories originally told by Native peoples. Some of the NMAI's stories are designed to emulate Native oral traditions. It is for this reason as well that I employ the theoretical frameworks of Native scholars and established in Native rhetorics to analyze the four storied sites of the National Museum of the American Indian and Edward H. Davis.

Storytelling

Storytelling, in this project, is a deliberately rhetorical discursive formation that uses and/or produces culturally relevant codes. Storytelling is located in a particular social, historical, and cultural context. Storytelling is an embodied rhetoric in which the culmination of what story *is* and what story *does* functions as the discursive formation through which storytelling participates in the production of culture. Storytelling is a form of meaning-making and interpretation and operates recursively with respect to time. Above all, storytelling is creative.

Storytelling is deliberately rhetorical. Writing about the intellectual work of Sarah Winnemucca and Charles Eastman[8], Malea Powell (2002) states that the stories these Native intellectuals tell are "deliberately rhetorical, consciously and selectively interpretive with a specific audience's needs in mind" (p. 406). This deliberate rhetoricity is perhaps the aspect of story that allows these Native intellectuals to construct their own identities, which assert differences even while existing within a dominant ideological system. Identity is expanded through integrating oral traditions, experiences, histories, and even dominant discourse into stories. In fact, claims Powell (2002), it is the *use* of dominant discourse that enables the making and remaking of Winnemucca and Eastman's identities. Storytelling is also deliberately rhetorical as theorizing through language play. Barbara Christian (1987) writes that through language play, storytelling as theorizing unmasks power relations and reveals "dynamic rather than fixed ideas" (p. 68). For example, both Davis and the NMAI employ storytelling as a deliberately rhetorical means of constructing particular identities for different audiences.

Storytelling is a discursive formation that uses and/or produces culturally relative codes. A discursive formation is a rule governed set of material practices that involve discourse as socially constructed and culturally mediated (Foucault, 2002; Gee, 2001;

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[8] Sarah Winnemucca (ca. 1841 - October 17, 1891) was an early advocate for Native people. She spoke several languages including Spanish, English, and several Native languages and thus served as interpreter and peacemaker among many peoples. She continued her advocacy through delivering hundreds of lectures and publishing her work in English. Although she spent the last few years of her life retired, it is likely that Davis was aware of her criticisms of US Indian agents, which he shared.

Charles Eastman (February 19, 1858 - January 8, 1939). Educated at Dartmouth and Boston University, Eastman served as a physician at the Pine Ridge Agency where he "witnessed the events that culminated in Wounded Knee" (cover). Eastman was also an advocate for Native peoples and published, lectured, and was active in politics including helping to form the Boy Scouts. Davis is quite likely to have known about Eastman as his contemporary.

Goffman, 1959; Hall, 1997; Labov, 1966, 1972; Tannen, 1982, 1993, 1998). Foucault (2002) introduces discursive formation as a "dispersion of statements" or an archaeology of knowledge, referring to not only discourse itself, but also the negotiation of knowledge and power within layered and historicized sets of discourses that construct a subject. Storytelling as an enunciative function does important cultural work. Hall (1997) further defines discursive formation as a "cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society" (p. 6). In other words, discursive formations are not just discourses that work together, but also all of the attendant contexts and cultural codes that function along with and in between the discourses, which limit and constrain "object/topic" construction and constitution. The most obvious example of this is the NMAI. As a museum, its very function and purpose is to construct "the American Indian" as a subject and object. Through its exhibitions, the NMAI tells stories about Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere by selecting, presenting, interpreting, and mediating the stories told by Natives. Thus, the NMAI effects and maintains power relations between mainstream society and the colonized "other" represented by the institution.

Storytelling is located in a particular social, historical, and cultural context. Julie Cruikshank (2002) and LeAnne Howe (2002) describe storytelling as an epitomizing event—those stories that call forth historical events that may or may not have actually occurred, but that dramatically capture and summarize conflicting tendencies within a process of change. What is important to understand about this idea of an epitomizing event is that the historical and cultural contexts of storytelling need not be factual (in

whole or in part) and need not be located in any linear sense of time. As rhetorician

Walter Fisher (1985) notes, "We speak of the social construction of a reality erected,

experienced, and conducted largely through many forms and modes of story-telling [*sic*],

and we write of a symbolic world that is unified and maintained through the tales told by

us and our media" (p. 73). What is important is the lived experience of the culture, which

may call upon a variety of historical and cultural contexts. In terms of the storied sites I

examine in this dissertation, this aspect of storytelling is perhaps most visible in the *Our*

Universes gallery at the NMAI. The gallery displays the origin stories of eight different

tribes of the Western Hemisphere emphasizing how the origin stories are both currently

relevant and relevant in the tribes' pasts. The origin stories represent important tribal

histories located outside any sense of linear time and thus represent epitomizing events.

The gallery employs multimedia such as interactive kiosks, audio recordings, images of

past and current tribal lands, portraits of tribal elders and community curators, and a

variety of other representations in order to emphasize the social, historical, and cultural

contexts of the origin stories as well.

Storytelling is an embodied rhetoric. One of the interests I have in multisensory

perception and phenomenological approaches is that I find in them means for exploring

storytelling as an embodied rhetoric, one in which the "particularities of linguistic

culture, historical moment, and social responsibility" become explicit through various

semiotic modes of expression (Kates, 1997, p. 61). Storytelling is never just about the

words being spoken in the present moment; stories are the accumulation of situated

knowledge[9] that shape, influence, and produce identity and representation (Maracle, 1994). As an embodied rhetoric, this means that stories not only express and interpret through the various senses of the body, but also that storytelling provides for metaphors of the body. For example, Devika Chawla (2007) describes her paternal grandmother who, *through stories*, "carried the weight of memories, nostalgia, and loss" (p. 18). The idea I draw on here is that stories allow her grandmother to carry weighty concepts and ideologies that the body alone cannot bear. The concept of storytelling as an embodied rhetoric plays out in many ways throughout the storied sites I investigate in my dissertation. One example is the ways in which Davis told stories of his friendships, advocacy, and ethnological collecting practices that emphasized the dangers and discomforts to his body. Even in the photographs he took of Native peoples, Davis inserted his own physical body into the photographs in contrast to the Native bodies he captured on film. His stories emphasize his own corporal presence in order to legitimate his ethnological practices for a white, mainstream audience.

Storytelling functions as an act of meaning-making and interpretation. To Gerald Vizenor (1990) stories, specifically as oral histories, are a "visual reference to experience," which he explains in an interview with Laura Coltelli:

> All right. You can't understand the world without telling a story. There
> isn't a center to the world but a story. I want to distinguish "story." It's
> not a rehearsed or repeated story, it's a visual reference to experience . . .
> and what I mean by visual is not television or films but recollection of

multiple senses of an experience so that actually when you call upon an

experience in memory and when you decide to tell a story from memory

you can tell it from a number of points of view; I mean you just see it and

hear it and feel it, and you can just step in and talk about it and it takes a

different shape and a different bit of humor. (p. 156)

Vizenor's statement explains story as a way of understanding the world, but also calls

upon the sensory and semiotic nature of storytelling that defines it as an embodied

rhetoric. Looking to Davis' autobiographical publication, it is evident that storytelling is

an act of meaning-making. Davis tells several stories of his interaction with Native

peoples in an attempt to make meaning of his life in relation to the peoples among

whom he lived, traded, and collected. Yet his meaning-making through storytelling is also

evident in his struggles to justify his life's work and practices to a white, mainstream

audience.

Storytelling is recursive in respect to time. Ochs and Capps (1996) write that story

"is born out of experience and gives shape to experience. In this sense, narrative[10] and

self are inseparable. Self is here broadly understood to be an unfolding reflective

awareness of being-in-the-world, including a sense of one's past and future." (pp. 20-21).

In another example, Chawla (2007) asserts that "storytelling—the task of knowing our

history in the oral words of our loved ones—was the only way to know a lost world and

live in a new one" (p.19). In Chawla's sense of storytelling, it is a process of looking back

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[10]Although Ochs and Capps use the term "narrative" in this passage, their article conflates the use of "narrative" and "story" as interchangeable. I employ it here in the sense of storytelling rather than narrative, which I understand to be the reporting of events in a sequence of "narrative time," designed to represent a "true" or "factual" event (Carter, 2003; Fisher, 1985; Mitchell, 1980; Ricoeur, 1980).

in order to look ahead. Cruikshank (2002) also argues for storytelling as a means for understanding past, present, and future because, as she says, stories are not merely data for institutions such as the academy or the museum to interpret, but rather they are "the oldest form of historical practice or history making with its own rules and methods of verification" (p. 23). Finally, Glassie (1982) describes storytelling as "one person's attempt to coordinate multiple responsibilities to time, to the past event, the present situation, the future of the community" (pp. 47-48). For example, in an attempt to counter long-standing stereotypes of Native peoples as a "vanishing race," the NMAI enacts what it calls cultural continuity. In order to enact cultural continuity, the NMAI negotiates responsibilities to both historic and contemporary representations of Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere.

Storytelling—regardless of its medium—has the power to create identity, relationships, and history. Métis writer Lee Maracle (1994) claims that story is both a "place of prayer" and a method of persuasion:

> Words are not objects to be wasted. They represent the accumulated knowledge, cultural values, the vision of an entire people or peoples. We believe the proof of a thing or idea is in the doing. Doing requires some form of social interaction and thus, story is the most persuasive and sensible way to present the accumulated thoughts and values of a people. (pp. 322-323)

In the sense of social interaction, knowledge, values and the "vision of an entire people," Maracle argues for storytelling as shaping and creating identity and representation. Similarly, Khyla Russell (2007) notes, "The *mihi* [story] I recite in the presentation of this

paper identifies, reinforces, and communicates my identity and position in my tribal, historical, natural, and cosmic world." Thus, storytelling not only creates and establishes identity, but also reinforces existing identity, and historical and cultural contexts in the telling. This can also be seen in the ways that Davis and NMAI employ storytelling to create specific identities. In just one example, Davis uses storytelling as a means for creating and legitimating his identity as a professional ethnologist, despite the fact that he was completely self-taught in ethnological practices. Davis' education in art hardly prepared him for a life of traveling and collecting among more than 25 different tribes of the Western United States. Therefore, he used storytelling to create, justify, and maintain his identity as a professional in the field through his many publications in popular press as well as museum monographs.

Stories not only affect individual identity, but also establish community and "reinforce webs of relationships" (C. Howe, 2002, p. 163) Stories extend to a larger context of "social, historical, and political processes" (Cruikshank, 2002, p. 3). This is important because it illustrates how "story creates culture and beliefs, the very glue which binds a society together" (L. Howe, 2002, p. 40). Ultimately, stories reinforce kinship and community ties as well as inform social memory (Cruikshank, 2002; C. Howe, 2002). As Ochs and Capps (1996) further note, "We come to know ourselves as we use narrative to apprehend experiences and navigate relationships with others" (p. 20). In terms of community connections and kinship, in re-telling and analyzing the stories of my great grandfather I re-establish and re-confirm my familial kinship, learning my own family histories as I story his experiences.

To restate, storytelling is a deliberately rhetorical discursive formation that uses and/or produces culturally relevant codes, and is located in a particular social, historical, and cultural context. Storytelling is an embodied rhetoric in which the culmination of what story *is* and what story *does* functions as the discursive formation through which storytelling participates in the production of culture. Understanding storytelling in this way is central to using media praxis as an approach for reading and analyzing the storied sites that this project takes as its focus because the complex layers of this definition form the framework of my analysis.

Cultural Institution

For my purposes in this project, cultural institutions are the locations (both structures and mechanisms) that have institutionalized a particular set of elements. These elements include the values, practices, beliefs, and knowledge perceived as important to a culture, community, or society and its members. Included in this definition are those institutions that instantiate cultural values and identities articulated through interpretive practices and cultural representations; this includes physical places such as museums, libraries, or academia, as well as ceremonial spaces such as marriage, adoption, or storytelling. Based on the complex definition of story and storytelling in the preceding sections, I define storytelling as a cultural institution because it represents a ceremonial space in which values, practices, beliefs, and knowledge are maintained and transmitted.

The media praxis approach does not provide an institutional critique in the sense that Porter et al. (2000) define it. That is, media praxis does not offer a plan of action for intervention; however, it does provide several of the important components of

institutional critique. Porter et al. note that "the relations between the material and rhetorical is an important component of institutional critique" (p. 627). A media praxis approach to storytelling examines precisely those relations. Furthermore, Porter et al. claim that an important stage of institutional critique is analysis or first-hand observation of institutional practices. The media praxis approach also offers a means to provide this observation and analysis.

Culture

To understand how I use the idea of "cultural institution," it may be useful to briefly sketch how I define "culture"—a challenging concept to even begin to define. Nonetheless, culture, in my view, consists of the symbols that represent values, practices, beliefs, and knowledge of a group of people who share a common goals, language, geography, religion, and so forth. I do not intend a reductive definition of culture; it is a very complex layering of the relationships that bind people together through what is important to them. I draw my definition from the vast range of common[11] and field-specific definitions addressing the nature and function of culture. For example, in *Culture & truth: The remaking of social analysis*, social anthropologist Renato Rosaldo (1993) explains that, "Culture lends significance to human experience by selecting and organizing it" (p. 26). Culture incorporates the range of human activities from the everyday to the transcendent. Further, culture is a learned phenomenon that mediates every human action.

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[11] See Williams, R. (1983) *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society* (revised); or Bennett, T., Grossberg, L. & Morris, M. (2005) *New Keywords: A revised vocabulary of culture and society.*

The authors of *Fieldworking: Reading and writing research*, Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2002) define culture as "an invisible web of behaviors, patterns, rules, and rituals of a group of people who have contact with one another and share common languages" (p. 3). Museum studies scholar Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000) offers a rather lengthy treatment of culture, synthesizing and expanding upon Williams' (1983) definitions from *Keywords*. She notes two ways in which culture is customarily considered: as objects or a body of works, and as "personal cultivation" or taste (p. 11). She further elaborates on four complex and constitutive views of culture offering, finally, that culture consists of sets of practices; is concerned with the "production and exchange of meanings"; involves signifying practices where knowledge is a major component; and that culture "can transmit dominant values, but can also be seen as a site of resistance" (pp. 12-13). The important aspect to understanding culture, she claims, "is to identify the discursive context within which it is used" (p. 13). Stuart Hall (1997) emphasizes the importance of culture as a process, or a set of practices. Hall further explains, "culture is about feelings, attachments and emotions as well as about concepts and ideas" (p. 2). One example of a set of practices that contributes to the production of culture is what Michel de Certeau (1984) describes as concepts of spatial practices, or of "making do" through strategies and tactics.

Institution

Many of these definitions of culture emphasize patterns, practices, human activities, or behaviors that encompass culture. In addition, I would argue that these components of culture also constitute an institution. In this project, I define institution

as the customs, behavioral patterns, or relationships of importance to the identity of a people, community, or society. Because the definition of institution and that of culture are so closely aligned, some definitions elide the two meanings defining a cultural institution as the institutionalization of those values, practices, beliefs, and knowledge that are important to a group or society. What interests me beyond this definition, is to consider *how* cultural institutions such as storytelling participate in the production of culture.

Production of Culture

The production of culture involves the constellation and negotiation of multiple discursive formations resulting in the commodification of cultural objects such as texts, art, music, etc. Relationally, the production of culture also involves the consumption of culture, though it should be noted that in this dissertation I focus exclusively on the production of culture. The production of culture is not imposed, but rather it is negotiated within the cultural contexts in which it operates. Cultural production is also closely linked with cultural construction. For example, museum displays constitute a discursive formation involving several discourses such as anthropological or educational (Hall, 1997, p. 191). These often-competing discourses work to "construct particular objects as desirable and valuable ethnographic artefacts [*sic*]" (Hall, 1997, p. 192). These "particular objects" then take on symbolic cultural meaning and value (Coser, 1978). The system in which these particular objects are created, valued, distributed, displayed, and so forth constitutes the production of culture. Storytelling operates in the production of culture through such a system including creation, valuation, distribution, and so forth.

Media Praxis

In this project, I use media praxis, an interdisciplinary approach for reading and analyzing storytelling as a cultural institution, in order to investigate *how* storytelling participates in the production of culture. By media, I refer to form and material, which can even be our bodies. By praxis, I refer to the combination of the underlying theoretical framework along with a set of practices for carrying out the investigation. In using media praxis, I employ a phenomenological approach to examine the constellation of storytelling (in various modes and media) along with site-specific discursive contexts (social, historical, and cultural included). In employing a phenomenological approach, I draw heavily on Merleau-Ponty (2005), referring to the ways in which different modalities affect or constrain multisensory perception. Loftin (2003) describes multisensory perception explaining:

> . . .most humans can process simultaneous sensory inputs—visual,
> auditory, haptic (pressure, texture, and temperature), olfactory, gustatory,
> and vestibular. . . .we live our lives immersed in a multisensory world, and
> our brains are clearly capable of extracting useful information from more
> than one sense simultaneously. (p. 56)

My interest in multisensory perception is its relationship to an embodied rhetoric. Thus, in defining storytelling, in part, as an embodied rhetoric, I am concerned with the ways that multisensory perception shapes and influences storytelling[12].

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[12] Multisensory perception shapes and influences storytlistening as well, though that is not the focus of this project.

Consequently, my interests in media praxis as a means for understanding storytelling as a cultural institution lie in the embodied, multisensory perception imbricated in the production of culture through stories and their performance. This approach opens up spaces for examining the interplay between identity and representation and gives a greater sense of the dynamic and complex nature of storytelling. Therefore, it begins to explicate *how* it is that storytelling operates in the production of culture—or how particular contexts can both frame and shift meaning and interpretation, thus providing a powerful contribution to institutional critique. My goal is to articulate the media praxis of storytelling in order to make visible those contexts and processes that contribute to identity and representation and thereby frame meaning and interpretation.

Methodological Practices

The methodological practices I employ are close reading and analysis of storytelling in the four storied sites. Through the media praxis approach, I examine the intersection of the site-specific discursive contexts (social, historical, and cultural) with the rhetorical processes employed in site-specific storytelling. In other words, through rhetorical analysis of specific claims in comparison to the corresponding storytelling, I examine discrepancies between what is said or claimed and what is done. These discrepancies illustrate the underlying ideological foundations that shape and constrain storytelling, both consciously and unconsciously.

In reading and analyzing these four sites of storied practice, I employ standard research methods such as rhetorical analysis, close reading, and material artifact analysis

including texts of various modes and genres. What is useful about the media praxis approach is the means by which the interdisciplinary approach draws these standard methods together to investigate a richer and more deeply contextualized storied site.

I begin each of the two "data analysis" chapters by contextualizing the stories through a site-specific theoretical framework. For example, in chapter three I analyze two storied sites of identity-building after presenting an overview of material rhetoric. Both Davis and the NMAI tell stories of their interaction with and representation of material objects and even material bodies as a means for establishing particular identities for different audiences.

Similarly, in chapter four, I analyze two additional storied sites of the NMAI examining representation and display deployed to support their identity claims. To contextualize the storied sites of representation and display, I begin by presenting ethnoarchitectonics as a theoretical framework that informs each of the two storied sites in the chapter. In claiming to present "a Native place," the NMAI deploys landscape techniques and architectural codes that represent "Nativeness" in order to support their claim to be of Natives, by Natives and for Natives. This claim and their deployment of landscape and architecture is complicated by the fact that 98% of visitors to the NMAI are non-Native and thus a huge constituency the NMAI gears its presentations toward. Additionally, supporting the claim to "authentic Native voice and perspective," the NMAI deploys multimedia exhibitions to represent eight tribal cosmologies in the *Our Universes* gallery. I analyze these multimedia representations with respect to ethnoarchitectonics in order to understand how the dimensions of event-centered tribal histories are encoded in the design of the gallery and its exhibits.

I've chosen these four storied sites for three reasons: my personal research interests lie in the interplay between identity and representation; these stories are most evident and readily available in the archival materials; and these stories mutually inform one another. The results of this analysis illustrate that one of the ways that storytelling participates in the production of culture is by shaping and influencing possibilities for meaning and interpretation.

In the next chapter, I analyze the ways in which Davis and the NMAI tell stories to create particular identities. I argue that the rhetorical processes they employ in this deliberate and rhetorical creation of identity reveal underlying and unquestioned ideologies that shape and constrain the possibilities for meaning and interpretation thereby participating in the production of culture. I focus on the discursive contexts and rhetorical processes Davis and the NMAI employ to construct specific identities. Employing the two storied sites to inform each other in terms of identity-building, I examine the discursive contexts of the rhetorical practices of collecting and collection formation at the turn of the 20th century in Southern California. I analyze archival records such as catalogs, receipts, letters between Davis and George Heye, and field notes. I also examine publications including Davis' popular press articles and the mission statement, publications and press materials of the NMAI. In addition to the site-specific social, historical, and cultural contexts, I also draw upon material rhetoric as an analytic lens because it is a discursive formation common to both storied sites. Both Davis and the NMAI establish their identities and position themselves through their interaction with material objects—explicitly and implicitly.

CHAPTER THREE

READING RELATIONSHIPS: STORYTELLING THROUGH RHETORICAL AND HISTORICAL DISCURSIVE CONTEXTS

Edward H. Davis and the National Museum of the American Indian deliberately and rhetorically construct specific identities through telling stories about the work that they accomplish and the products of that work. For Davis, this identity is one of "friend" to and advocate for the Native peoples among whom he worked. He further claimed an identity of a "scientific" ethnologist working to document and preserve Native culture through art and artifacts (Davis, 1931). The NMAI claims that in its collaborative and cooperative efforts with Native communities it ushers in a "new paradigm" of 21st century museology that, through its "authentic Native voice and perspective," is more equitable than past museum representations have been for Native peoples. Furthermore, the museum claims to counter long-standing stereotypes about Native peoples through cultural continuance (West, 2000, p. 7). To put it differently, Davis and the NMAI use storytelling to construct particular identities and to perpetuate these identities.

In this chapter, I use media praxis to problemetize the identities that Davis and the NMAI claim. I argue that media praxis makes visible the rhetorical processes that Davis and the NMAI employ in creating their identities through storytelling and thus reveals how underlying, and often competing, ideologies shape and constrain possibilities for meaning and interpretation. The underlying rhetorical processes and ideologies are made visible through analysis of the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which the storytelling takes place. Furthermore, I situate the stories that Davis and the NMAI tell

through material rhetoric (a common discursive context) as an analytic lens that

illuminates social, historical, and cultural contexts. In doing so, the close reading and

analysis reveals some of the deep-seated and unquestioned ideologies that shape and

constrain the stories Davis and the NMAI tell.

Material Rhetoric

Material rhetoric provides a theoretical lens underscoring social, historical, and

cultural discursive contexts, allowing for analysis of the rhetorical processes Edward H.

Davis employed in constructing his identity as a "friend," advocate, and ethnologist of

Native peoples. Material rhetoric also provides a theoretical lens to analyze the rhetorical

processes the National Museum of the American Indian engages in constructing its

identity as a new type of national museum that ushers in a "new paradigm" of

museology, collaborating as partners, providing the "authentic Native voice and

perspective," and countering long-standing stereotypes about Native peoples (West,

2000, p. 7). Two definitions of material rhetoric inform my understanding of this

important theoretical framework. I draw heavily from Malea Powell's (2009) definition of

material rhetoric as "objects that are produced by human interactions with various media

and materials" (personal communication). Powell's emphasis is on meaning that is made

and attributed through human interaction. I also draw upon Barbara Dickson's (1999)

definition of material rhetoric as "a mode of interpretation that takes as its objects of

study the significations of material things and corporal entities—objects that signify not

through language but through their spatial organization, mobility, mass, utility, orality,

and tactility" (p. 297). Dickson further suggests that a primary concern of material rhetoric is studying "material objects that represent the human body, because of the way these representations are then taken up by and inscribed upon corporal bodies" (pp. 297-98). In emphasizing human interaction with and through various modes and media, these two definitions also reinforce the idea of storytelling as an embodied rhetoric as discussed in chapter two. The attribution of meaning through interaction with objects is the crux of the rhetorical process that interests me. I do not perform close readings of objects for the stories they tell, rather I examine how Davis and the NMAI implicitly *use* material objects in the claims they make about their identities.

In terms of the storied sites, this means that the objects and artifacts that Davis collected, and which later ended up in the National Museum of the American Indian, are not merely to gaze upon for aesthetic enjoyment. The material objects and artifacts carry and transmit meaning, values, and connections between people. Explaining the value that collectors and museums place on objects, Morrissey and Worts (1998) note:

> Objects are a link to this larger context of time and place, between personal experiences and that of the human experience. Objects can symbolize, recall, or illuminate something that has meaning to us—a relationship, a place, an accomplishment, a time. As institutions, museums collect objects for the same reasons . . . (p. 147)

As the definitions above emphasize, it is Davis' *use* of and the NMAI's *use* of or interaction with the objects and artifacts collected that allowed them to construct particular identities.

Two interdependent features of material rhetoric establish it as an excellent

analytic lens for analysis of the two storied sites, including the role it plays in

interpretation and the ways in which it can reveal unquestioned or unconscious

ideologies at play in the collecting and identity-building processes. Mvskoke writer Joy

Harjo (2000) states in her poem "there is no such thing as a one-way land bridge," that

"The story depends on who is telling it" (p. 38). Material rhetoric is an inherently

interdisciplinary field spanning semiotics, historical archeology, cultural anthropology,

cultural geography, folk life studies, history, and other fields that rely on objects and

artifacts as evidence (Schlereth, 1985, p. ix). The inferences made within each of these

disciplines about human activities and cultures based on the material evidence has led to

"emotional controversies," because what gets to count as meaning, as knowledge, and as

important is different depending on the ideological standpoint of whomever is

performing interpretation and representation of cultures (Kingery, 1996). This idea of

interpretation is important to each of the storied sites because it indicates some of the

rhetorical processes of identity-building. Davis' selection and interpretation of objects

and artifacts as worthy of preservation and documentation was a rhetorical act governed

by his social, historical, and cultural discursive contexts and ideologies. Likewise, the

selection and interpretation of objects and artifacts used to represent diverse Native

peoples in the NMAI say as much about the museum as about the peoples it represents.

Focusing on the means by which collections are formed further implicates

cultural value systems, not only for the ethnologists like Davis seeking to form museum

or historical records, but also in terms of the "range of behaviors" exhibited by private

and institutional collectors of material objects that they accumulate (Akin, 1996; Fowler

& Fowler, 1996; Kristiansen, 1996). Shove et al. refer to such behaviors as "doings," which they claim are "performances, shaped by and constitutive of the complex relations—of materials, knowledges, norms, meanings, and so on—which comprise the practice-as-entity" (p. 13). Akin (1996) provides an example of how collector behaviors help to explicate social and political ideologies explaining, "The process of taking items of importance to Native Americans and transforming them into showcase trinkets placed on the mantelpiece was a graphic display of Euro-American political and economic domination" (p. 111). Furthermore, Schlereth (1985) notes that researchers must continually remind themselves that the "historical evidence" only represents surviving data and not a complete picture (p. 14).

Storytelling through Historical and Rhetorical Contexts: Edward H. Davis

Through his ethnological fieldwork and its products, Edward H. Davis told stories that deliberately and rhetorically crafted his identity as a "friend" to Native peoples, as their advocate, and as a serious ethnologist conducting "scientific expeditions" (Davis, 1931). In order to illustrate some of the ways that storytelling participates in the production of culture, I discuss the historical context of Davis' time and analyze the stories Davis told to create his identity. These stories include excerpts from archival records (including catalogs, field notes, photographs, and personal correspondence), and excerpts from Davis' publication—an autobiographical piece published in a popular magazine. The stories I analyze implicitly connect Davis'

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rhetorical processes to the objects he collected because it is through his collecting-as-entity that Davis was able to position himself as friend, advocate, and ethnologist.

General Historical Context

The historical context of the turn of the 20th century in America illuminates some of the ideologies Davis embodied. Davis' rhetorical processes reveal three primary ideologies embodied in his practices: the idea of "the Indian" as a "vanishing race"; the ideal of "rugged individualism"; and the concept of nostalgia. An "indefatigable collector," Davis spent well over half a century, from 1887 until his death in 1951, travelling, living, trading, and collecting among Native peoples, preserving what he believed to be "a vanishing race" (Davis, 1931; Quinn, 1965). In his publication "Pursuits of a Museum Collector," Davis states:

> I convinced myself that if the evidences of Indian culture were to be
>
> preserved for history, educational, and museum purposes, the collecting
>
> would have to be started while there was still something to collect. I
>
> began gathering up mortars and metates, bows, arrows, stone implements,
>
> domestic articles, and every available specimen of Indian arts and crafts.
>
> (1931, p. 2)

As Davis indicated in this passage, he believed strongly that Native people were becoming culturally extinct and that it was up to individuals such as him to preserve Native cultural heritage. In his publications and field notes, Davis often repeated the mantra of "a vanishing race," perhaps as a justification for his actions. This ideology governed his purposes prompting him to collect ancient extant artifacts and to

requisition new ones from the various Indigenous peoples among whom he lived and traded.

Davis is emblematic of ethnologists of his time in his belief in "rugged individualism" and the need to follow his destiny "out west" where life remained "uncivilized," and the land remained a "magnificent, unspoiled, virgin playground" (Davis, 1931, p. 11). In *Mystic Chords of Memory*, Michael Kammen (1991) notes the ideological shifts in America particular to the period around 1870: "A powerful presumption lingered on (far longer in the United States than in Europe) that government bore virtually no responsibility for matters of collective memory, not even for the nation's political memory" (p. 55). Continuing, he notes the do-it-yourself ethos of America's individualist identity of the time, "If people wished to commemorate an anniversary, celebrate a battle, or save a historic site, they would have to take the initiative. The time, energy, and above all the money must come from them" (p. 55). Davis epitomizes this do-it-yourself ethos. Even though he rebukes the term "adventurer," in his publications he extensively highlights maverick acts in collecting:

> During the years that I've been collecting among the Indians I have gathered specimens sufficient to fill one entire floor, representing approximately 12,000 square feet of floor space, in the Museum of the American Indian. . . . In traveling among [Native peoples] I have journeyed tens of thousands of miles with wagons, pack animals, boats, trains, motor trucks, automobiles, and afoot. Many of these journeys have been frought [*sic*] with hardships and privation. (1931, p. 9)

I find it interesting and telling that Davis describes his expeditions as if he alone did all of these things without the help of the many guides and hired help that made his journeys possible. His rhetorical processes and storytelling demonstrate Davis' commitment to the ideology of individualism.

With the rise of nationalism, nation building, the myth of the "Wild West," and continued westward expansion, nostalgia and a great sense of loss spurred many individuals such as Davis to begin collecting and preserving the Native cultural heritage (and peoples) they wished to possess (Anderson, 2006; Kammen, 1991; Richards, 1993; Slotkin, 1992). Davis often spoke with great fondness of his ethnological expeditions because they hearkened back to a "simpler" and "freer" time. Davis noted, "These trips were the joy of my life, the freedom, the exhilaration of camping under the stars, either high up in the Pines and Cedars or on the desert in the Cactus and Ocotillo, but always the great unfenced open spaces..." (qtd. in Quinn, 1965, p.21). In fact, Davis was so fond of the sense of freedom he felt in the "unfenced open spaces," and he so romanticized his life, that it was the subject of one of his poems:

> *With Mother Earth for a couch,*
> *To sleep under the fragrant conifers;*
> *To breath the purity of the ranges;*
> *To watch the procession of the constellations;*
> *To listen to the music of the wind harps of the*
> *sierras;*
> *To leave care, worry, responsibilities behind us;*
> *To be in harmony with nature at all times;*
> *To live simply, to think severely, to love deeply,*
> *to be content;*
> *And to learn patience and tolerance from the mighty*

mountains;

That me thinks is to be happy. (field notes, no date)

Davis' use of language throughout his publications, catalogs, and field notes implicates

him in nostalgia as he often referred to places he traveled as "unmarred by civilization"

or other such terminology. The process of selecting material for interpretation, ordering

it, and the discourse used to describe and define the material (and its users) inevitably

(re)inscribe ideological beliefs.

California Historical Context

In addition to the national mainstream ideologies that influenced Davis'

rhetorical processes, the ideologies of early California shaped Davis' practices as well. In

fact, Davis constructed his identity and rhetorical processes framed as oppositional

response to the historical context of California. When Davis first settled in the San

Diego "back country[13]," of California and began documenting his Native neighbors and

collecting art and artifacts from Native peoples in 1887, California had already seen more

than a century of violence and colonization. The Spanish first colonized California in

1769, with the establishment of the first mission and presidio in San Diego. To establish

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[13]After moving from New York, Davis and his family settled in Mesa Grande approximately 65 miles North East of San Diego near Lake Henshaw, Mount Palomar, and famed Ramona. The novel *Ramona* written by Helen Hunt Jackson (1884), tells the story of racial discrimination and hardship. "The impact the novel had on the culture and image of Southern California was enormous. Its romanticization of Mexican colonial life gave the region a unique cultural identity and its publication coincided with the arrival of railroad lines to the region, bringing in countless tourists who wanted to see the locations in the novel" (Wikipedia.com; Quinn, 1962). The novel was instrumental in the California government acknowledging the plight of some Natives, affecting the establishment of reservations for tribes dispossessed of their lands.

additional missions and support the colonizers, the Spanish enslaved Native peoples throughout California and along the Gulf. By 1823, there were 21 missions and several military presidios along the coast of California from San Diego to Sonoma[14]. In 1836, in the aftermath of the Mexican independence from Spain, Mexican landowners took over the mission lands. Over the course of Spain's nearly 70-year reign, the population of Native peoples in California was reduced by 100,000 people (Archibald, 1978; Campo Kumeyaay, 2009; Castillo, 1998; Forbes, 1971).

Only a few decades before Davis' arrival, the United States fought and won the Mexican-American War and signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, effectively granting instant citizenship to the approximately 10,000 Mexicans living in the territory that would become California. Following the gold rush in 1848, many whites and foreign immigrants, including Chileans, Peruvians, Basques, and Mexican miners from Sonora, moved into California. According to the *Ethnic Historic Site Survey* by the National Parks Service, the influx of whites was so prodigious that "despite this Latino immigration, the Spanish-speaking population of California fell to 15 percent by 1850, and to four percent by 1870" (2004). This increase in white settlement of California was in part due to California's admission to the Union in 1850 as a Free State and the directive of manifest destiny propelling more and more Euro-Americans to "go west."

During this time, Native peoples were hunted for government-sanctioned bounties, forced onto reservations and *rancherias* to work in forced labor situations, or left to starve. B.D. Wilson writes of state and federal policy toward Indians in 1852:

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[14] San Diego is located in Southern California at the border of Mexico. Sonoma is some 530 miles north of San Diego, just over halfway up the coast of California.

The opinion then current among Californians [...] was that destiny had

awarded California to the Americans to develop, that the aboriginals were

no asset to the state, and that wherever they interfered with progress they

should be pushed aside. The state proceeded to implement this opinion

by authorizing military campaigns against Indians alleged to have

committed depredations and by accepting the bills for such work as a

charge against the state treasury. (Wilson & Caughey, 1995, p. xxx)

This was a call for nothing less than the total extermination of Native peoples in

California. According to the California Native Heritage Commission, the California

Indian population in 1845 is estimated to have been approximately 150,000; by 1855, the

population dropped to 50,000 (Castillo, 1998). The Campo Kumeyaay Nation claims

that, "The population of Indians in California dropped by 90% from 1850 to 1860"

(2009). Moreover, by 1900 fewer than 16,000 Native peoples survived in California.

Thus, when Davis began collecting Native art and artifacts and documenting Native

peoples in 1887, he worked hard to create an identity that would distance him from the

perpetrators of violence and colonization.

Rhetorical Processes

One of the first rhetorical moves Davis made when he moved to Mesa Grande

and began observing and documenting his Native neighbors was to establish himself as a

"friend" to Native peoples. In doing so, Davis cultivated an identity as a trader among

the Indians—a subtle distinction from collector. Davis claimed that his "mission [had]

long been primarily that of trading with them. It differs only in that I have operated by a

series of expeditions among many tribes of Indians instead of having a permanent

trading post. . ." (1931, p. 3). To conduct himself as a trader made his acquisition of

Native objects and artifacts appear more in line with reciprocity. Indeed, his records and

publications are rife with examples of the food, clothing, tobacco, and other gifts he

routinely brought to the Natives with whom he worked. Furthermore, Davis recognized

a diversity and intelligence in Native peoples that most whites failed to recognize at the

time. Davis noted, "I doubt if the average person, or even the Indian trader of long

experience in dealing with a single tribe, has any conception of tremendous differences I

have found in dealing with various tribes of Indians" (1931, p. 3). Throughout his

publications, field notes, and catalogs, Davis noted incredible variations in languages,

customs, appearances, values, and artisanship among some 25 different tribes[15] of

California and Northern Mexico. Repeatedly, Davis' notes and catalogs comment on

exceptional ingenuity and skill among Native artisans, as well as on the warm friendships

he cultivated among many tribes.

However, Davis' depictions of the Native peoples he worked with are

problematic. In the same publication in which he described Native peoples as diverse,

intelligent, and skilled individuals, he also described Natives as "pathetic," "savage," and

"childlike" in their trust and faith, once it is earned. Davis decried the harsh living

conditions, unbearable poverty, and disease that Native peoples suffer resulting from the

Euro-American invasion into "their land." Yet even as Davis refuted popular notions

about Natives, he reinforced them by describing specific tribes such as the Yaqui, "who

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[15]Davis noted that he traded and collected among Modoc, Klamath, Piute, Yuma, Cocopah, Chemehuevi, Mojave, Hualapai, Pima, Papago, San Carlos Apache, Tonto Apache, Fort Apache, Apache, Yavapai, Pueblo, Navajo, Seri, Yaqui, Southern Pima, Mayo, Huichol, Cora, Maricopa, Paipai, and Kilewa (1931, p. 9).

kill with no compunction" (1931, p. 7). These contradictory statements illustrate how the

stories Davis' told and his collecting-as-entity helped him to shift between audiences—a

type of interpretation and meaning making—and reveal deep-seated and unquestioned

ideologies that shaped and influenced Davis' rhetorical practices.

Davis had two purposes in establishing himself as a "friend" to Native peoples.

On the one hand, being a genuine friend—and I've no doubt that he was genuine—

enabled Davis to successfully live and trade among more than 25 different tribes. By all

accounts, Davis was welcomed with warmth and hospitality wherever he went. On the

other hand, Davis cultivated these friendships for the express purpose of obtaining

objects, artifacts, and information "in a purpose that is purely educational" (1931, p. 1).

For example, Davis became the "blood brother" to Cinon Duro, the last hereditary chief

of the Kumeyaay, and through his esteemed relationship was able to participate in

ceremonies of great importance as a ceremonial chief. In 1907, Davis participated in the

last Eagle Dance allowed in California—a sacred ceremony commemorating the death of

Cinon Duro, his blood brother. Nevertheless, despite the sacredness of this ceremony,

Davis ensured that his friend from the *San Diego Union* was there to report on the

ceremony and Davis' son Henry took photographs. Even if Davis had permission from

the tribe to photograph the ceremony, it is unlikely that he made the full scope of

publication known to the Kumeyaay. Such ceremonies are typically not available to any

public due to their sacred nature and one would expect that the respect inherent in

friendship would have had greater influence on Davis' behaviors. Also problematic is

Davis' acceptance of his honorary position as ceremonial chief without any record,

discussion, or acknowledgement of his responsibilities to the Kumeyaay resulting from this relationship.

Similarly, the Seri of Tiburon Island purportedly made Davis a "medicine man" of their tribe in 1923. Davis earned their trust, but he also "convinced them that [he] was capable of performing certain feats which to them are black magic, but which were, in truth, simple chemical experiments" (1931, p. 3). In addition to the ethical questions of Davis' admissions, it is problematic that Davis assumed only whites would read his article published in *Touring Topics*, the magazine of the Automobile Club of Southern California at the time. Davis' unquestioned belief in the impending extinction of Native peoples influenced his rhetorical practices in establishing his identity as friend to Native peoples, compelling him to act with occasional ethical abandon for the sake of "educational and museum purposes" (Davis, 1931). Davis would be horrified to think that he had acted unethically, because his friendships were genuine. Nonetheless, because he so internalized his belief in "the vanishing race," he had no way to question such mainstream ideologies. The truth, of course, is that Natives peoples continue to thrive and survive. Both the Kumeyaay tribe and the Seri who exist today and experience resurgence in their populations are just two examples of this.

Davis not only cultivated his identity as friend of Native peoples, but he also worked hard to advocate for his friends. Davis' advocacy for Native peoples took shape in rhetorical practices of various forms. Davis' museum catalogs and personal correspondence with George Gustav Heye repeatedly noted ways in which Davis advocated for Natives. For example, in a catalog entry dated July 28, 1927, Davis directed a note to Heye stating:

By the way, I bought that large olla basket you wanted for $20. I paid the

woman $25. It was a bargain at that price—it was marked $35. It was

made by Andrea Cuero of Volcan Mts.—10 mi. from here—she had to go

50 or 60 miles to secure the material which does not grow on the Volcan

Res. (catalog).

Although Davis' commentary also served to justify his expenses, in this simple act of

explaining the distance the artisan must travel to secure materials, Davis advocated for

greater appreciation (and payment) for Native artists. In another example from his

catalogs, Davis informs Heye that, "Roberto Thomson wishes to be remembered. It was

through his help, I secured the Seri balsa in 1922 & we were on the Island so long,

friends thought we had been eaten up" (personal correspondence, Jan. 25, 1948). Davis'

logs and field notes are riddled with reminders that he believed it was important to pay

for every photograph, to trade for every object, and whenever possible, Davis noted

individual artisans for the baskets, pottery, and other material objects he collected. These

examples all served, for Davis, as forms of advocacy for Natives.

Considering material rhetoric and Davis' rhetorical practices again reveal

problematic issues—discrepancies between what Davis said and what he did. Davis and

Thomson had a very close friendship from at least 1922 through the end of Davis' life

and yet, Davis gives very little credit to his guide and interpreter. Thomson served as

Davis' guide and companion on nearly every expedition after they met, especially those

in Northern Mexico closer to Thomson's home in Hermosillo. If Davis was such an

advocate for his friends, why did he not do more to give credit to Thomson for his

work? It is through Thomson that Davis was able to gain initial contact with the Seri and

secure the balsa canoe. Over a decade after Davis passed away, biographers of Davis' life

asked Thomson to write a chapter. In his reminiscences of their friendship, Thomson

speaks with warm fondness and great respect. The material records clearly indicate that

the men had a close friendship, and yet Davis failed to advocate for his friend's position

in the Heye Foundation history, save one sentence. I attribute such rhetorical processes

to the ideology of individualism that Davis internalized. Despite the fact that his

expeditions included hired help, guides, and interpreters, the other members of his

expedition teams rarely, if ever, received mention. They remain an absent presence much

like the Native peoples who were supposedly "vanishing."

Another rhetorical and material means by which Davis constructed his identity as

advocate was his photography. One of Davis' contemporaries was Edward Curtis who

spent much of his life creating a romanticized record of Natives of the West. Curtis is

famous for depicting the "noble savage" a stoic reminder of a "simpler time" that

typified values and ethics of a "vanishing race" that a white America embracing manifest

destiny and an ethos of modernity lacked (Anderson, 2006; Kammen, 1991; Richards,

1993; Slotkin, 1992). Although Davis, too, believed in the impending cultural extinction

of Native peoples, he used his photography to illustrate the abject poverty, dispossession,

and disease that Natives suffered resulting from Euro-American invasion. Figure 3.1

shows one example of Davis' depictions of Native peoples:

Figure 3.1
Santo Blanco (Seri)
and Edward H.
Davis, Sonora,
1929.

Picture provided from
personal family
collection. Additional
copies are on file with
Smithsonian Cultural
Resource Center and
with the San Diego
Historical Society

The photograph caption states, "This hombre gambled away his only shirt." Davis'

purpose in including this information was to stress the poverty of the Seri tribe; the man

had only one shirt. Davis' photo shows more than the lack of shirt, however. In this

photo, Davis takes care to show the "crude" hut in the background and the sandy

ground. He also managed to capture something of the life ways of Seri at the time

showing the bow and arrow they hunted with, the baskets they wove casually stacked on

the ground, and evidence of turtle and other shells from the sea life that was their

livelihood.

This is no innocent photograph. In the context of material rhetoric, it is Davis'

interaction with the material objects, including bodies, that demonstrate his rhetorical

practices. As noted earlier, material rhetoric reveals interpretation and ideologies. Both

are at work in this single photograph in which Davis carefully interpreted and selected those objects, including his own corporal presence, that represented "Native peoples" in his understanding. Davis often joined his subjects on film, both to reinforce his identity as friend, but also to show the relative height and weight proportions of various peoples compared to himself. Additionally, because he believed so fervently in Native cultural extinction, his photographs reflect this subject. None of Davis' notes, publications, or photographs depict happy, healthy, successful Indians. Placed alongside the social, historical, and cultural context of material rhetoric, Davis' rhetorical processes show how his ideological beliefs constrained the stories he told. Because Davis believed in and feared the cultural extinction of Native peoples, evidence of their demise is all he saw around him. His historical records—his interpretation of what counted as subjects for preservation and posterity—are clearly marked by unquestioned and deep-seated ideologies. Specifically, the material objects Davis collected served the Heye Foundation as a means of presenting a static, endangered, and exotic "other" in contrast to which white America defined itself.

Finally, Davis worked hard to construct and legitimate his identity as an ethnologist through his rhetorical processes, namely the collection of Native material culture. Davis demonstrates through his practices a deliberate and rhetorical crafting of identity for the general white public and for his museum affiliates, whom he considered scholarly and serious ethnologists. For the mainstream public consumption, Davis often wrote magazine articles for *Out West*, *Sunset*, *The Desert*, and *Touring Topics* magazines. In the autobiographical article "Pursuits of a Museum Collector," mentioned earlier, Davis began by emphatically explaining that he was not an adventurer:

Having spent more than thirty-five years of my life as a museum collector among some twenty-five of the most primitive tribes of Indians in the United States and Mexico, I am sometimes spoken of as an adventurer. I don't consider myself an adventurer, and I rather dislike having the term applied to me. An adventurer, to my mind, is a sort of worthless soldier of fortune. He's a fellow who gets himself into trouble when he should be using his wits to keep out of it. Adventurers are largely mishaps, and the proof of faulty judgment. They have no place in a well-planned scientific expedition, and are something to be avoided, if possible in any phase of ethnological field work. (1931, p. 1)

In this lengthy passage, Davis rhetorically calls upon his years of experience and a strong distinction of his own life's work as scientific to build his ethos as an ethnologist. In relation to his other publications, it is difficult to say if Davis believed Native peoples were "primitive" or if he used that term to appeal to a mass, mainstream Euro-American audience. He used the term consistently, but most often in his articles for popular press. Davis told this story to legitimate the rest of his autobiography. Davis' autobiographical account *reads* like an adventure, so he had to establish himself as "scientific" ethnologist in order to give credibility to his experiences. Legitimating his work as an ethnologist for the majority white public in this way also allowed Davis to embrace nostalgia even while he attempted to distance himself from perpetrators of violence and colonization, particularly in California. With the establishment of his work as beneficial for Natives, and for "scientific" purposes, Davis was able then to speak about "primitive" and "dangerous" Indians without, to his mind, fear of hastening their demise.

In constructing his identity as ethnologist for his museum affiliates, Davis'

rhetorical strategies were quite different. Although self-taught in the arts of ethnology,

Davis was an avid note-keeper and often made sketches, paintings, and photographs of

his travels and interactions. These skills served him well when he realized the material

culture he had begun to collect would be useless without documentation. Although

Davis does not elaborate on learning the need for documentation, he noted that he was

unable to sell his massive collection of Native artifacts until he had "compiled a catalog

with the known history of every article" (1931, p. 2). Once hired as a field collector for

Heye, his catalogs of item collections and sale receipts carefully noted the origin,

location, purpose, and even the artist's name whenever it was known. Unlike his

mainstream publications that entertained as well as informed, in Davis' catalog entries, he

took a predominantly didactic tone. For example, in a record from 1929[16], marked as

Klamath Lake, Davis described in some detail a canoe he secured:

> Old canoe—made by Peter Phillips, old Modoc who was warrior in
>
> Modoc War 1872. He hauled the log out of forest in winter, first humed it
>
> and then hewed it until it was hollowed out to proper shape and
>
> thickness. It was launched in the spring and would carry three people and
>
> all their blankets, cooking things, food, etc. The tulle mats were placed in
>
> the bottom to kneel on and paddle. The hank of fibre [*sic*] is from bark of

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[16] Davis' personal correspondence records and log receipts are property of the Smithsonian's Cultural Resource Center—National Museum of the American Indian Archive. Each catalog entry is dated, and usually accompanied by a cover letter; however, my photocopy of this catalog record obscures the exact date.

the nettle from which nets and twine are made. This was the longest and

oldest canoe on Klamath Lake. (receipt log)

In terms of material rhetoric and the social, historical, and cultural contexts, the

rhetorical practices Davis employed demonstrate issues of interpretation as well as of

ideological constraints. Typical of Davis' cataloging style, he marked individual pieces

with some narrative telling both the object's use and making, and often of his travails in

obtaining it. Here, Davis has carefully interpreted and selected this canoe as worthy of

preservation because it is "the longest and oldest" canoe, but also because a particular,

noteworthy individual made it. Even though it is quite likely that several members of the

tribe helped Peter Phillips haul the log and prepare it into a canoe, Davis fails to attribute

artisanship to more than one person. Davis embraces the ideology of individualism to

such a degree that his rhetorical processes reflect only individual attribution. In fact,

none of Davis' catalog entries appear to reflect group attributions. Furthermore, a close

reading of this catalog entry suggests that in embracing nostalgia and individualism, he

selected objects of note and distinction. Objects that were more mundane may have

provided a better record of everyday life of the Native heritage Davis sought to preserve,

but he specifically chose to collect noteworthy examples[17]. Davis used his catalog entries

to argue for the uniqueness of each object he collected, thus justifying his selection,

interpretation, and acquisition of each object.

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[17] Davis' selection of specific items he believed noteworthy objects is unusual in light of Heye's famous "vacuum cleaner" approach to collecting.

Summary

In this section, I analyzed the stories that Davis told by examining how he rhetorically positioned himself as friend, advocate, and ethnologist through a material rhetoric lens, or through his collecting-as-entity. Placed alongside social, historical, and cultural contexts, the contradictions of Davis' claims with his actions reveal how his unquestioned ideological beliefs influenced and constrained the stories he told. I do not believe that Davis meticulously calculated his relationships for his material gains, but I do believe that ideological constraints often created a "both/and" proposition. In other words, he was both a genuine friend to the many Native peoples with whom he lived and worked for the majority of his life, and he sometimes behaved unethically because he believed in "a vanishing race" that was his responsibility to preserve. Davis both advocated for Native peoples in a variety of ways, and he reified and reinforced mainstream beliefs that contributed to Native hardship, colonization, and diaspora. This he did not through malice, but often because he internalized the ideal of the pioneer or the "rugged individual" such that, for example, in creating his narratives of individualism, he often failed to acknowledge or attribute collective activity. Finally, depending on his audience, Davis positioned himself and legitimized his life's work for both entertainment in popular press articles and for "scientific expeditions" for his scholarly contributions. In positioning himself as an ethnologist in this way, Davis' ideological beliefs culminate in the implicit assumption that his only responsibility was to a white audience, be it mainstream or his museum affiliates. In the next section, I move to the National Museum of the American Indian storied site discussing its legacy from the Heye

foundation, and the rhetorical processes it employs in telling its stories of identity-building.

Storytelling through Historical and Rhetorical Contexts:
The National Museum of the American Indian

The National Museum of the American Indian tells stories that deliberately and rhetorically craft its identity as a new type of museum employing a 21st century paradigm of representation. In order to show some of the ways that storytelling participates in the production of culture, I discuss the museum studies context, including the NMAI's legacy from the Heye Foundation, and analyze the stories the NMAI tells to create its identity. These stories include the NMAI mission statement, as well as excerpts from publications, press materials, and brochures that illuminate the mission statement. Just as with the Davis storied site, I employ material rhetoric as an analytic lens to problemetize some of the ideological beliefs that undergird the NMAI in its identity-building. Through its stories and its use of material objects (including bodies) the NMAI positions itself as a new, dialogic paradigm engaging in collaboration and cooperation with Native communities, highlighting Native diversity, countering stereotypes, and insisting "that the authentic Native voice and perspective guide all our policies, including, of course, our exhibition philosophy" (West, 2000, p. 7). This new museological paradigm is one in which the museum functions *as* an act of storytelling.

The Heye Foundation Legacy

The institutional identity of the National Museum of the American Indian is vital

to consider in terms of the rhetorical processes and stories it tells to build its identity as a

"new" paradigm of museology. Perhaps ironic in the stories the NMAI tells, and its use

of material rhetoric to build its identity, is that the NMAI places itself in oppositional

response to the traditional museological models. This is ironic, because of its legacy from

the Heye foundation and its membership as a Smithsonian Institution—in essence, and

in fact, the NMAI opposes itself. Although some scholars have gone so far as to suggest

that the NMAI is similar to a tribal museum[18], but on a national scale, it is paramount to

remember that it *is* a member of the Smithsonian Institution and received its legacy—the

objects and records, name, and some of its mission mandates—from the Heye

Foundation, Museum of the American Indian[19]. The Heye Foundation was an exemplar

of the traditional museological model discussed in chapter two. Several discussions[20]

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[18] See Ira Jacknis (2004) in *American Indian Quarterly*, 30(3&4). For a counter to this view, see Amy Lonetree (2006) "Missed Opportunities" or Jacki Thompson Rand (2007) "Why I Can't Visit the National Museum of the American Indian."

[19] To clarify some terminology, the Heye Foundation, Heye Collection, and Museum of the American Indian, New York (MAI) are used interchangeably as they all refer to the same institution (Heye incorporated his personal collection into the MAI in 1916). The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) includes three components: the George Gustav Heye Center in New York, the Cultural Resource Center in Maryland, and the NMAI museum on the Mall in Washington, DC. The museum actually claims a "fourth museum" through public programming, outreach to Native communities, and through its internet and educational facilities. However, with the current economic strain, some of these programs have uncertain futures.

[20] For discussions of the Heye Foundation see: Blue Spruce, D. (2004) (Ed.). *Spirit of a Native Place: Building the National Museum of the American Indian*, Washington DC: National Museum of the American Indian; National Geographic Society; Brady, M. (2007). "A Dialogic Reaction to the Problemetized Past: The National Museum of the American Indian." Paper presented at the CIC-AIS Symposium, Chicago, IL: Newberry Library; Hodge (1929). "Aims and Objects of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation," *Indian Notes and Monographs*, no. 36, New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye

about the Heye Foundation raise important points about the economic and political

shifts during the time Heye collected, from 1897 to 1957, including Heye's "heyday" of

collection in the 1920s followed by the years of war and depression in the 1930s and

1940s[21]. In addition to political and economic factors, the shift from personal to public

collection, and nebulous associations with archeology, ethnology, and anthropology were

key facets of Heye Foundation identity. The most salient features for the NMAI,

however, are the massive object archive and the mission mandates, which I will touch on

briefly.

The some 800,000[22] objects Heye collected over six decades is "the largest

assemblage of Indian objects ever collected by a single person" (Lenz, 2004, p. 87). By

some accounts, the archive of Native American objects is the largest in the world. Much

lore describes Heye as a bizarre individual whose motivations in collecting Indian

artifacts remain unknown (Jacknis, 2004; Lenz, 2004). Lenz notes that Heye "personally

catalogued and numbered each piece in his collections" and purportedly could pick up

any object and "recount how and where it was collected and what he paid for it" (pp. 91-

92). Heye was also notorious for purchasing large quantities of Native objects wholesale

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Foundation; Jacknis, I. (2006). "A New Thing?" *American Indian Quarterly*, 30(3&4); Johnson, T. (1998)
(Ed.). *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, Washington DC:
Smithsonian Institution Press; Kidwell, C.S. (1999). "Every Last Dishcloth: The Prodigious Collecting of
George Gustav Heye." *Collecting Native America 1870-1960*. Ed. Shephard III, K. and Hail, B. Washington:
Smithsonian Institution P: 232-58; Lenz, M. J. (2004). "George Gustav Heye: The Museum of the American
Indian," *Spirit of a Native Place: Building the National Museum of the American Indian*, Washington DC:
National Museum of the American Indian.

[21] Records indicate that with the death of two of his primary benefactors in 1928, Heye fired all of the
field collectors and large numbers of staff. However, Davis continued to collect and sell objects to Heye up
until his death 1951.

[22]Some estimates claim the Heye collection included 1 million objects (*Indian Notes and Monographs*,
1922).

and without regard to quality or condition (Jacknis, 2006; Kidwell, 1999). Furthermore, Heye focused on collecting artifacts from all Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere. Although he collected both ethnological and archeological objects, his preference was for archeological artifacts. Heye's "Golden Rule" for his field collectors like Davis included the condition that the objects "must be old" and "no tourist material" (Lenz, 2004, p. 105). Following Heye's death in 1957, the Heye collection continued in economic uncertainty until at last it was determined that the Heye collection would become part of the Smithsonian. However, one of the primary requirements from the Heye Board of Directors was that the collection remain intact. In scope, quantity, and provenance, the Heye collection is perhaps the single most important legacy of the NMAI today. Thus, even though the NMAI claims in some of its publications to be more people oriented than object oriented, part of its legacy is to maintain the massive Heye collection intact, implicitly connecting the NMAI to the ideological foundations of its former institution.

In addition to inheriting the legacy of the massive Heye collection, the National Museum of the American Indian also shares some of the mission of its former institution. In its publication *Indian Notes and Monographs*, Editor F.W. Hodge (1922) states the Museum of American Indian, Heye Foundation mission:

> This Museum occupies a unique position among institutions, in that its sole aim is to gather and to preserve for students everything useful in illustrating and elucidating the anthropology of the aborigines of the Western Hemisphere, and to disseminate by means of its publications the knowledge thereby gained. (p. 3)

As the mission statement indicates, the MAI was established to perform public service through research and educational initiatives, included all Natives of the Western Hemisphere, and sought to collect and preserve "everything useful"—an information archive legitimating domination and control, and exoticizing Native peoples. This is further born out in the inception statement: "The Museum had its inception twenty years ago, when its present Director, pursuing his interest in the material culture of the American Indians, commenced the *systematic accumulation* of objects pertaining thereto" (my emphasis, p. 3). The NMAI shares many of these same mandates in its own mission and directives.

Rhetorical Processes

One of the first rhetorical moves the National Museum of the American Indian made to build its identity as a "new" type of museum was to establish its own mission statement. Through the discourse of its mission statement, the NMAI declares that it is "new" primarily because it provides the "authentic Native voice and perspective," and counters long-standing stereotypes about Native peoples through what it calls cultural continuity. Chartered by congress in 1989 as the 16th Smithsonian Institute museum, the NMAI established the following[23]:

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[23] This version of the NMAI mission statement was available through their website and press kits as of 2006. Today (2009) the mission statement available on their website is different:

> The National Museum of the American Indian is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere, past, present, and future, through partnership with Native people and others.
> The museum works to support the continuance of culture, traditional values, and transitions in contemporary Native life.

It is unclear if this new version is official, or an adaptation for the website.

The National Museum of the American Indian shall recognize and affirm

to Native communities and the non-Native public the historical and

contemporary culture and cultural achievements of the Natives of the

Western Hemisphere by advancing—in consultation, collaboration, and

cooperation with Natives—knowledge and understanding of Native

cultures, including art, history, and language, and by recognizing the

museum's special responsibility, through innovative public programming,

research and collections, to protect, support, and enhance the

development, maintenance, and perpetuation of Native culture and

community. (adopted in 1990)

Similar to the Museum of the American Indian, or Heye Foundation, the NMAI

shares several components of its former institutional legacy. The National Museum of

the American Indian retains the provenance of its former institution in including all

Natives of the Western Hemisphere. Further, the NMAI retains the subject (and name)

of its former institution focusing on "the American Indian." Additionally, the NMAI

also shares in the research and educational mandates of its former institution. According

to the NMAI, the educational purpose set forth in establishing the new museum is to

"preserve, present, and celebrate the Native cultures of the Americas.[24]" Thus, like the

Heye Foundation, the NMAI is also for preservation and display.

Considering the NMAI emphasizes Native diversity as part of its "new"

paradigm, it is interesting to note the way its own purpose and name essentializes Native

communities as "*the* American Indian" and reinforces colonizing ideologies. Just as a

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[24]According to the NMAI's press website, 2006.

material rhetoric analysis of Davis' identity-building shows discrepancies between what he said and what he did, so too does the NMAI exhibit such discrepancies. In retaining the name, provenance, and scope of its former institution, regardless of whether or not such issues were negotiable in the establishment of the NMAI, implicates the "new" museum in traditional ideological models. Specifically, through discourses, the NMAI reifies ideologies that essentialize the "other," creating a "pan-Indian" representation of "the" American Indian. At the same time, the NMAI also employs discourse that reinforces exoticism by marking a particular group of people to collect, preserve, study, and celebrate—all elements of national cultural patrimony of the traditional museological model.

Two aspects of the NMAI's mission statement diverge from its former institutional legacy providing the foundation for its "new" museological paradigm. The first is providing the "authentic Native voice and perspective" through collaboration and cooperation. The second aspect includes providing cultural continuance though the inclusion of both historical and contemporary material culture to counter long-standing, damaging stereotypes.

In establishing its identity as a new type of museum, the NMAI claims that institutions must learn to equally share responsibility and power, allowing and encouraging interpretations to be done by and/or in collaboration with local Native communities. In an early symposium that influenced the NMAI development, James Nason (2000) suggested that this collaboration take place by "engaging Native American museum colleagues and community specialists in exhibition planning and implementation, by sharing decision-making about elements with them, and by

incorporating their perspectives in the interpretations that result from such collaboration"(p. 41). This important goal of a new museological paradigm of representation is evident throughout the planning and development of the NMAI as well as in its mission statement. Implementation of this goal, however, is more or less successful depending on who is telling the story. The NMAI's publication describing the building of the museum is rife with illustrations of numerous Native peoples who collaborated and cooperated with the museum—Board members, the founding director, archivists, preservation staff, curatorial staff, botanists, architects, landscape designers, artists, engineers, Native community members, and so forth. Several of the museum publications, brochures, and sponsored presentations also illustrate a rich palette of Native partnerships and community collaboration. Indeed, the NMAI's favorite planning and development phase creation story involves the many years of community consultations, surveys, and discussions held with Native communities ascertaining what Native communities envisioned for the NMAI.

This identity-building story, however, belies the realty of the experience. What the NMAI fails to tell in their creation story is the negative reactions they received during planning (and continue to receive). For example, Native scholar Jacki Rand, who worked with the NMAI planning team from 1989 to 1994, notes a particularly memorable response that resonates with the frustration and anger many Native communities feel towards the NMAI: "We've been trying to educate the visitors for five hundred years; how long will it take to educate the visitors?" Although this is a valid question, it was not answered. Placed alongside a material rhetoric lens, it becomes evident that in its interpretation and selection of which Native communities and material would represent

"the American Indian," the NMAI only selected those communities in alignment with the vision it already had in mind. In enacting this selection and interpretation, the NMAI reproduces traditional ideological foundations. In at least some of its interactions with Native communities, the NMAI speaks about, speaks for, and ultimately deems some Native communities incapable of speaking. In essence, even though the NMAI claims a new museological paradigm through collaboration and cooperation with Native communities, its implementation of that paradigm has been selective, seeking only those communities that positively support the museum and are interested in participating. The effect of this interpretation and selection is reification of domination and control, as well as exoticizing Native peoples through selective representation and exclusion of adversarial stories and experiences.

In building its identity in oppositional response to traditional models of museology, it is clear why the NMAI would want to counter damaging stereotypes. In traditional museum models, stereotypical images of Native cultures, including, for example, those illustrating Natives as allegorical figures, noble "savages," "a vanishing race," or as exotic manifestations, demonstrated "persistent colonialist attitudes [that] influenced the presentation of Native Americans and their cultures, showing them to be of less value than their European [or Euro-American] counterparts"(Maurer, 2000, p. 21). Representing the diversity of all tribes of the Western hemisphere is a challenge. In some galleries and exhibits, this challenge is met with more success than in others. In a 2005 interview with founding director Richard West, he noted the importance, difficulty, and challenge of implementing this goal:

But I think that [tribal specificity/transcendence] is really an important

idea...it's an effort, I think, that combines objects with people in a

community context to make the point of differentness, and if you can do

it that way to point out the diversity, then you have a much more

complete picture of it. (author's substitution, qtd. in Cobb, 2005, p. 531)

To counter stereotyping images, the NMAI employs an unusual rhetorical strategy of

including contemporary Native culture as well as the historical evidence from its massive

archive. Through this strategy, the NMAI claims to provide cultural continuance. One

deployment of this strategy is the inclusion of contemporary objects or artifacts

alongside older archival objects. In his foreword to the NMAI's founding publication,

Duane Blue Spruce (2004) tells of innumerable contributions to the museum from

Native artists across the Western Hemisphere. Many of these artists contributed work

for the construction of the museum, but many more contributed art and artifacts for

representation and display as well. For example, in the *Our Universes* gallery in the Santa

Clara Pueblo tribal area, the display of water vessels includes archeological pieces as well

as a recent acquisition made for the display. The water vessel display demonstrates the

importance of water to the tribe in both past and present contexts. The NMAI employs

this type of cultural continuance throughout the *Our Universes* gallery and perhaps

throughout the museum. However, the deployment of this rhetorical strategy is

problematic. While such displays do emphasize cultural continuance, without more

explicit connections or explanations for the majority audience, the meaning is lost and

only confuses the 98% of non-Native visitors conditioned to expect a static history in

museums. Furthermore, in acquiring new objects for displays of cultural continuance, the

NMAI effects the continued collection of Native cultural heritage. In other words, just as Davis and Heye collected Native material culture in order to build the imperial archive of knowledge, so too is the NMAI. In fact, the NMAI adds these more recent acquisitions to the existing archive that Davis and Heye began.

Another means by which the NMAI demonstrates cultural continuance is through a discourse of "survivance" and the repeated thematic throughout the museum of "we're still here." For example, on one wall of the *Our Peoples* gallery, an elegantly simplistic dark display background with grey lettering states, "WE ARE THE EVIDENCE" in large type (see figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: We are the evidence, NMAI.
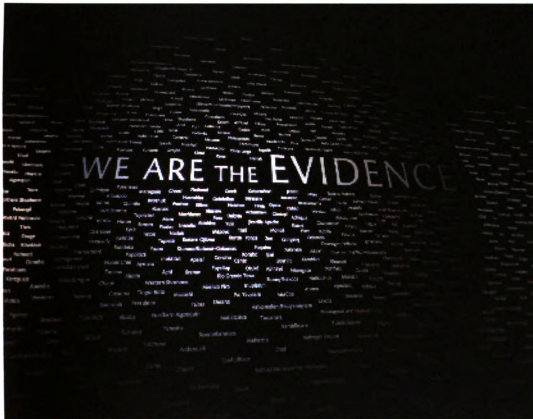
Surrounding the phrase, but in smaller type, are the names of thousands of tribes, many

of whom perished in the last 500 years of colonization in the Americas. Reminiscent of

other memorial walls such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, this beautiful panel stands

as testament to survivance (Lonetree, 2006). Near the visual display of tribal names is the

text attributed to curator Paul Chaat Smith:

> *All My Relations*
>
> *Entire nations perished in the waves of death that swept the Americas.*
> *Even their names are lost to us. We cannot tell you where they lived, what they believed,*
> *or what they dreamed. Their experiences are buried and unknowable. Like much of*
> *Indian history, only fragments are left to us.*
> *This wall names many of the languages spoken by our relatives who are still here, as*
> *well as those ancestors who vanished without a trace. The list can never be whole. It will*
> *always be incomplete.*
> *Nine of ten Native people perished in the first century of contact between the*
> *hemispheres. One in ten survived. They didn't fear change; they embraced it.*
> *Their past lives on in our present. As descendents of the one in ten who survived, we in*
> *the 21st century share an inheritance of grief, loss, hope, and immense riches. The*
> *achievements of our ancestors make us accountable for how we move in the world today.*
> *Their lessons instruct us and make us responsible for remembering everything especially*
> *those things we never knew.*

This display, graceful and moving, is one of the few explicit acknowledgements of

colonization in the NMAI, and yet even this text downplays the violence of genocide,

euphemistically referring to genocide as "change." Furthermore, the discourse portrays

Native peoples as statistics—nine of ten and one in ten—rather than humans. Placed

alongside the analytic lens of material rhetoric, the muting of harsh realities demonstrates

a discourse that affirms dominant control and legitimates hegemonic power structures.

Summary

In this section, I have analyzed the stories that the NMAI tells by examining how

it rhetorically positions itself as a new type of museum that presents the "authentic

Native voice and perspective" through collaborative and cooperative relationships with

Native communities and that counters damaging stereotypes through cultural

continuance and survivance. The museum evinces this new paradigm primarily through

the rhetorical processes of discourses and display. Placed alongside its social, historical,

and cultural contexts, the contradictions and slippage between the identity the NMAI

claims and the identity it demonstrates through its institutional existence reveal how

traditional ideological foundations of colonization and control continue to exert

rhetorical force through the NMAI. In this discussion and analysis, I have not done

justice to the strengths of the NMAI—in many respects, the museum has made

tremendous strides in producing more equitable representations of Native peoples. The

NMAI has also created a space where the majority population may begin to question

assumptions about Native peoples and history. However, similar to the Davis storied

site, I find in this analysis another example of the "both/and" proposition. The NMAI is

both a museum designed to represent Native peoples to a majority audience, and it is a

place that celebrates living Native cultures and communities through *some* collaborative

partnerships. I believe that the NMAI's failure to acknowledge its own institutional

history prevents it from successfully creating its identity as a "new" type of museum. In

addition, in placing itself in oppositional response to traditional ideological models of

museology, the NMAI speaks about others, and speaks for others, without telling its own

stories as well. In other words, the "authority" that makes it possible for the NMAI to

determine what counts as an "authentic Native voice" is its institutional authority. What

counts as "authentic Native voice" for the NMAI is not a voice that represents all

Natives of the Western Hemisphere, but rather the exclusionary voice of the institution

that privileges only those peoples in alignment with its mission. While making some

positive steps toward more equitable representations, the NMAI also reaffirms

colonization and control, continues building the imperial archive, and exoticizes Native

peoples through selection, interpretation, exclusion, and display.

Conclusion

My analysis and close reading of storytelling and rhetorical processes in this

chapter demonstrates the ways in which ideological foundations invisibly shape and

constrain meaning and interpretation. Because this invisible shaping implicitly affects the

ways in which culture, in these sites Native culture, are created, valued, taught,

distributed, displayed, and so forth, it constitutes the production of culture. Thus, these

rhetorical processes and discursive contexts demonstrate some of the ways that

storytelling participates in the production of culture.

In retrospect, Edward H. Davis was fairly successful in building his identity as

friend, advocate, and ethnologist. The relative success of his rhetorical processes lie in

the fact that his reputation today valorizes him as a sort of hero of the Old West. And

yet, through the analysis of his rhetorical process located *within* their social, historical, and

cultural discursive contexts, Davis' rhetorical processes are limited by the ideologies of

early 20th century California history. The close reading of his storytelling as practice and

collecting-as-entity reveal his subjectivity and unquestioned perpetuation of mainstream ideologies just as much as they served to work against them. Even though Davis befriended several Native communities, advocated on behalf of Natives, and sought to preserve important cultural heritage, Davis' rhetorical processes also served to reinforce the ideology of Natives as "a vanishing race" and ultimately figured the Natives he worked with as silent, absent, and exotic.

Since the National Museum of the American Indian was first established in 1989, its identity has remained controversial and contentious. Some Native communities and non-Natives support the museum's claim to the "authentic Native voice" and laud its efforts to demonstrate Native cultural continuance. However, other Native communities and non-Natives roundly criticize the museum for reifying mainstream ideologies, being blind to its own rhetoric, and perpetuating colonization through a complacent stance that mutes the realities of Native experience. I believe both sides of the debate are true. The museum's failure to acknowledge and confront its own institutional history and identity render its attempts to invent a new type of museum ambivalent at best. Without raising critical questions about the purpose of museums, the object-centric orientation of its displays, and the desire to maintain and expand the massive archive of Native material culture, the NMAI risks reproducing traditional ideological models of museology.

In the next chapter, I continue my analysis in order to articulate the media praxis of storytelling in relation to representation through various modes and media. One way that the NMAI establishes representation of all Natives of the Western Hemisphere is through the deliberate and rhetorical construction of "a Native place," which it achieves through its landscaping and architecture. Additionally, the NMAI claims to present the

"authentic Native voice" through its use of multimedia displays. I argue that an analysis of the rhetorical processes of representation through various modes and media in their discursive contexts demonstrates some of the ways that storytelling participates in the production of culture.

CHAPTER FOUR

READING RHETORICAL PROCESSES: STORYTELLING THROUGH REPRESENTATION AND DISPLAY

The National Museum of the American Indian tells stories not only through its mission statement, publications, and brochures as discussed in chapter three, but also performs storytelling through other modes and media. In this chapter, I use the media praxis approach to analyze storytelling in two storied sites of the NMAI. The first is construction of "a Native place" through its architecture and landscaping. The second storied site is the construction of an "authentic Native voice and perspective" through the presentation of Native cosmologies in the *Our Universes* gallery employing multimedia exhibitions. I argue that media praxis makes visible the rhetorical mechanisms and processes that shape and influence meaning and interpretation within the discursive contexts of these storied sites thereby illuminating some of the ways that storytelling—in various modes and media—participates in the production of culture.

In the sections that follow, I introduce three theoretical frameworks as contextualizing lenses for the analysis of these two storied sites. The first lens, ethnoarchitectonics, provides an overarching framework in which to consider both storied sites in this chapter. Furthermore, I situate the construction of "a Native place" through landscaping and architecture in the contexts of space and place. Finally, I situate the presentation of "the authentic Native voice and perspective" through the multimedia gallery exhibitions of Native cosmologies in the context of the rhetorics of display.

Ethnoarchitectonics

Ethnoarchitectonics is discursive context common to both storied sites in this chapter. When applied as an analytic lens, it underscores the social, historical, and cultural discursive contexts of the storied sites. The term refers to a theoretical framework[25] developed by Lakota scholar and architect Craig Howe (1995) to describe the encoding of tribally relevant and tribally specific cultural beliefs, including language, oral tradition, tribal histories, and religion through the production of architecture. Architecture and, by extension, the landscape surrounding it, are "three-dimensional manifestations" of tribal uniqueness and a means for delineating boundaries between different tribal communities and between nations (Howe, 1995). The theoretical framework is based on the metaphor of comets or "comae," which originate in the primordial material of the universe. Howe extends the metaphor by inscribing COMAE as an acronym for centering, orienting, moving, arranging, and echoing. Briefly, centering is concerned with the "source of influence" or the essential core "around which events and actions revolve" (p. 10). Orienting refers to grounding understanding spatially and temporally. Moving, as its name implies, is related to actions or "doings," but it should be noted that storytelling is a type of doing. Arranging "is concerned with internal order, with relation between the components of the core" (p. 11). Echoing "resonates with reflection, repetition, recognition and recollection" (p. 11). The NMAI's use of

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[25] Although they may have slight different nuances, I use the terms "analytic lens" and "theoretical framework" interchangeably here.

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storytelling, both literally and thematically, from its architecture and landscaping, to its multimedia displays, constitute an echoing.

There is a very important difference, however, between *tribal* architectures and *Native* architectures for Howe. Tribal architectures are specific to a particular group of people and communicate important cultural codes, which Howe describes as the people's Original Instructions. Howe (1995) explains that architectures are "communication systems whose social functions are to embody rhetorical messages pertaining to the cosmic instructions of tribal communities" (p. 11). Tribal architectures delineate differences between specific tribal peoples and between tribal architectures and mainstream architectures. Because tribal architectures are designed for a people and by a people to remind them of their responsibilities to their Original Instructions, such architectures, Howe (1995) claims, serve to "retribalize." Furthermore, tribal architectures are an act and a rhetoric of resistance.

On the other hand, Native architectures are pan-Indian architectures, or national architectures, that are "the product of coherent aggregations of people" (p. 16). There is no such thing as coherent aggregation of people called "Indian," thus imposing and/or reinforcing essentialized conceptions of a people through architectural codes "usually serves only to detribalize tribal peoples, homogenize them, to render invisible their distinct identities and cultural boundaries" (p. 16). Such architectures, Howe claims, are collective expressions of Indian nationalism, an "intertribal architecture" (p. 22). While such national architectures can act as "an over-arching shared framework that unites tribal peoples and Native Americans," the shared framework typically represents an imposed commonality from the outside (p. 24). According to Howe, these imposed

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commonalities produced in architectural media do not communicate tribally specific Original Instructions, but rather they communicate and perpetuate essentialzed and stereotyped beliefs about tribal peoples. The NMAI claims to produce "a Native place" through its architecture and landscaping and as the COMAE apparatus demonstrates, the architectural codes communicate Indian nationalism rather than tribally specific messages.

Whether an architectural code communicates tribally specific Original Instructions or pan-Indian nationalism, the COMAE apparatus of ethnoarchitectonics remains an appropriate analytic lens for illuminating the discursive contexts of architecture and lived spaces. The COMAE apparatus of ethnoarchitectonics "may also be used to analyze origin/creation accounts" thus making it suitable as a lens to analyze the tribal cosmology displays of the *Our Universes* gallery as well (p. 10). In terms of the gallery installations, Howe (2002) describes features of event-centered tribal histories that COMAE helps identify. Ethnoarchitectonics is a discursive formation that not only connects to tribally relevant and tribally specific cultural beliefs, including language, oral tradition, tribal histories, and religion, but it is also bound up in the contexts of landscape, space, and place.

Construction of a Native Place

Through its architectural codes and landscaping, the NMAI claims to produce "a Native place." The question of *how* landscape and architectural codes communicate Nativeness is imbricated in issues of landscape, space, and place. In order to illustrate

some of the ways in which storytelling participates in the production of culture, I discuss the discursive contexts of landscape, space, and place and analyze the NMAI's landscape and architectural communication.

Storytelling: Landscape, Space, and Place

Landscape, as a term, was coined in the early 1600s by Dutch artists working in what became the genre of landscape art (Oxford English Dictionary). Its original function was that of scenery or background. Later, the term became associated with theatre to describe the backdrop against which a scene was performed (Halloran & Clark, 2006). However, landscape is not merely a static object, but is an active agent. Landscape has subjectivity, which, according to Harkin (2000), "is specific, localized, qualitative, and experientially bounded" (p. 52)[26]. In a study conducted on the role of landscape and memory in Estonian outdoor theatre performances, Liina Unt (2008) echoes this sentiment stating, "Landscape is regarded as a totality that comprises the natural environment and human agency, physical landscape and meanings and values attached to it" (p. 320). She further describes landscape as a kind of a palimpsest that maintains layers of both visible and invisible traces of historical memory that can be read through "multisensory involvement" (pp. 321-322). Similarly, Mitchell (2002) describes landscape as a type of discourse, or "a physical and multisensory medium (earth, stone, vegetation, water, sky, sound and silence, light and darkness, etc.) in which cultural meanings and

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[26] In Harkin's description of landscape, he paraphrases Edward Casey (1996) "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena." In *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso, pp. 13-52.

values are encoded..." whether the landscape be crafted or "found" (p. 14). In other words, landscape is an active element of a historical past, with direct influence on the present through lived, and embodied practices[27].

The active, material, historical, and multisensory character of landscape is directly related to its role in space and place[28]. De Certeau (1984) argues that "space is a practiced place" (p. 117). In other words, for de Certeau, *place* is a distinct location or group of positions that imply stability. *Space*, however, is completely dependent on the context of relationships and actualizing processes. A place becomes space through movement and action. In de Certeau's example, the street (place) becomes a space through the action of walkers. In following de Certeau's concepts, one might go so far as to suggest that land (place) becomes landscape (space) through the accumulation of events, lived experiences, and the cultural meanings and values inscribed on the land and remembered through human multisensory experience. This reciprocal process or event, then, can be understood as a whole concept of landscape, space and place — what LeFebvre (1971)

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[27] As "landscape" is primarily a Western concept, it is perhaps not surprising that Native scholars do not engage in defining the term per se. Rather, the broad range of Native scholars consulted for this project reveal discussions of the importance of relationships to the land and the relationship between significant landscapes and remembered histories. The absence of landscape definitions in Native scholarship may also be seen as resistance to the colonizing process of reductive generalization or essentializing. Land and landscape means something very specific and personal to individual Native persons and within specific tribal contexts.

[28] One major issue in considering space and place is that the terms are often arbitrarily assigned and sometimes used interchangeably. While de Certeau (1981) has a specific conception of space as the active and subjective actualization of place, Harkin (2000) claims that places "are not mere background for what I viewed as the important business of culture, but in a very real sense act upon persons..." (p. 53). Indeed, the NMAI itself refers to the museum as "A Native *Place*," whereas the goals and mission of the museum speak to a sense of lived *space*. In considering the triad of space, place, and landscape, I will attempt most often to refer to the museum and its crafted surroundings generalized as "landscape," except when using the museum's verbiage of "place."

might refer to as the spatial triad[29] of perceived, conceived, and lived space. I take note,

however, of Mitchell's (2002) contention that the specific correspondence of LeFebvre's

triad is less important than the general concept of understanding landscape, space, and

place as a whole topic, rather than falling to binary oppositions. In this respect, Mitchell

suggests that landscape, space, and place are a dialectical process involving "movements,

actions, narratives, and signs," which are encountered through sight or "as image" (p. x).

However, Mitchell builds his discussion, in part, upon the theory of storied space and

corresponding spatial practices offered by de Certeau (1984) and thus sees landscape,

"not as an object to be seen or a text to read, but as a process by which social and

subjective identities are formed" (p. 1). In other words, landscape, place, and space

together are a cultural site and a cultural practice.

Thus far, I have discussed landscape, space, and place as uncontested, but what

happens when cultures compete for space, place, and/or landscape? How do power

relations play out through the spatiotemporal[30] triad of landscape, space, and place?

While the scholarship on the relationship between this triad and colonization, power,

nation building, and imperialism is too large to do it justice in the scope of this project,

its importance cannot be overstated[31]. I mention it briefly here because it is through an

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[29] Similarly, Soja (1996) in *Third Space* refers to this as the "trialectics of spatiality."

[30] Although I make reference to time through a spatiotemporal concept of landscape/space/place, it should be noted that the temporal aspect is not based on Western notions of linear or sequential time. Time, here, is seen as a recursive process in which the past, present, and future are always and inextricably linked. (See also Mitchell, 2002).

[31] See for example: Anderson (2006), Beilin (2001), Bender (2001), Bermingham (2002), Butzer (1990), Conzen (1990), de Certeau (1984), Feld & Basso (1996), Foucault (1986), Gupta & Ferguson (1992), Hindman (1996), Leavelle (2004), Mitchell (1994), Pratt (1992), Reynolds (2004), Richards (1993), Ruan (2007), Silko (1987), Spurr (1993), Soja (1989).

intentional act of recalling or re-appropriating pre-contact landscape that the NMAI

claims, in part, to establish "a Native place." As an example, it is appropriate to draw

upon Pratt's (1999) notion of contact zones—"social spaces where cultures meet, clash,

and grapple with each other, often in the contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of

power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many

parts of the world today" (n.p.). Because of the power of landscape, space, and/or place

to build identity, represent and enact history (and memory), and because it is a cultural

medium, landscape can both symbolize power and perform as an agent of power

through spatial metaphors and representation as discourse that silences "others" in the

service of political legitimation (Bermingham, 2002; Leavelle, 2004; Mitchell, 2002). In

the articulation of nation building and colonization, appropriation of land and

representation of the displacement of the "other" in landscape art creates what Anderson

(2006) calls imagined communities. As an aesthetic and material practice, landscape

serves as a process of normalizing social values that displace the colonized subject

through representations of mobility and eroticism (Bermingham, 2002; Bunn, 2002; Said,

2002). Furthermore, as Harkin (2000) notes, "the panoramic perspective is linked to the

exercise of political power precisely because of its ability to abstract universal meanings

from the specificities of landscape" (p. 55). This is equally true for landscape art as it is

for landscape design (Harkin, 2000; Holloran & Clark, 2006).

However, while landscape has overwhelmingly been used in the service of

colonization, it has also been used, especially by Indigenous intellectuals and artists, in

decolonization. In an ironic reversal described by Unt (2008) in her work on landscape

and memory, she notes a "reversal of the gaze" in which "the viewer becomes involved

with the work of art and it is experienced as a situation in a place" (p. 328). In a special

themed section of a recent *American Indian Quarterly* on "Indigenous Groundwork at

Colonial Intersections," Karen Ohnesorge (2008) brilliantly examines contemporary

Indigenous artists engaged in what she terms "artistic sovereignty" (p. 43). The concept

is closely related to intellectual sovereignty[32] and describes decolonizing "the theory and

method of landscape within the broader context of visual art" (p. 43). In describing the

work of several Native artists, Ohnesorge notes the ways in which the artists reverse

viewer subjectivities and engage in purposeful and effective critiques of stereotypes of

Native America (p. 51). Moreover, Mitchell (2002) argues we must recognize that "the

appreciation of landscape as an aesthetic object cannot be an occasion for complacency

or untroubled contemplation; rather, it must be the focus of a historical, political, and

(yes) aesthetic alertness to the violence and evil written on the land, projected there by

the gazing eye"—an eye "inextricably connected with imperialism" (p. 29). Artist

constructions of space and place resist, react to, and in some cases, rewrite ideologies of

Empire and practices of colonization (Pérez, 1999; Pratt, 1992; Spurr, 1993). Anthony

Clark and Malea Powell (2008) describe the theoretical and intellectual approach in which

such reversals become reality as Indigenous groundwork. This approach "marks

Indigenous epistemologies that inform identities, resistances, and survivals [and] names

long-standing responsibilities to the well-defined and marked landscapes on this planet

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[32] **Warrior, Robert (1995)** *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions.* **Examining the work of Deloria and Mathews, Warrior builds a complex praxis of critical intellectual work in lived human experiences—a praxis that acknowledges social, political, and spiritual experiences, while offering, through his example and his analysis, ways to engage respectful and critical Native intellectual work.**

that *Original Peoples* call home..." (original emphasis, p. 5). In place-making[33] "a Native

place" through recalling pre-contact landscape and Indigenous architecture, the NMAI

enacts this kind of reversal, resistance, and Indigenous groundwork.

In examining the relationship between space, place, landscape, and story at the

NMAI, I want to emphasize my previous discussion of landscape, space, and place as a

lived experience. How is it that the landscape is, as Indigenous ethnobotanist Donna

House (2004) noted, "who we are"? How do the landscape, space, and place tell a story?

In terms of Indigenous groundwork, Clark and Powell (2008) note "The oral traditions,

sacred histories, prayers, and songs of the Original Peoples, in the appropriate contexts[34],

provide insights into the life of their various lands and their many historical and

contemporary relationships to the places in *and that are constitutive of their lives*" (original

emphasis, p. 10). Or, as de Certeau (1984) notes, stories "carry out a labor that constantly

transforms places into spaces or spaces into places" and thus constitute a "culturally

creative act" (pp. 118, 123). De Certeau further articulates what he calls "spatial stories,"

which are "a *spoken* language, that is, a linguistic system that distributes place insofar as it

is *articulated* by an 'enunciatory focalization,' by an act of practicing it" (original emphasis,

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[33] By place-making, I call on Basso's (1996) concept of, "a way of constructing history itself, of inventing it, of fashioning novel versions of 'what happened here.' For every developed place-world manifests itself as a possible state of affairs, and whenever these constructions are accepted by other people as credible and convincing —or plausible and provocative, or arresting and intriguing—they enrich the common stock on which everyone can draw to muse on past events, interpret their significance, and imagine them anew" (p. 6).

[34] For the sake of analysis through this chapter, I'll assume that the careful landscape architecture designed to recall pre-contact landscape, to "honor local Native people by featuring four environments indigenous to the Chesapeake Bay region, including hardwood forest, wetlands, cropland, and meadow areas" is an appropriate context (National Museum of the American Indian "General Information" brochure).

p. 130). The landscape and architectural designs at the NMAI situate visitors to the

museum as active performers who articulate the story of pre-contact Indigenous lands

through their movements around the outside of the building to the entry of the building.

This act of 'enunciatory focalization' is what Unt (2008) refers to when she describes

environmental scenography as "the practice of incorporating the spectators (spatially,

visually, auditively, gesturally, etc.) into the same frame with the performers..." (p. 321).

At the NMAI, the performers are the active agent found in the land and the Natives

whose lives are expressed through the museum.

Storytelling: Landscape, Space, and Place at the NMAI

In order to analyze the spatiotemporal triad of landscape, space, and place at the

National Museum of the American Indian, I focus primarily on the concept of Native

architecture in the construction of "a Native place." It is no coincidence that the crafting

of landscape environments is referred to as a type of architectural design and thus this

section will treat the landscape and building together employing Lakota scholar Craig

Howe's (1995) five architectural concepts of Centering, Orienting, Moving, Arranging,

Echoing (COMAE) through the theoretical lens of ethnoarchitectonics[35]. For all the

reasons of multisensory engagement and reciprocal inscription of cultural values noted in

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[35] For Howe's concepts of COMAE, I draw upon his dissertation *Architectural Tribalism in the Native American New World*. Part of his dissertation evolved into a 2002 chapter "Keep Your Thoughts Above the Trees," which I also draw upon, especially in the *Our Universes* gallery analysis relating to tribal histories or cosmologies. In his dissertation, Howe defines "ethnoarchitectonics" as "ethno-, a combining form meaning 'race,' 'culture,' 'people,' and architectonics, the science of planning and constructing buildings" (p. 59). He further refined the ideas from his dissertation and subsequent chapter in a presentation "Architecture and Sacred Spaces" given at the 2005 CIC: American Indian Studies national conference, "Native Knowledge Written on the Land."

the previous sections, Howe (1995) notes "Architecture is eminently suited to the long-term communication of tribally encoded messages, messages that would enable tribal communities to three-dimensionally manifest their uniqueness. . ." (p. 8).

The five-story, 250,000-square foot, curvilinear building has an exterior cladding of Kasota limestone from Minnesota, giving the building the appearance of a stratified stone mass that has been carved by wind and water. The museum entrance faces east toward the rising sun, and the building contains a prism window, which fills its inner spaces with sunlight, and a 120-foot-high atrium called the Potomac. Set in a 4.25-acre landscaped site with wetlands, 40 boulders known as "grandfather rocks," and four special boulders to mark the cardinal directions, the grounds make up 74% of the museum site. The Native landscape includes a major water feature that pays homage to Tiber Creek, a tidal creek that originally ran through the site when the National Mall area was a marsh. Three hundred trees in 30 different species contribute to the Native landscape of the museum, including bald cypress, and common pawpaw. The site also features 1,000 shrubs from 25 different species, including mountain laurel, buttonbush, greenbrier, spicebush and deerberry. Meadow leek, wild ginger, winterberry and Christmas fern are some of the more than 27,000 herbaceous plants surrounding the NMAI. Furthermore, the Native landscape consists of four habitats indigenous to the local region: an upland hardwood forest, lowland freshwater wetlands, eastern meadowlands and traditional croplands. Accompanying all of this lush landscape is a 30,000-gallon pond replete with a half-dead bald cypress lying across part of it in celebration of the cycles of life. In an article in the *Washington Post*, inaugural director Richard West is paraphrased as stating the landscape is "'honest and truthful' even in its

artifice, and provides the context to learn and celebrate Indian life" (2004). Figure 4.1

illustrates the concept map of the building and its surrounding landscape.

Figure 4.1: NMAI landscape.
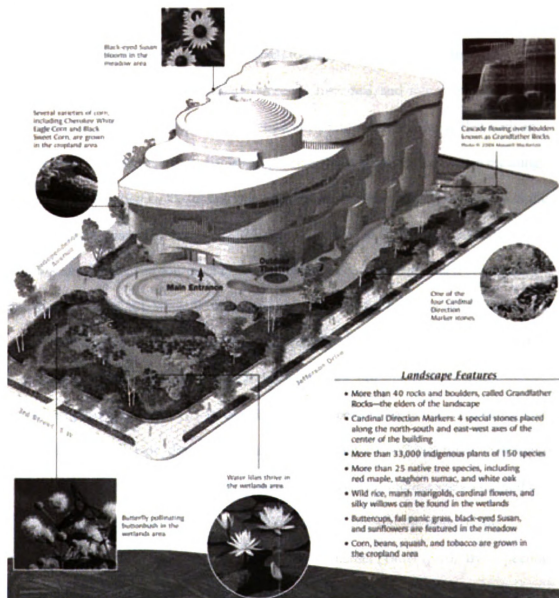
The primary goals of the NMAI in constructing this Native place through

landscape and architecture are to recall the pre-contact landscape of the museum

location, and to establish a holistic connection between the building and the landscape

(Blue Spruce, 2005). The NMAI facilities design team claims that the construction of the landscape and architecture encodes important Native cultural values such as treating the land with respect, acknowledging that land has memory, and contributing to the museum mission of cultural continuity by reminding visitors of Native survivance.

In applying the media praxis approach to analyze the storytelling through construction of "a Native place" situated in social, historical, and cultural contexts, I draw upon Howe's (1995) ethnoarchitectonics as a rhetorical lens. I argue that such an analysis makes visible the mechanisms and processes that shape and influence meaning and interpretation thereby illustrating one of the ways that storytelling participates in the production of culture. The first concept Howe introduces in Centering, which he describes as a "pivot, the source of influence, focus, or core around which events and actions revolve" (p. 10). While Western notions may place the building itself in this centering position, I argue that the focus and source of influence is the land surrounding the museum, which constitutes "ecological communities, not simply decorative landscape" (House, 2004, p. 76). In describing the process of designing the building and considering the landscape, design team member Johnpaul Jones (2004) notes "a group of elders who were serving as advisors on the project walked around the site and found its center. I don't know exactly how they identified it...The stone at the heart of the Potomac, the museum's beautiful rotunda, sits at that center point" (p.70). By respecting the land and honoring its memory of pre-contact flora and fauna, the facilities design team recuperated local Native cultural values as a source of influence for the multisensory experience of a Native place.

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Orienting, according to Howe (1995), "is concerned with outside reference points," with respect to the core or source of influence (pp. 10-11). Howe's discussion of orienting involves complex layers of cultural expression and formation through architecture and design. He orients through a survey of past Native architectures to develop a sense of tribal architecture as identity, as a form of resistance, and as a form of multisensory engagement. Through the revivification of pre-contact landscaping and the placement of such an unusual, and some have claimed female[36], building on the National Mall, the NMAI recalls the tribal histories of that place orienting through architectural design and even its placement on the National Mall. The building was built on the last open space available on the National Mall, located at the head of the National Mall between the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum and the U.S. Capitol, placing it in "visual dialogue with the United States, "nation to nations" if you will," and thus not only symbolically recalls the land, but as Amanda Cobb (2005a) notes, "very specifically and literally *reclaims* that land" (original emphasis, p. 367). The museum opens facing the Capitol and for inaugural director Richard West, there is "great poetry" in occupying this particular space "in the shadows of the Capitol building" and "is a part of the museum's statement about the true history of this country" (qtd. in Brown, 2004). A much more literal orienting in the landscape and architecture comes through the boulders used to mark the cardinal directions. Each cardinal boulder has its own story and comes from corresponding communities: the western marker is "newly formed lava from Hawai'i" (House, 2004, p. 78); the northern marker is a four billion year-old

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[36] In *Spirit of a Native place*, Duane Blue Spruce (2004) describes the association of the curvilinear building as female.

boulder from the Northwest Territories in Canada; the eastern marker from Great Falls,

Maryland; and the southern from Punto Arenas, Chile. The cardinal direction markers

also directly link the outside and inside of the museum, as the axes intersect inside the

building and are visibly marked in the Potomac (Cobb, 2005a, p. 370). In considering

rocks for selection, the landscape team visited several sites with significant rocks,

learning from the local tribal elders the history of the rock, its story, and how to honor it

properly. Once chosen, they asked for the elders to bless the rock, the move, and the

placement. The design team took care to note what kind of vegetation it was located in,

what direction it faced and how much wind it was accustomed to receiving so that they

could try to replicate as much of that as possible at the museum site so that the rock

would be comfortable and harmonious with its new surroundings. Moreover, in his

lecture series presentation at the NMAI, Blue Spruce (2005) talked about the importance

of orientation and spatial relationships as he described the processes the team underwent

in bringing the boulders to the museum and placing them.

The cardinal direction markers also play an important role in Moving. In Moving,

Howe (1995) also asserts the active engagement "bound up with action, with doing

something" similar to the discussion of landscape, space, and/or place in the previous

sections (p. 11). Just as Mitchell, de Certeau, Unt, and others describe landscape, space,

and/or place as an interactive and multisensory engagement, Howe notes the importance

of movement in place-making. The landscape of the NMAI is designed specifically as a

process of centering, orienting, and moving from west to east to come from the Mall and

enter the building (Jones, 2004, p. 71). In crafting the landscape and architecture of the

NMAI, the facilities design team was conscious to make Moving part of a multisensory

experience. As design team member Ramona Sakiestewa (2004) notes, "Sound turned out to be an important element in experiencing water, which led us toward the cascading stream along the north façade" (p. 83). Not only is nearly 75% of the site a naturally landscaped area through which to walk, but it incorporates the sounds of the gentle running water, the various smells of vegetation in the four habitat areas, and also engages with the actualizing process of remembrance through the 40 grandfather rocks, so-called because "they are elders of the landscape, symbolizing the cultural memory of the long relationship Indigenous peoples have with the natural environment" (Cobb, 2005a, p. 370). Additionally, the fire pit offers a site for different activities, such as Native ceremonies and cooking demonstrations. There is an offering area, which is a discreet and quiet circular area within the wetland environment, partially hidden by boulders, that provides a space for reflection and contemplation. Furthermore, the outdoor theater is used to host Native cultural arts performances. The building itself was designed with the expectation that people would touch it and thus employs varying textures in the Kasota stone. In addition, its curvilinear form is clearly distinctive and emulates nature. The walkways around the building are designed so that people are encouraged to walk around and enter from the east, acknowledging the Capitol building in direct line of sight. Amanda Cobb (2005a) writes, "The overarching tone of the museum is hospitality—a core value of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas—which also contributes to the sensory experience" (p. 371).

The interior of the building robustly demonstrates ethnoarchitectonics through what Howe (1995) terms Arranging. Inwardly directed, Arranging "is concerned with internal order, with relation between the components of the core" (p. 11). The

relationship between components guides the moral and ethical standards governing interactions with land and peoples. In terms of Arranging, the plotting of cardinal directions is important in this aspect as well. As design team member Jones (2004) states, we "were very conscious not to obstruct [the cardinal directions] in the design, so that they flow from the building very easily (pp. 70-71). This relates inwardly for the building as well, because it is respectful to ensure that directions are easily known from inside the building where elders and tribal community members may gather in the rotunda to perform and tell stories. The interior arrangement of the NMAI is based on circles. Jones (2004) explains that "The concept of a circle comes up often in Indian thought —in storytelling, for example, and in government" (p. 72).

The internal arrangements of "braided radii" that form the interior of the NMAI building are also an element of what Howe (1995) calls Echoing. Echoing, he claims, "resonates with reflection, repetition, recognition, and recollection" and it "binds together the present, past, and future" (p. 11). This plays out in many levels at the NMAI through the repetition of circular forms and the curvilinear building to the NMAI mission of cultural continuity linking past with present and future. Echoing is found in the crafted landscape spaces designed for quiet reflection. Echoing is also found in the expectation for Native visitors to be able to see and recognize themselves to some degree in this "Native place." It further plays out through the cultural values encoded in this landscape, space, and/or place that recalls pre-contact life. As Cobb (2005a) states, "the natural eco-system, the attention to place and cosmology, the relationship between natural and built environments, the ancient yet modern building and the thousands of details inside, and the living functions the spaces serve are all elements that work

together to make the NMAI a truly Native place" (p. 373). From its inception, the National Museum of the American Indian has been conceived, designed, crafted, and presented as "a Native Place." This is evident not only in the many banners and signs around the museum heralding its visitors with "Welcome To A Native Place," but also in the various brochures and publications of the museum declaring the museum's existence as a Native place. More importantly, however, the museum carefully crafts active, multisensory engagement and remembrance of the landscape, space, and/or place.

Summary

Thus far, I have implied that storytelling in landscape, space, and/or place is the transmission of cultural values through the multisensory engagement described in the previous sections of this chapter. In many respects, storytelling is both a literal and a thematic engagement in multisensory experience and embodied in the landscape, space, and/or place. Thematically, story implied in the transmission of values, relationships, and moral guides described in my analysis of the landscape and architecture. As Howe (1995) notes, "codification of the Word in architectural codes enables architectural media to be inscribed with tribally specific traditional referents" (p. 63). Architecture is viewed as a communication medium for tribal values, goals, and identity. Literally, telling stories is also part of the process of Centering, Orienting, Moving, Arranging, and Echoing.

Presentation of the Authentic Native Voice and Perspective

The NMAI constructs an "authentic Native voice and perspective" through the presentation of Native cosmologies in the *Our Universes* gallery employing multimedia exhibitions. I argue that media praxis makes visible the rhetorical mechanisms and processes that shape and influence meaning and interpretation within the discursive contexts of these storied sites thereby illuminating some of the ways that storytelling—in various modes and media—participates in the production of culture.

Storytelling: Visual Representation and Display

Values, practices, and beliefs are culturally and contextually (social, cultural, historical, etc.) encoded and learned through practices of socially constructed meaning-making in conjunction with the visual culture we encounter in our daily lives (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). In a museum setting, this translates to the design issues of producing exhibitions that employ a variety of media and modalities. For example, in "Design as meaning making," Kazmierczak (2003) shifts concepts of design production to instead examine the "cognitive processes that underlie the reception of those designs" (p. 1). Seeing design as "cognitive interfaces" such a theory of design "stresses the semiotic relations between perception and meaning construction to explain the perceptual and cultural codes involved in communication" (p. 1). Similarly, Stroupe[37] (2000) emphasizes the "profoundly social processes of cultural interaction"

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[37] Stroupe develops this concept based on theories presented by Bakhtin.

that comprise contextual coding and interpretation (p. 25). Kress (2003) argues that understanding design requires understanding the social and cultural context in which it occurs. Sometimes, as Farrell (2006) notes in his chapter on the Irish Famine, meaning is constructed from purposeful absence as well (p. 67). There really are no universal standards for interpretation—viewers bring cultural assumptions and factors such as gender, age, class, and regional identity that play into interpretations of meaning. That is to say, interpretation and the assignment of meaning take place in a complex social interaction between audience, the image or media, the context, and the dominant ideology expressed through the milieu of display (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 47).

Furthermore, Sturken and Cartwright (2001) posit that the process of constructing meaning is reciprocal—audiences make meaning, but the images also construct the audience (p. 45). In other words, context not only involves how images are interpreted, but is affected by the context in which images are seen. For Shotter (2006), this reciprocal process arises from mutual and dialogic encounters with embodied presences that he refers to as an "active relational-responsive form of understanding." Moreover, Lutkehaus and Cool (1999) discuss cultural representations through ethnographic studies as a shared "dialectical relationship of interaction and impact" (p. 435).

Lest it appear that through mutual construction of meaning all groups remain equal in agency, it is important to understand that dominant ideologies are ever-present. Foregrounding Foucault's theories, Sturken and Cartwright (2001) claim that "Images can both exert power and act as instruments of power" (p. 93). Prelli (2006) notes that display, in whatever modes or manifestations, "anticipate a responding audience whose

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expectations might be satisfied or frustrated, their values and interests affirmed, neglected, or challenged" (p. 1). Dominant ideological constraints play out in expression of "taste" (Allen, 1996; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001), in the ways values are asserted (Gallagher, 2006), and in hidden or invisible rules or principles (Shotter, 2006). For example, in their discussion of the iconic photograph at Tiananmen Square, Hariman and Lucaites (2006) argue that framing the photograph so that it is absent of any context that might influence interpretation ideologically constrains possible interpretations of the image rather than providing an entry point into other cultures (p. 122).

Dominant ideology continues to exert force through economic and discourse control. Sturken and Cartwright (2001) note that according to Marxist theory, owning the means of production allows for the transmission of particular values and beliefs, thus mainstream values are conveyed in capitalist societies where only certain classes have access to media control and transmission (p. 51). Similarly, Gallagher (2006) asserts that hegemonic control occurs when dominant groups control the flow of cultural projection (p. 178). For Allen (1996), design is a language and therefore rhetorical, thus she argues that practitioners of technical and professional communication and teachers of visual communication must understand the rhetoricity of visual features in order to better understand the messages they convey. To explain the importance of this rhetoricity, she cites several definitions of rhetoric found in Woodson's (1979) handbook of rhetorical terms, such as Bitzer's contention that, "rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action" (p. 96). Kress and Van Leeuwen

(2001) note that discourses have the power to both include and exclude participants and events thus shaping interpretation. This demonstrates the colonizing capacity of dominant ideologies, which can shape and limit the kinds of meaning or signification available to audiences as they view images or media. As museums strive to represent people and cultures through images and various media, this is of particular concern. In essence, museum displays and cultural representation provide cultural symbols (Hall, 1997), which have the "power to shape cultural identities at both individual and social levels; to mobilize emotions, perceptions and values; to influence the way we feel and think" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 13).

However, while practices of representation and display may overwhelmingly constitute reification of dominant ideologies, especially in light of complex contextual constituencies, there are also possibilities for recursive transformations. For Hariman and Lucaites (2006), transformative possibilities exist in iconic images, for while they can constrain public memory, they also provide "important social, emotional, and mnemonic resources for democratic identity, thought, and action" (p. 122). Similarly, Gallagher (2006) discusses counter-hegemonic practices whereby dominant groups may be converted to subordinate ideologies. Hooper-Greenhill (2000) claims that "Culture can transmit dominant values, but can also be seen as a site of resistance where dominant shared codes may be disrupted or displaced, and where alternative shared codes can be produced" (p. 13). Sturken and Cartwright (2001) also offer a discussion of the ways that *bricolage* may be employed as tactics whereby audiences (or consumers) may usurp mainstream systems through appropriation, remix, culture jamming, and other forms of

resistance and counter-hegemonic practices. Therefore, while dominant ideologies exert force on the "other," resistance exerts a counter-force.

While meaning-making remains a recursive process through complex contextual constituencies, mutually constraining ideologies, and the shaping of discourse, representations also draw meaning from signification practices, multiple semiotic modes, and genres through which they function. Discussing signification practices, Arnheim (1969) described three functions of images—picture, symbol, and sign. The three functions help to realize an image's "mediating position between the world of sensory experience and the disembodied forces underlying the objects and events of that experience" (p. 147). Taking up this concept of the semiology of images, Barthes (1977) explicates linguistic, connotative, and denotative values assigned to images or symbols. Sturken and Cartwright (2001) further explain Barthes' model describing additional concepts of the sign, composed of signifier and signified. The production of a sign, they claim, is "dependent on social, historical, and cultural context," on the context in which it appears, and on the viewer's interpretation (p. 29). In addition to Barthes' model of semiotics, Sturken and Cartwright (2001) offer several theoretical foundations and cultural theories[38] for understanding how signifying practices take place and involve a range of issues such as ideological constraints, appropriation, and the enculturation of mainstream values. The image then, as sign, is expressed through semiotic modes

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[38] The authors survey Marxism, structuralism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis and other relevant theoretical foundations as offered by Foucault, Althusser, Hall, de Certeau and others. My summary of their work is not a complete summary of the text, but rather a sampling of those ideas I felt most applicable.

originally conceived as mode-specific[39], but some researchers examine combined or

multiple modes, which play out through a variety of genres (Allen, 1996; Farrell, 2006;

Kress, 2000; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001).

Understanding signifying practices and their expression through semiotic modes

is important to representation in cultural institutions because such knowledge is required

for critical examination of connotative and denotative meaning and how it is

constructed. New technologies have enabled wider audiences to become more critical of

their media-saturated world (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Through mythic connotation

appearing as denotation, the "myth of photographic truth" is an important consideration

in representation. Sturken and Cartwright (2001) note that while photographs may be

discursively transformative by serving as "expressive vehicle[s]" they also have value as

"empirical, informational document[s]" (p. 19). In Farrell's (2006) study of the visual and

verbal depictions of the Irish Famine in Skibbereen, he claims that the combination of

visual and verbal depictions performed a kind of synecdoche. The *Illustrated London News*

capitalized on the public notion of authenticity in visual representations by obtaining

sketches from an "artist on the scene." Farrell related, "There was something in the

sketch, in the visual representation of the scene that was more trustworthy as an

immediate and authentic representation of the "truth" being reported" (p. 67). Thus,

when the newspaper reporter intentionally left his sketches "undone" and verbally

claimed the scene was too horrific to describe, a reluctant 19th century British public was

finally moved to action. Sturken and Cartwright (2001) discuss the "myth of

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[39] i.e. sound for speech, body for movement, and so forth.

photographic truth" explaining its positivistic roots and contradictions inherent in the myth. "It is a paradox of photography," they claim, "that although we know that images can be ambiguous and are easily manipulated or altered, particularly with the help of computer graphics, much of the power of photography still lies with the shared belief that photographs are objective or truthful records of events" (p. 17). Furthermore, Allen (1996) claims technological advancements allowing manipulation and distortion of images/media amplify the ethical risks that technical and professional communicators must heed. She claims that these risks are ever greater because of lack of knowledge about the rhetorical effects of visual alterations and the rapidly increasing access to technologies that allow such alterations.

Storytelling: Visual Representation and Display at the NMAI

Ethnoarchitectonics through the rhetorical apparatus of COMAE not only reveals the rhetorical practices embedded and imbricated in storytelling through architecture and landscape, but can also provide analysis for multimedia museum installations. This is perhaps especially true for those designed to visually represent and display Native cosmologies. In the section that follows, I examine the multimedia exhibitions used to present Native cosmologies at the NMAI. In addition to his concept of COMAE and ethnoarchitectonics, I also draw upon Craig Howe's (2002) concept of event-centered tribal histories. Through four dimensions (spatial, social, spiritual, and experiential), of event-centered tribal histories, Howe elaborates concepts in common with his COMAE apparatus. For example, the spatial dimension of event-centered tribal histories roughly corresponds to a combination of centering and orienting. The shift in
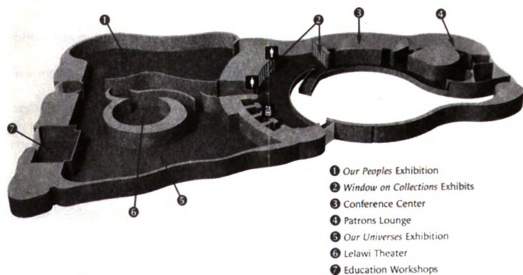
register represents the recursive and overlapping nature of the constituent concepts rather than separating them.

In the *Our Universes* gallery, visitors are required to 'engage with' Indigenous worldviews—cosmologies "related to the creation and order of the universe—and the spiritual relationship between humankind and the natural world" of eight different tribes of the Western Hemisphere. Figure 4.2 and 4.3 below show the floor map and blueprint respectively. It is difficult to tell from these illustrations but the gallery is set up with a central path from which each of the eight different tribal areas stem. Furthermore, upon entering the museum, the staff handing out the brochure with the floor map suggest that visitors begin on the fourth level with the Lelawi theatre, which offers an introductory short film on contemporary Native life. The theatre itself lets out into the *Our Universes* gallery and thus begins the visitor's journey.

Figure 4.2 *Our Universes* floor map.

FOURTH LEVEL

❶ *Our Peoples* Exhibition
❷ *Window on Collections* Exhibits
❸ Conference Center
❹ Patrons Lounge
❺ *Our Universes* Exhibition
❻ Lelawi Theater
❼ Education Workshops

Figure 4.3 *Our Universes* blueprint.

"Organized around the solar year, the exhibition introduces visitors to indigenous peoples from across the Western Hemisphere who continue to express the wisdom of their ancestors in celebration, language, art, spirituality, and daily life." Primarily, these worldviews are expressed through the oral tradition of story. In understanding the delivery of storytelling through multimedia, it is important to note the parallels between oral communication and multimedia communication as discussed earlier in this chapter. However, as these concepts and extra-linguistic elements are conveyed through multimedia, visitors who assume that they can simply receive information without engaging may become confused.

In his chapter of *Clearing a Path*, titled "Keep Your Thoughts Above the Trees," Craig Howe (2002) discusses the ways in which architecture reflects space and place in ways that also reflect the spiritual center of a home or even community. In "the [*sic*] Indigenous tribal perspective on tribal histories," histories are told in stories which are event-centered and the telling of them involves the four dimensions of spatial, social, spiritual and experiential understanding. There is an important interrelationship of these four dimensions which involves not only the remembered past of a particular group of people, but it is firmly grounded in the land, in reciprocity and in responsibility. While Howe is careful to caution that nothing can replicate or replace oral tradition, he does, however, suggest some ways in which multimedia museum gallery displays can achieve aspects of the four dimensions specifically because they allow for non-linear negotiation of the information and provide a contextualized experience of the remembered past. This non-linearity is important because one of the major points of resistance for non-Native visitors to the NMAI is that the cultures represented through the museum are not presented according to a Western timeline. As Howe (2002) emphasizes in his chapter, "the temporal span of tribal histories extends from the beginning of time to the end of time" (p. 169). The gallery attends to this temporal span by introducing its visitors to the creation stories and symbols of cosmology.

For example, in Figure 4.4, this large glass sculpture, symbolic of the origin story of Raven stealing the sun, takes the entire entry wall of the gallery. As visitors exit the Lelawi Theatre or as they enter from the museum foyer, they see first this image from cosmology—rendered in modern sculpture by a Native artist—and the words from gallery curator Emil Her Many Horses:

Figure 4.4: Raven steals the sun, blown glass. Preston Singletary (Tlingit), 2003.

Traditional Knowledge Shapes Our World

In this gallery, you'll discover how Native people understand their place in the universe and order their daily lives.

Our philosophies of life come from our ancestors. They taught us to live in harmony with the animals, plants, spirit world, and the people around us. In Our Universes, you'll encounter Native people from the Western Hemisphere who continue to express this wisdom in ceremonies, celebrations, languages, arts, religions, and daily life.

It is our duty to pass these teachings on to succeeding generations, for that is the way to keep our traditions alive.

In Figure 4.5 below, a viewer watches a series of illustrated creation stories for each of the eight tribes represented in the gallery. The screening area is located inside landscape silhouettes flanked by Tlingit house posts, and speaks about the various images found throughout the gallery.

Figure 4.5: Illustrated creation stories.

The concept of centering in creation and the non-linearity of time is a difficult concept for non-Native visitors to comprehend, but one that can eventually be understood. Applied as a rhetorical apparatus, Howe's (2002) four dimensions of event-centered tribal histories may help Native and non-Native visitors alike to understand the ways in which the NMAI expresses its new museological paradigm.

One means of understanding the event-centered orientation and non-linearity of Native histories is through the spatial dimension. This relationship is reciprocal in nature and whereas the "land has primacy over human beings," Howe further asserts that "lands are thus enriched by accounts that link events to places rather than to a chronological narrative" (p. 164). Events do not take place in time, as they do according to the Westernized notions, but rather, Howe states, "Events take place in space..." (p. 164). Similarly, gallery exhibits allow for such event/land/space-based histories to be represented because they can focus on a geographic location or landscape rather than implementing time as a distinguishing feature. The main space of the gallery not only contains cosmological symbols such as the starry sky above, but the silhouettes of landscapes are also present.

Within this context of sky, story, landscape, and cosmology, the display objects relating to traditional ceremonies have been placed. The spatial and social aspect of event-centered histories overlap as can be seen in Figure 4.6, which shows the night sky illuminating Devil's Tower, a sacred site to the Lakota.

Figure 4.6: Devil's Tower.

The social dimension, Howe claims, "relates land and identity to the concept of 'peoplehood,' a unique community identity differentiated from other tribes and from individual Indian persons" (p. 165). In other words, the social dimension is that of a distinct community with a particular landscape—a landscape not bounded by maps or geographies or even based on time. Whether or not the particular community is located on that remembered landscape currently is irrelevant to the significance of the land and the tribal history. Through events associated with a remembered landscape or place, each tribal community draws its distinctive identity.

In terms of the museum, the social dimension plays out according to the selection of which groups are chosen for representation as illustrated in Figure 4.7 showing some of the community curators. Each of the tribes selected—the eight tribes of the Western Hemisphere were originally scheduled to be rotated approximately every two years—

show the community curators responsible for assisting in design and representation choices for their tribal-specific spaces. Thus the social dimension plays out according to the tribal peoples involved and according to the distinct geographic place:

Figure 4.7: Community Curators.

> [T]ribes whose known landscapes encompassed that place at some time in their histories may be included. Whether or not the tribes are similar in culture or history or currently occupy that area is irrelevant—just so long as that particular place was known at some time in each of their histories, even if it was not simultaneous. (Howe, 2002, p. 169)

The spatial and social dimensions are also intimately tied with the spiritual dimension of the Indigenous perspective on tribal histories because, as Howe states, "The relationships between tribal peoples and their lands are guided by the spiritual dimension of tribalism" (p. 165). Quoting Vine Deloria, Jr., Howe goes on to explain that "…the attachment to the land by the people becomes something extraordinary and involves a sense of identity and corresponding feeling of responsibility" (p. 166). The interrelation between the spatial, social and spiritual dimension thus guides the moral and

ethical standards governing interactions with land and peoples. Furthermore, Howe states that because the temporal space of tribal histories expands from the beginning of time to the end, "tribal histories are inextricably linked to spiritual traditions" (p. 166). This temporal notion plays out in multimedia museum exhibits as well since multimedia is not limited to a specific frame of temporal reference.

The spiritual dimension of tribal histories can be seen in Figures 4.8 and 4.9 below showing the cosmology explanations at the entrance of each tribal-specific space. For example, Figure 4.8 shows the entrance to the Santa Clara Pueblo space and highlights not only the tribal "wheel" illustrating their spiritual tenets, but also shows the connection with the land and with continuity by showing a present-day image to the left of the "wheel."

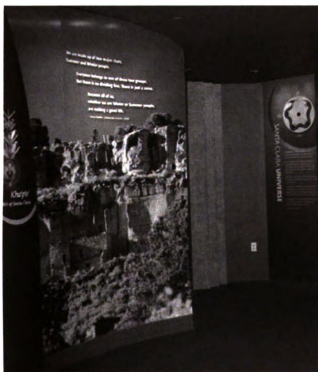Figure 4.8: Santa Clara Pueblo.

Figure 4.9, below, shows the symbols and explanations for the Lakota and Quechua tribal cosmologies.

Figure 4.9 Lakota and Quechua Cosmologies.

The fourth dimension of tribalism is the experiential dimension, which "recognizes that tribal communities perpetuate ongoing relationships with their high spiritual powers" (Howe, 2002, p. 166). This recognition, Howe explains, is not based on blind faith, but rather on the interactions and participation that community members experience. Furthermore, the experiential dimension, like the other dimensions before it, does not stand alone, but rather is a constellation of all four dimensions. Just as in the discussion of multimedia/multimodal delivery earlier in this chapter, Howe claims that the "Tribal historians traditionally created multisensory settings within which they presented their tribal history performances" (p. 166). This might include "eating, drinking, smoking, singing, and dancing" to accompany the performance. In other words, community members do not go to receive a lecture, they experience the event, in

the telling, and in the remembering through their embodied participation. This dimension can be incorporated in the multimedia museum exhibits as well since it can incorporate "images, sounds, and written texts" as well as "smells, tastes, and textures" (p. 170). An important component of the experiential dimension in museums brings us back to the sense of non-linearity again as visitors physically move themselves from one exhibit space to another—from the outside to the inside and between any of the four floors of the museum. Visitors must engage the museum through a type of immersion in the multisensory environments. Each tribal areas contains not only objects from the museum's holdings, but also present day images of tribal activities using those types of objects. In many of the tribal exhibit areas there are video recordings, audio recordings, smells from the wood or other materials present, the sounds of birds or of corn blowing in the breeze—all multisensory applications designed to provide context for the visitor.

This new museological paradigm is one in which the museum functions *as* an act of storytelling, it is a place of celebration and remembrance, and as a new paradigm, we will have to learn how to "read" it. For as Cobb (2005a) concludes, the museum is not a museum at all, but "a living place bearing witness" (p. 380).

CHAPTER FIVE

MEDIA PRAXIS: READING CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

I acknowledge that I have a debt to all the peoples whose stories are told indirectly through the process of this dissertation. Because this dissertation is, in part, designed to test the effectiveness of the media praxis approach I developed, I perform moderate analysis of each of the storied sites, choosing to focus on specific instances of storytelling across the sites. There are many Native peoples whose lives my great grandfather touched. There are also many Native peoples whose stories coalesce as the heart of the National Museum of the American Indian—those stories become a backdrop, not a focus, for my discussion of the museum and how *it* tells stories. Particularly in terms of chapter three, storied sites of Native storytelling in response to Davis and in response to the NMAI would have made a much richer and more complete picture of how storytelling participates in the production of culture.

That storytelling participates in the production of culture is not the issue; such concerns are tautological. However, considering *how* storytelling participates in the production of culture has been my primary interest here. The mechanisms and processes by which people and institutions negotiate discursive contexts and competing ideologies often remain invisible. And yet, it is these very mechanisms, processes, and negotiations that participate in the production of culture by shaping and influencing how culture is valued, taught, created, distributed, displayed, and so forth. Media praxis is a useful approach for reading and analyzing storytelling as a cultural institution because it investigates *how* storytelling participates in the production of culture. In this dissertation,

I used the media praxis approach to work through a series of four storied sites involving the National Museum of the American Indian and its cornerstone collector Edward H. Davis. My purpose was not only to determine *how* storytelling participates in the production of culture in these storied sites, but also to test the effectiveness of the interdisciplinary approach. In this conclusion, I summarize my analysis of the storied sites, discussing what this analysis reveals about the NMAI. Furthermore, I extend implications for media praxis as an interdisciplinary approach and its possible contributions to future scholarship.

Summary

In each of the storied sites, I examined storytelling situated in the social, historical, and cultural discursive contexts in which it occurred in order to make visible the rhetorical processes that contribute to the production of culture. Chapter three examined the rhetorical practices employed in telling stories to establish particular kinds of identity and then situated those practices in their social, historical, and cultural discursive contexts. Close rhetorical reading in this way revealed the negotiations and strategies at play as Davis and the NMAI constructed their identities. The analysis revealed the rhetorical practices embedded and imbricated in the discursive contexts and in material rhetoric—a common discursive formation to Davis and the NMAI—of each storied site. It may be obvious that ideological foundations work below the visible surface of communicative acts, but media praxis provides a means for making those rhetorical processes more visible, indicating the specific mechanisms of complex layering of meaning and interpretation. Davis employed storytelling to construct an identity as a

"friend" and advocate of Native peoples and as a "scientific" ethnologist. Media praxis

reveals specific negotiations through rhetorical practices that enabled him to create these

identities, but also illustrates how his decisions and practices were influenced by

underlying ideologies.

Likewise, the NMAI employs storytelling to create an identity as a new type of

museum offering collaborative partnerships, the "authentic Native voice," and a counter

to damaging stereotypes through cultural continuance. By situating these claims in the

museum's discursive context, analysis reveals the ideological foundations that influence

the construction of this identity. The media praxis analysis illuminates how invisible or

unacknowledged competing ideologies establish colonization as "an absent presence[40]"

in the NMAI. Specifically, the NMAI's resistance against its own mainstream

institutional identity through attempting to assert a new identity essentializes Native

peoples and reinforces colonization and control through reiteration of dichotomous

"either/or" propositions and exclusion of some Native communities.

In chapter four, I focused analysis on how the NMAI performs storytelling

thematically and literally by examining how the NMAI constructs "a Native place"

through its landscaping and architecture and through orienting visitors to the "authentic

Native voice" in its use of multimedia displays in the *Our Universes* gallery. I employed the

media praxis approach to examine the rhetorical mechanisms and processes embedded in

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[40] The concepts of absence and presence are ubiquitous in theoretical discussions. See, for example: Barthes, Baudrillard, de Certeau, Derrida, or Deleuze. As applied to the NMAI and colonization specifically, I credit Myla Vicenti Carpio (2006) who describes colonization as an absent presence in "(Un)disturbing Exhibitions: Indigenous Historical Memory at the NMAI."

the NMAI's storytelling. I also chose these particular storied sites to test the effectiveness

of media praxis on a variety of storytelling modes and media.

The NMAI claims to create "a Native place" through its architecture and

landscaping. Thus, I examined this site of storytelling situated in the discursive contexts

of space and place as well as through the lens of ethnoarchitectonics—a common

discursive formation to both the architecture/landscape and the multimedia exhibits.

The media praxis analysis makes visible the rhetorical practices through which the NMAI

creates "a Native place" through meaning encoded in its architecture and landscaping.

The analysis, however, also reveals how this "Native place" represents a pan-Indian

imagining.

Finally, the *Our Universes* gallery literally and thematically employs storytelling to

establish "an authentic Native voice and perspective" by orienting museum visitors

through Native cosmologies. Since this storytelling is expressed through multimedia

exhibitions, the analysis situates storytelling in digital rhetoric and visual rhetoric

discursive contexts as well as employing the ethnoarchitectonics lens. Analysis of the *Our*

Universes gallery makes visible the mechanisms and processes though which the NMAI

expresses important orienting concepts of Native cosmology. The media praxis analysis

suggests that the specificity in telling the story of eight particular tribes, as opposed to all

Natives of the Western Hemisphere, make this gallery perhaps the most successful

example of storytelling at the NMAI.

Ultimately, what my analysis shows is that the National Museum of the American

Indian is a double-rhetorical space—a place of "both/and." By both/and I mean that is

both a new museological paradigm that does, indeed, provide *some* positive steps toward

more equitable representation of Native peoples, and it is also intimately tied to its historical and colonizing institutional legacy, which continues to shape and constrain the museum's rhetorical practices and the stories it tells. By claiming to provide "the authentic Native voice and perspective" through re-presenting the voices of only those Native communities it carefully selects, interprets, and displays, the NMAI effects a giant act of ventriloquism in that the institution is still determining what can be said and by whom, and how it can be said.

Furthermore, although the architecture and landscape designs brings many important Native concepts to bear in its architectural codes and establishes a Native presence facing the Capitol building from the National Mall, in the very act of bringing "Nativeness" to the National Mall, the NMAI further essentializes Native communities by effecting a sort of pan-Indian manifestation of architecture and landscape.

Additionally, in establishing collaboration and cooperation with Native tribes, the NMAI only provides opportunities for these relationships and potential benefits for Native groups in alignment with the museum's mission and goals. Although the museum claims to represent all Native tribes of the Western Hemisphere, in terms of the United States, that only refers to federally recognized tribes. Furthermore, because the NMAI is mandated to maintain its massive collection intact, the NMAI naturally has an affinity to work with those groups whose objects are most richly represented in the collection.

Finally, while the museum claims to usher in a "new museological paradigm," and certainly does offer some progressive moves toward more equitable representations, the NMAI must acknowledge its institutional legacy including the Heye Foundation and the colonizing practices of museums throughout history. Davis' rhetorical practices represent

common ethnological collecting practices of his time, and yet in resisting acknowledgement of such institutional and historical connections, the NMAI blithely reproduces traditional, mainstream ideologies.

Implications

Media praxis is an effective research approach for making visible the rhetorical mechanisms and processes whereby storytelling participates in the production of culture. In each of the storied sites, examining storytelling situated in its discursive contexts reveals underlying ideologies or assumptions that shape and influence meaning and interpretation. Media praxis illuminates *how* various aspects of culture are valued, displayed, expressed, distributed, and so forth, thus contributing to cultural production. In terms of the NMAI, media praxis offers a serious look at what the museum does well, where it fails in its mission, and why it fails. Many critics of the museum—Native and non-Native alike—have already raised discussion of colonization. In fact, this aspect of museums in general is also a ubiquitous discussion. What the media praxis approach may offer museums like the NMAI is a self-reflexive means for assessment. The NMAI is a complicated space for Native peoples and Native scholars; however, the media praxis approach demonstrates the kind of space it can be for other scholars. The approach takes a place that has a specific function and makes it available to other scholars who might work in cultural rhetorics or who want to think about the museum from a Native studies perspective rather than simply do a critique and/or deconstruction.

The means for observation, assessment, and analysis through the media praxis approach may also offer rhetoric and composition avenues for thinking differently about

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places like museums. Media praxis also opens up spaces for thinking about ceremonial spaces like storytelling, marriage, or even adoption as cultural institutions. In these institutions, often neglected in institutional critiques, media praxis makes visible the rhetorical processes and mechanisms that shape and influence the production of culture.

In terms of digital, visual, and even cultural rhetoric, media praxis offers an additional means for thinking about the interplay between identity and representation. Media praxis makes visible the complex layering and interaction of the representation of identity through various modes and media. Media praxis also offers an approach to understand the role of discursive contexts on representations and identity-building.

Ultimately, the real value in the media praxis approach is as a model for interdisciplinary inquiry and research. Through the media praxis approach, I bring together a variety of interdisciplinary research methods to investigate storytelling as a cultural institution.

Future research

Although the scope and nature of this dissertation necessitated moderate analysis across a range of storytelling and storied sites, future research may benefit from more in-depth analysis. Furthermore, as demonstrated in my analysis, one of the values in the media praxis approach is that storied sites may mutually inform each other. Therefore, future studies may also aim to include multiple storied sites to provide a more complex illustration of the mutually constitutive discursive contexts.

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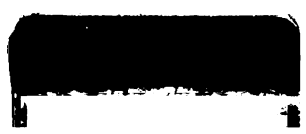Maracle, L. (1994). Oratory: Coming to theory. *Essays on Canadian Writing*, (54), 7-11.

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