

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: VANISHING IMAGES?: MEDIATIONS OF
NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE TRADITION
OF THE WESTERN

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This dissertation investigates the legacy of the Western, one of the most prolific genres in American popular culture. With its focus on the central conflict between Native Americans and white settlers, the Western has shaped Indian stereotypes that continue to influence how Americans look at Native Americans today. This dissertation interrogates how Western visual and narrative conventions continue to influence Indian images in current US public discourse, and how these conventions are renegotiated or replaced in contemporary texts.

It concludes that, in both texts that seek to dismantle stereotypes and in texts that could be considered self-representation, dominant frameworks, such as the visual conventions of the *National Geographic*, media frames concerning Indianness, and national museums, nonetheless recirculate (revisionist) Western conventions.

Therefore, visual tropes, such as the Noble and Ignoble Indian as well as the Indian Warrior, and narrative tropes, such as the Cowboy/Indian dichotomy, exist in non-Western popular texts in updated forms, as three case studies demonstrate.

First, Aaron Huey's *National Geographic* photos reflect Western conventions by depicting Native Americans in the duality of the traditional and spiritually-minded Noble Indian on the one hand, and the modern, poor, and decrepit Ignoble Indian on the other. Second, the press coverage of the Cowboy and Indian Alliance insisted on the narrative of the "unlikely alliance" between Native and non-Native activists. Third, the National Museum of the American Indian exhibit, *Americans*, reaffirms the visual of the Indian Warrior over other iterations.

Two dynamics seem to effectively challenge Western conventions, as demonstrated in the Native criticism of Huey's project, the Native self-representation in the CIA protest, and the NMAI. First, articulating modern Native American identities negates the Western's generic Indianness and rejects a cultural conceptualization of Indianness. Emphasizing Native American sovereignty affirms Native political agency and rejects stereotypes such as the Ecological/Spiritual Indian. Second, embedding public constructions of Indianness in historical and social context challenges American master narratives of benign expansion.

VANISHING IMAGES?: MEDIATIONS OF NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE
TRADITION OF THE WESTERN

by

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INTRODUCTION

On a sunny Saturday in April 2014, I stood on the National Mall listening to speakers from the Cowboy and Indian Alliance (CIA) explaining their reasons for protesting the Keystone XL Pipeline. On stage, members of several US and Canadian tribal nations together with representatives of midwestern farmers and ranchers expressed their fears of environmental damage to their reservations, lands, and farms, and protested the abuse of Native lands with a mixed audience for support.¹ A rally on horseback followed. Instead of focusing on the functioning cooperation, the press covered the event as an exotic and surprising alliance of mortal enemies. The *National Geographic*'s article even opened with the trope of a shoot-out at high noon to depict the commonly assumed animosity between cowboys and Indians.² Visually, picturesque Indians and the tipis on the National Mall dominated the news coverage.

Headdresses, moccasins, shoot-outs, horseback riders, the violent conflict between cowboys and Indians—the connections to popular understandings of the Western genre were impossible to overlook both in the protest event itself and in the following news coverage. The news coverage highlighted that the repetition of Western conventions concerning both narrative and visual frameworks is prevalent and reductive when Native Americans are concerned. The name and form of the protest itself highlight that Native American protestors can use Western imagery to their advantage under certain circumstances. That the participants of the CIA were willing and able to invite visual and narrative tropes of Indianness emphasizes that there is a space in which dominant projections of marginalized groups can be used to the benefit of these marginalized groups. The same tropes—headdress, warrior on horseback, shoot-out—can

have vastly different meanings and uses depending on who uses them in what way to what end.

This deliberate engagement of Western imagery thus happened both on the end of the (mostly) non-Native press coverage and on the end of the Native protestors and allies. Considering the status of the Western in American popular culture, this is not surprising. It is plainly impossible to put a Native horseback rider in full headdress and buckskin clothes next to a tipi without invoking Western associations. Importantly, that same image, with its reflection of American ideas of exotic Otherness and the Wild West, is both a secure ticket to press attention and a secure ticket to attention for the press. In this case, the press coverage banked on the fact that readers would be interested in cowboys and Indians; and the CIA banked on the fact that Western imagery would achieve press attention to highlight a serious complaint: that the US government was appropriating, destroying, and desecrating Native lands yet again.

That visual and narrative stereotypes can apparently be used to benefit the marginalized group should not draw attention away from the fact that dominant society's ideas have had a devastating effect on Native communities over the last five hundred years, and that these effects have been legitimized by the ways in which society looks at Native Americans. The relative invisibility of Native Americans in mainstream media gives disproportional "communicative power to the few prevalent representations" available to audiences.³ This reductive and stereotypical representation has consequences on individual and societal levels.⁴ On the political level, it leaves Native Americans at a disadvantage when, for example, historical or contemporary economic issues are negotiated in the context of land rights, water rights, rights to resources, education, health

care, or political sovereignty.⁵ On the personal level, it leaves Native people under an acute threat of both personal discrimination and “chronic feelings of inferiority,” which can possibly evolve into self-fulfilling prophecies.⁶ For non-Native audiences, the stereotypes seem to justify discrimination and behavior that would be unacceptable toward (most) other marginalized communities. As Nancy Marie Mithlo (Chiricahua Apache)⁷ points out:

American culture possesses Native Americans as their own. The majority of the public will not allow us to grow up, vent our rage, and begin living our lives with dignity.... The nation wants to own Indians. This is why it appears appropriate for otherwise intelligent college students to use racial slurs as team mascots....

Cultures can be sold and bartered, they can be emulated, they can be the topic of film. We can be held, defined, and finally buried.⁸

Furthermore, imagining Native Americans as savages in constant and natural opposition to cowboys as a stand-in for settler society influences public discourse in relevant and problematic ways today. The antagonism at the heart of the Western narratives allows Americans to retrospectively legitimize the brutal conquest from East Coast to West Coast that enabled and still enables the United States as they are today. Western narratives obscure that the prosperity and wealth of the United States as they exist today rest on the forceful land theft, the betrayal of Native nations in the treaty making processes, the removal and decimation of Native tribes, and the resulting genocide. As recent examples such as the Keystone Pipeline or the Dakota Access Pipeline projects demonstrate, the question of domination and desecration of land cannot be relegated to a cleanly contained past. Furthermore, the Native American as the savage

Other allowed and allows American dominant society to draw a boundary around the ever-evolving identity that is at the basis of this “imagined community.”⁹ Thus, Indian images in the public sphere serve to maintain a status quo in which Native Americans are grossly neglected, mistreated, and unequal in comparison to other groups within the American ethnic and racial make-up.¹⁰

While the connection between visual mediations of Native Americans and these living conditions is by no means causal, it is undeniable that how we imagine people influences our attitude toward them. Today, movies, TV shows, commercials, hipster headdresses, Southwestern patterns in fashion, or the hype around dream catchers and Navajo patterns on Urban Outfitters underwear affirm the continued status of Native American culture as backward, exotic, belonging to the past, and ready for consumption by dominant society.¹¹ Native peoples are written out of American narratives of modernity and American identity. Because of this exclusion, modern, real-world Native needs, concerns, and calamities are always already less visible and less valid within the public sphere than dominant society’s problems. Ironically, Native Americans have to justify how they belong into US society and explain how they have been mistreated for centuries. All the while, the Western genre continues to ease non-Natives’ minds by spinning narratives that portray the settlement of the West and the annihilation of Native cultures as part of a Manifest Destiny, and that portray Native American cultures as backward and bound to disappear, articulating modern Indianness as an impossibility.

Even though John Wayne-type Indian killers no longer populate the screen and Westerns tend to be more “sympathetic” toward Indians today than they were in 1950, the legacy of the genre is very much alive in our depictions of Native Americans. Both

visual and narrative tropes indebted to the Western continue to constrain Indian images as they appear in the American public sphere. While the Western is not the only genre within which Indian images have been negotiated, it is one of the most influential and popular versions of the American master narrative. So far, dominant society has struggled to create narratives or images of Native Americans that are meaningfully distinct from Western representations handed down through various media, predominately film. Analyzing these outsider-representations in the American public sphere highlights how “Americans” conceptualize themselves and Native Americans. At the same time, Native Americans have increasing influence within the American public spheres as active participants in politics, academia, journalism, social media, museums, and arts. This enhanced reach inserts Native voices and people into public negotiations of Indianness as agents of self-representation—voices that compete with generic, dominant stereotypes.

This dynamic of insider- and outsider-representation leads to the research questions for this dissertation. Fundamentally, I am interested in images of contemporary Native communities and individuals within the legacies of the Western genre. Several overarching research question complexes govern my case studies. First, how are themes of the Western genre reflected and renegotiated in images of Native Americans? Second, how does the Western genre influence articulations of contemporary Native American identity? Third, how do self- and other-representation affirm or interrupt these conventions in different ways? Three case studies shed light on these questions: First, I look at Aaron Huey’s photo project “In the Shadow of Wounded Knee,” which was published in the *National Geographic* in 2012 accompanied by the storytelling project “Voices of Pine Ridge.”¹² Second, I look at the news media coverage of the Cowboy and

Indian Alliance's Reject and Protect protests in 2014. Lastly, I look at the *Americans* exhibit in the National Museum of the American Indian in DC.

In this introduction, I first outline a critical approach to contextualizing images and provide a discussion of identity construction and its intersection with visual culture. In the second part of the introduction, I provide the specific background for situating the case studies in the visual and narrative legacies of the Western. In order to do so, I outline the history of Indian images that preceded and shaped the Western. I then define the Western genre and provide an overview over its history. Consequently, I highlight the narrative and visual conventions concerning Native Americans produced by the Western genre and analyze how these concepts influence non-Western depictions of contemporary Native Americans.

Framing Images

As the introductory anecdote has highlighted, Indian images exist as visual and narrative tropes. Because the Western genre functions in different media, and because American ideas of Indianness have been shaped through various visual and narrative media, I employ the term "image" loosely. "Image" denotes visual optical representations as well as mental representations or ideas about something. For this dissertation, this malleability works well because Indian images function within the public sphere both as visual representations and as ideas that can be communicated in both narrative and verbal forms. For example, the Indian Warrior image as visual denotes a Plains man on horseback, usually with leather clothes and feathers. But the Indian Warrior can also be articulated as a narrative component: as an antagonist to expansion in narratives of How

the West Was Won and Manifest Destiny. The concept of Indian “images” is therefore broader than a question of “pure” visuality.

Because all three of my case studies use visual cues to articulate Indianness, this section formulates a theoretical background for images and their contexts. In order to establish a framework for images, I use photography to highlight aspects of visual culture since both Aaron Huey’s project and the CIA press coverage rely on photography as a primary visual medium. Furthermore, I offer a brief overview over US American concepts of “Native Americans” and “Indians” in order to highlight intersections of identity construction and image cultures.

Images and Their Contexts

The meaning of images is neither stable nor fixed. Like verbal texts, images are polysemous texts whose meaning is contingent on historical context, visual culture, and the immediate verbal or visual environment of the image. These contexts and meaning-making processes are shaped by power dynamics within the public sphere: The power to engage in representation and interpretation as well as the privilege of visibility is not equally distributed among different sections or groups within the public sphere. The author of an image and its audience co-contribute to the rhetorical meaning-making process that is necessarily part of both the creative and the interpretive phases of photography. In some cases, such as photography, the photographed are also part of this meaning-making process.

This conceptualization shapes a critical approach to images that I elaborate on in three points. First, critics need to situate images in their context: historical context, visual culture, and the immediate verbal or visual environment. Second, critics must account for

visual cultures as a form of power relations. Control over production as well as conventions of seeing and interpretation grant power unequally to different groups within a public sphere. Colonial histories shape traditions of looking which in turn shape visual cultures today, especially when the subjects of images are marginalized communities like Native Americans. A third point is specific to photography. For photography, rhetorical critics must account for the interplay between all participants in photography and resist attributing too much agency to the photographer and too little to both the photographed and the public.

Just like verbal texts, images as texts for criticism are constructed by the author and the viewer. For viewer interpretation, the images' contexts become vital to understanding, meaning that contexts need to be carefully interrogated. A definition of "context" is not clear or obvious because the environment that includes clues to an image's meaning is usually not articulated by the image itself.¹³ Therefore, the critic needs to determine the context necessary for lucid interpretation. It is one vital task of the critic to choose and assemble both text and context from the historical context, the visual culture, and the immediate visual and verbal context of the images.

The immediate context is usually the article or publication in which the viewer encounters the image. Especially the verbal narratives surrounding images have caused some debate about questions of interpretation since there seems to be an urge in scholarship to draw a dividing line between the "visual" and the "verbal." However, scholars should look at visual rhetoric as a "project of inquiry rather than a product," as Cara Finnegan has suggested. The "distinction between text and image" is unproductive in the context of visual rhetoric, and the field should be conceived "neither as exclusively

textual nor exclusively visual.”¹⁴ We encounter images in magazines, journals, newspapers, advertising, and social media as well as on TV or posters,—and these media generally offer a mixed-media environment. Many images contain text or are embedded in narrative text, and photographs might have captions.

Excluding linguistic components from analyzing images creates an unwarranted assumption of purity in visuals.¹⁵ W. J. T. Mitchell’s conceptualization of media is helpful in this regard. He posits that the “image-texts” as “the interaction of pictures and text is constitutive of representation as such: All media are mixed media, and all representations are heterogeneous; there are no ‘purely’ visual or verbal arts.”¹⁶ Looking at images in their verbal context allows a conceptualization of the three case studies as mixed media with strong visual components. This visual aspect of the immediate context also needs to be considered. Immediate visual context can consist, for example, of the sequence of images into which the photograph in question is embedded.¹⁷ Dana Cloud has shown how the sequence of images in a photo essay covering Afghan women and men helps to establish a binary between white, western “saviors” and pre-modern, helpless Afghan women.¹⁸ Accounting for verbal and visual contexts allows the critic to look at the cues for meaning making left by authors and editors, which are also available to the audience-interpreter. Visual critics need to direct their attention toward the immediate environment—be it verbal, pictorial, or a combination of both—in order to assure an informed interpretation.

These immediate environments lead to considerations of broader contexts: historical context and visual cultures. “Visual cultures” as a form of context are viewing practices surrounding images that “privilege... certain forms of visual expression over

others.”¹⁹ Martin Jay called these practices “scopic regimes” that make possible certain ways of seeing while rendering impossible other ways.²⁰ This conceptualization highlights that practices of looking are culturally contingent, and not biologically determined. As a terminological distinction, it is helpful to differentiate vision, visibility, and visuality: vision is the biological process of seeing; visibility concerns the question “who or what gets recognized in what ways”; and visuality concerns the question “how histories and relationships between entities can be imagined.”²¹ While terminological distinction is possible for the sake of argument, in practice, these modes of the visual experience are entangled with each other.²² The critic should therefore account for these aspects as mutually reinforcing.

However, the terminology is helpful to differentiate between things that can be depicted and things that cannot. Looking at images as a kind of discourse that will “make certain things visible in particular ways” at the same time that it makes “other things unseeable” allows critics to account for conventions of looking, which impact all participants in photography: the photographer, photographed, and audience.²³ Visual culture as the “cultural convention of vision” helps critics to frame how particular societies look at particular issues at a particular moment in time.²⁴ This introduction includes a section that characterizes conventions of looking in the particular field of Native American images.

The connection between conventions of seeing and power relations is the second dynamic of images that critics have to account for. In the United States, power relations between dominant and marginalized groups often play out along ethnic or racial lines. For example, photography often re-inscribes these differences between groups visually.

Visually marking difference makes pictures and vision elementary to understanding how photographers and photographed place themselves in relationship to a world in which race and ethnicity are an essential part of identity and social standing.²⁵ Furthermore, in a world as saturated with images and as self-conscious about debates concerning oppression, ethnicity, and race as ours, it is essential to discuss the habits of seeing and the norms of representation.

As mentioned above, images created by dominant society about marginalized communities are often harmful and render absent or invisible the real people behind the tropes. Practices of seeing can conceal, oversimplify, and reduce historical events and structures.²⁶ Potentially, the normalizing effect of images contributes to the fact that socially constructed categories like race or ethnicity become inscribed as objective fact.²⁷ Following Elizabeth Kaszynski's idea of "visualization" as those social relationships that can be imagined, visualizations of race can become limiting and damaging.²⁸ This possible damage necessitates a careful assessment of cultural conventions and traditions of vision since they are historically contingent and cannot be disentangled from historical and cultural environments.²⁹

Visual culture as viewing practice complicates and often limits the things that can be said about race and power relations in public. Images of marginalized communities within dominant media are often simplistic, stereotypical, and damaging. Furthermore, visual cultures might aesthetically limit ways in which marginalized communities can be portrayed. One example is the critique of "pornographic" image conventions with which some critics accuse photographers of exploiting their marginalized subjects.³⁰ Charges of "poverty porn" accuse photographers of highlighting the "aberrational qualities of low-

income people” at the exclusion of any other aspects of their culture.³¹ Poor people are romanticized and stripped of any agency to influence their own representation.³²

The central aesthetic argument of those accusing photographs of being pornographic is the assumption that “beautiful” images are improper vehicles for depicting suffering. The idea that terrible social conditions should not be shown in aesthetically pleasing forms has, thus, resulted in the triumph of an “insultingly slummy aesthetic: craft, care, structure, and visual power... are now morally suspect in photojournalism, while sloppiness denotes authenticity and a good heart.”³³ However, characterizing the aestheticizing of suffering as pornographic grafts the moral criticism of pornography—there are some things that strangers should not see and whose “worth is diminished when they do”—onto photographs of suffering people.³⁴ As Susie Linfield points out, the issue with stories and images falling into this category should not be that someone dared taking pictures of (in this case) abject poverty; the issue should be that the conditions for abject poverty exist in the first place. The critic should therefore keep in mind that it is important to condemn the horrendous conditions under which some communities live, not to silence the people or images reporting these conditions by labeling the depictions as pornographic or exploitative.³⁵

It is possible to treat visual analysis as an “unmasking” both of the damaging ideologies of the powerful and of the consequences of these ideologies, especially when focusing on marginalized communities.³⁶ However, the dynamic to dismiss contentious images altogether or to attack their authors creates an impossible standard for depicting the suffering of communities at the margins of society. There is no unproblematic way to show the “degradation of a person[,] the death of a nation[, or] unforgivable violence.”³⁷

In terms of photographing communities in distress, Ariella Azoulay's comments that "whoever seeks to use photography must exploit the photographed individual's vulnerability." This is even more true when the photographed person belongs to a marginalized community. Photographs are "liable to exploit the photographed individual, aggravate his or her injury, publicly expose it, and rob the individual of intimacy."³⁸

Luckily, there are redeeming qualities to both photographs specifically and images more generally in their potential to contribute to discourses about marginalized communities. First, images can contribute to humanizing those populations perceived as the Other in dominant society. Second, photography as a practice of bearing witness can be a tool to counter power imbalances. In terms of humanizing the Other, Victoria Gallagher and Kenneth Zagacki have demonstrated that images can evoke the idea of "common humanity" in viewers if they move beyond abstract or idealistic representations of social experience recognizable to specific audiences. In their case studies of Norman Rockwell's civil-rights-themed paintings and photographs depicting the violence in Selma, Alabama, they argue that both paintings and photography can inspire ideas of a "common humanity" in several distinct ways: by "disregarding established caricatures," by "making African Americans visible in ways that negate... the inferior character tropes that were the norm of white-authored texts," by "creating recognition of others through particularity," and by reminding viewers of the high moral ideals of American democracy and social justice alongside their poor execution.³⁹ Similarly, Linfield argues that photography forces us to acknowledge the individuality of members of marginalized groups because photographs show individuals as individuals.⁴⁰ Images and photography can, thus, offer visibility for communities at the margins of society even when the

relationship between photographer and photographed replicates the power relationship between dominant society and marginalized communities.

This dynamic leads to a specific aspect for how critics should approach photography. Approaching photography needs to differ to some extent from approaching other images because apart from author and audience, photographs include a third participant in the creative and interpretive process: the photographed. In order to conceptualize this triad, Ariella Azoulay's concept of the "civil contract of photography" is helpful. This civil contract exists between the photographed, the photographer, and the viewer as the constitutive participants of a "cizenry of photography" who "share a recognition that what they are witnessing is intolerable."⁴¹ To fulfill this civil contract, photographers must bear witness by taking photos, and the public must bear witness by looking at these photos.⁴² This idea of a contract involves the explicit or implicit consent of most photographed subjects.⁴³

Precisely this consent, and the ability to demand being photographed so that others might bear witness, asserts a balance between the power of the photographer, the photographed, and the viewers in two ways. First, being photographed so that others must be witnesses becomes a right under the civil contract. Second, neither of the components of the photographic "event" (photographer, photographed, camera) can impress an absolute interpretation on the final result of the process of photography.⁴⁴ Highlighting, again, the idea of the impossibility of ascribing fixed meanings to photographs, the idea of the civil contract of photography opens a space for marginalized groups such as Palestinians/Native Americans to "make politically present the ways in which they have been dominated, making visible the more and less hidden modes in which they are

exposed to Israeli [American] power.”⁴⁵ Photography does not overturn these power relations or revoke Palestinians’/Native Americans’ status as “noncitizens” but it can enable them to take part in processes of citizenship via photography even though their socio-political citizenship and power “to negotiate with the sovereign power” is very limited.⁴⁶ Photography can thus become a tool for marginalized communities to be visible in public. Critics should, therefore, view the photographed subjects not as passive objects within the gaze of the photographer and the audience, but as having agency within the act of creating photography. Despite Azoulay’s idea that photographers always commit a sort of “violence” against the photographed by exploiting their vulnerability, a “civil contract of photography” allows marginalized or underprivileged groups to articulate their oppression.⁴⁷

This framework for viewing practices implicates not only the photographer and the scholarly critic but also popular audiences. “Looking” as participation in meaning making for photographs and other visual representations constructs audiences as active rather than passive. Furthermore, the civil contract proposed by Azoulay constitutes audiences as moral agents. Obviously, there are problems when it comes to practices of looking but there are more advantages than disadvantages to bearing witness.⁴⁸ Because images are unfinished, ambiguous products, looking becomes a “civic skill” required from the audience. This skill can be described as an obligation “to other [members of the citizenry of photography] to struggle against injuries inflicted on those others, citizen and noncitizen alike.”⁴⁹ Seeing does not automatically lead to compassion or understanding toward the suffering communities depicted. Neither does it necessarily lead to action, which is a crucial issue when depicting suffering.⁵⁰ However, the idea of a “public moral

response” highlights that audiences are not passive receptacles of visual content but require skills and information for interpretation.⁵¹ As a civic skill or even a duty, practices of looking can become tools of disrupting public narratives about the social make-up of any given society. Critics, therefore, must account for the frameworks within which audiences are able to respond, both in terms of visual culture and social context.

The fact that the photographed actively shape the product means that critics also should look at how photography can be instrumentalized for political and social interests to interrupt established power relations.⁵² For example, John Delicath and Kevin DeLuca speak to the productivity of the unfixed meaning of photographs when they point out that images allow for “indirect and incomplete claims in ways that function to block enthymemes as well as advance alternatives,” which can advance protest discourses.⁵³ Similarly pointing out the productivity of ambiguity, Azoulay emphasizes that the open-ended nature of photographs creates an ambiguity that can be a “starting point for discovery for audiences.”⁵⁴ On the side of the photographed subjects, this instrumentality opens up space for what Kevin DeLuca has labeled “image events.” Image events are deliberately orchestrated events that facilitate a “kind of positional argument that creates social controversy and which animates and widens possibilities for debate.”⁵⁵ These concepts allow the critic to look at the agency of the photographed in the creative process of photography even before the actual pictures are taken.

In summary, a photograph’s meanings are negotiated in the triangle of Azoulay’s citizenry of photography and need to be situated in its various contexts to allow for an informed interpretation. The various contexts are crucial not only for photographs but for images more generally. As pointed out above, visual culture limits the possible meanings

that can be expressed. Therefore, critics must interrogate conventions of representation and looking when considering images of marginalized groups, like Native Americans. It is vital to look at dynamics of self- and other-representation to account for the power relations that seep into the crafting, dissemination, and interpretation of images in the public.

Images and Identity

Just like narratives, images as visuals, narratives, and ideas negotiate our sense of who we are in relation to others. As partaking in processes of identity construction, images form part of public discourses that shape our understandings of groups within the national imaginary. Among other questions, this project asks whether and how it matters if images are produced by insiders or outsiders to a group. For Native communities, this question is fundamental because the question of what constitutes Indianness has been debated legally, politically, and culturally for centuries without definitive answers. Furthermore, as pointed out above, most Native representation has been authored and shaped by non-Native people. In the widest sense, all three case studies deal with questions of creating, changing, maintaining, and affirming identities. In this section, I outline models of Native American identity construction from the outside and from within the group. Establishing the concepts of tribal versus pan-Indian identities, I briefly highlight how the different concepts potentially intersect with American master narratives.

Identity construction, and especially ethnic identity construction, is a process of self-ascription. People identify as ethnically German or as Turkish or as Korean-American of their own volition. At the same time, ethnic identities are also shaped by

external interpretations of group identities and historical processes.⁵⁶ On an everyday level, people make assumptions about other people's ethnicity based on their looks, names, geographic location, economic status, and other markers.

For Native Americans, the question of identity construction and ascription is especially complicated, and not lastly because of the long history of confusion about "Indians" that started with the so-called discovery of "America." When conquerors arrived on America's shores, Native Americans had, at best, loosely defined and unstable local identities. Through contact both with settler society and with other Native groups, tribal identities became more salient as ethnicities.⁵⁷ This conceptualization of ethnic identity rests on the idea that shared sociocultural and linguistic markers indicate common heritage, which self-identification often stresses. Settlers, thus, encountered Native American identity not as monolithic but as diverse. At the same time, extrinsic ascriptions of Indianness accompanied Native American peoples from the day Columbus set foot on *terra nova*.

The categorical term "Indian" is a European invention that was based on two erroneous assumptions which endure until today: first, that Native Americans constituted a racial group and that race was a sufficient base for a common identity; second, that all Native nations were culturally related or even culturally the same. The racial assumption speaks to the misunderstanding of "race" as an observable, objective, scientific phenomenon in many non-scholarly, everyday settings still today.⁵⁸ As Dvora Yanow points out, US American public discourse often creates what she calls a "race-ethnic identity" that confuses race and ethnicity and posits the former as constitutive for the latter.⁵⁹ Even though the idea of race as a biological given has been debunked, the

identification of minorities on the basis of alleged racial factors speaks to the continued validity of the concept in the public. Analyzing the assumed empirical reality of the terms allows the critic to fathom how dominant society has wielded race as a rhetorical tool for maintaining the status quo of power relationships among different ethnicities.⁶⁰ A racial definition of “ethnicity” usually requires us to ignore important differences between groups—differences that are often cultural.⁶¹

However, abandoning racial ideas in order to proclaim a cultural basis of Indianness does not make things much clearer. Based on most factors on the list of common markers of ethnicity, “Indians” don’t make up an ethnicity. They have no common language, no common culture, no common religion, no common mythic ancestry, not even a “real” shared proper name. The best and most likely only common denominator for pan-Indianness is historical experience. As wrong as the characterization as “Indians” was in 1492 (and a long time after), it has gained some validity as a pan-Indian identity because of centuries of political practice of grouping “all Indians” together and through common historical experiences of this supratribal group.⁶² Similar experiences of epidemics, resistance against French, British, and American (etc.) invaders, the removal westward, the confinement onto reservations, the cultural disintegration through the boarding school experience, removal and relocation in the twentieth century, and the formation of a (by no means uniform) Indian movement in the 1960s have given cultural salience to the concept of Indianness. Mostly, these events did not distinguish between Lakota, Choctaw, Nez Perce, or Klamath. The mere fact that dominant society has grouped “all Indians” together for centuries lends further salience to the concept of pan-Indianness as an identity construct (this is also demonstrated in the

following section on Indian images). It is important to note that while the pressure to conform or change to accommodate social and historical change might have been relatively uniform across diverse Native societies, the responses to these pressures was in no way uniform. Individual groups reacted with different strategies and sometimes they divided or turned against each other.⁶³ Even historical experiences as the basis of Indianness, therefore, need to be taken with a grain of salt.

Despite cases of division, however, the term “Indian” has been filled with meaning as an expression of an identity beyond being merely the opposite of “non-Native.” John H. Moore describes the formation of new identities by common experience as a hybridization process that produces original cultural and political institutions—without necessarily eradicating previous identity formations.⁶⁴ Supratribal organizations founded at the beginning of the twentieth century and after World War II attest to this type of identity construction, such as the National Council of American Indian (1944), the American Indians of All Tribes (late 1960s), or the American Indian Movement (1969).⁶⁵ Apart from institutionalized organizations, pan-Indian amalgams have formed as a result of mixing cultural practices from many regions. Hybrid forms of dances, costumes, music, and food visibly indebted to Plains cultures are most visible in powwow culture but also in religious syncretism.⁶⁶ Thus, Native Americans have the power to identify as both members of a tribal nation and as a member of the broader category “Indian.”

This potential layering of identities is not unique to Native Americans, but it means that public discourse about Native Americans can highlight different aspects of what it means to be “Indian.” Different identity concepts can do different work within

public narratives of the nation and national history in the way that they intersect with American self-concepts. Tribal identities highlight the historical sovereignty of Native nations, who exerted political and territorial self-determination. Within historical national narratives, the recognition that this sovereignty historically existed and was/is curtailed requires complicating the narrative of Manifest Destiny as a question of colonial conquest rather than benign progress. In contrast, a pan-Indian identity as an outside description of Native American identity can potentially collapse Native identities in such a way that questions of self-determination and political sovereignty are obscured. Native Americans are, after all, “just” one more hyphenated minority within the United States. However, as a self-concept, pan-Indianism might be a more powerful activist identity than a tribal one, uniting a bigger and potentially more influential cultural group.⁶⁷ Most often, dominant society emphasizes a combination of tribal and supratribal identities when it comes to Native Americans.⁶⁸ The Generic Indian reflective of this dynamic visually resembles northern Plains tribes of the second half of the nineteenth century but stands in for all US American indigenous peoples. This dissertation tries to shed light on how different articulations of Indianness do different work in public discourse.

Because of the pitfalls of Native American identity construction in the American public sphere, critically interrogating these identity concepts allows scholars to acknowledge three dynamics. First, the varied identity concepts move the conversation away from the idea of static cultural content that Native Americans have suffered from in the last hundreds of years. This recognition of cultural change is important because Native Americans have long been perceived as “authentically Indian” only when closely adhering to public imaginations about what it means to be “Indian.” Looking at identity

articulations enables a critical perspective that interrogates closely what identity articulations are used for without having to take into consideration garbled ideas about “authenticity.” Furthermore, acknowledging that identity, culture, ethnicity, and race are fluid, ever changing, and contingent on historicity allows us to recognize Native American presences today. If we insisted on defining Indianness by a historical moment even from as recent as a hundred years ago, we would have to conclude that all Native Americans are gone.

Second, looking at identity construction from outside and within allows us to account for Native survivance. The concept of survivance was theorized by Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor and has become central to discussing Native presences in American society today because it encourages a recognition of Native survival of and resistance toward colonialism.⁶⁹ Whether people identify as “Indian” or “Native” or by tribal or group affiliation, and in whatever form Native societies have reacted to historical pressures, the fact remains that they survived five centuries of vicious and violent colonialism. Whether living in recognized or unrecognized communities on or off reservations, whether living outward lives no different from urban neighbors or scattered in agrarian communities: the myriad of distinct social identities attests to the vibrancy of “Indian” culture.⁷⁰ However, these variations of Native identity on the tribal and supratribal level often still go unrecognized in dominant society. This is where the three case studies are located: How do non-Native and Native Americans negotiate spaces that are constrained by centuries-old traditions of representing Native Americans in public in order to affirm, change, maintain their identities?

Third and last, looking at how dominant society talks about Native Americans can also highlight processes of American identity formation. As I point out in the section on Native American images, Americans engage in projects of identity formation when telling and retelling stories of the settlement of the West and Native Americans. Native Americans are one focal point of dominant culture's self-definition.⁷¹ Portraying Native Americans as the Indian Other fulfills an important function of self-description and boundary maintenance.

The Intersection of Images and Identity

Visual culture and narrative and visual tropes intersect with processes of identity construction. Dominant society engages in self-description and boundary maintenance through visual representations, as I outline in the following section. From woodcuts, paintings, tobacco Indians, and Buffalo Bill to photography and moving images, Indian images say something about who Americans think they are and who they are not. Visually containing and controlling mass mediated images of Native Americans, therefore, was and is a central identity function of American dominant society.

In reverse, visual sovereignty for Native Americans can only be achieved in direct friction with these visual cultures. Native self-representation needs to engage with the long tradition of visual and narrative tropes to renegotiate, correct, and contradict. However, not all Native-originated images are corrective in the sense that they want to revise dominant society's perception of what "authentic" Indianness is. As pointed out, the limitation of culture to authentic forms is one of the structural issues that Native Americans have struggled with for decades, and self-representation can address the issue by catering exclusively or mainly to Native audiences. Visual self-representation falls

within the contingent, constantly changing processes of identity affirmation and maintenance: it is as much talking to the American Other as it is speaking to the in-group.

At the intersection of visual culture and identity construction, images can become a strategy for identity establishment and maintenance. “Visual rhetorics,” Robert Hariman and John Lucaites argue, are an integral part of constituting public identity within public spheres.⁷² As Michael Warner says, publics are discursively organized bodies of strangers who exist because they are addressed and pay attention, and photographs circulated publicly form part of this address.⁷³ Visual images and especially photography can create the feeling of relationality among strangers that publics are dependent on.⁷⁴ Photography can “provide... the public audience with a sense of shared experience that anchors the necessarily impersonal character of public discourse in the motivational ground of social life.”⁷⁵ Considering this function of images in public life, photography and images become a factor in “motivating identification with and participation in specific forms of collective life.”⁷⁶

The creation of a collective identity by connecting strangers via images speaks to the concept of identity construction directly. Intertwining this view of images in the public sphere and Azoulay’s citizenry of photography—photographer, photographed, audiences—allows me to privilege questions about how the photographs and images in the case studies create, affirm, maintain, or change collective identities.

All three case studies interrogate how Indianness is articulated in ways that affirm, contest, or replace narratives or visual Western tropes that reflect American master narratives. As this section on framing images has shown, contextualization is key to interpreting images. Immediate verbal and visual contexts, texts by the same authors or

institutions, and the institutional and bureaucratic backgrounds of the publications serve as the grounding contexts for the case studies. Furthermore, the historical and cultural conventions of portraying Native Americans shape the visual and narrative tropes available today. The following section will provide an overview over these conventions in order to situate the case studies adequately.

Media Disseminating Indian Images: A History

Most Americans in the past and in the present had or have little direct contact with Native peoples or cultures, meaning that popular constructions of Indian images have often gone uncontested in the mainstream.⁷⁷ Instead, people learn about Native Americans through mediated texts disseminating information—real and fantastic—on the indigenous population. Most of these publicly visible images of Native Americans have been produced and controlled by non-Natives. Therefore, Indian images in all kinds of media have less to do with the reality of Native Americans and all to do with white imaginations of the Other.⁷⁸ This section offers a brief overview over the most prevalent media types that have shaped imaginations about Native Americans in the non-Native United States since the “age of discovery.”

The first accounts of the “new world” reached Europeans via travel letters and accounts of the first explorers. Examples are Christopher Columbus’ 15th-century journals and letters,⁷⁹ and Amerigo Vespucci’s *Mundus Novus*, which was a comprehensive account of the new world published around 1504 or 1505.⁸⁰ As a variation of travel literature, mission accounts provided the most comprehensive accounts of early Native-white encounters. An impressive example of these systematic accounts

are the *Jesuit Relations*, which were written by Jesuit mission priests in New France and published annually in Paris between 1632 and 1673.⁸¹

Illustrations soon accompanied these written accounts. Thomas de Bry's engravings were not the first visuals reaching Europeans but among the most widely disseminated.⁸² Due to the widespread publication of de Bry's engravings as illustrations and their resulting popularity, the collection served as "a visual prototype for the North American Indian" well into the nineteenth century.⁸³ In the mid-nineteenth century, illustrated newspapers and magazines such as Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper* and *Harper's Weekly* satisfied the public's desire for Indian illustrations.⁸⁴ In the nineteenth century, visual interpretations by Romantic painters such as George Catlin, Karl Bodmer, and George Forest de Brush, who had actually traveled West to observe their subjects, were the most popular.⁸⁵ Catlin's work especially reached impressive circulation. His publications reached large audiences in the United States and in Europe and were adapted into books for young boys.⁸⁶ His "Indian Gallery" traveled extensively through the American East and spent over thirty years in Europe.⁸⁷

One of the first narrative genres emerging from Indian accounts of all sorts were captivity narratives, which were popular from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.⁸⁸ Some of these stories achieved renown, such as Mary Rowlandson's *Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Rowlandson* (1682).⁸⁹ The trope of the white woman abducted by Native Americans and later recovered by her family was well-established by the time that Western novels became popular in the nineteenth century. The narrative figures prominently in novels such as James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the*

Mohicans,⁹⁰ and in dime novels which were published in the thousands in the later nineteenth century.

Early news coverage was also filled with tales of Native violence and conflict on the “frontier.” The first century of news coverage of Native Americans was characterized by war-zone journalism.⁹¹ In his survey of nineteenth-century newspapers, John M. Coward analyzes how the “newspaper Indian” was intimately related to coverage of the Civil War and later the so-called “Indian wars.”⁹² The newsworthiness of Indian affairs declined somewhat after the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890, which concluded organized resistance against the US army. However, newspapers reported extensively on a new phenomenon: Wild West shows.

Wild West shows celebrated the triumph of civilization over barbarism with displays of “horsemanship, marksmanship, Western vignettes that depicted frontier life and the heroic deeds of cowboys and settlers, Indian-themed vignettes about culture and customs, and reenactments of famous battles.”⁹³ Even though there were over one hundred shows between 1883 and the 1930s, William F. Cody’s Buffalo Bill’s Wild West was without a doubt the best known and toured extensively in the United States and Europe.⁹⁴ In 1893 alone over twenty million people saw the show when Buffalo Bill had set up just outside the grounds of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, which itself was another vehicle of Native representation with an anthropological twist.⁹⁵

The new medium of photography increased the dissemination of Indian images as well. The Wild West shows and the World Fair created a nation-wide audience that witnessed allegedly “real” Native Americans first hand—and these events created opportunities for photography. Famously, Buffalo Bill had his picture taken with Sitting

Bull, both in full Western outfit as cowboy and Indian Chief respectively.⁹⁶ Furthermore, photographer J. N. Choate took before-and-after pictures of Native children at the Carlisle Indian school, driving home the dichotomy of “savage” and “civilized” Indians.⁹⁷ In 1890, a photographer was present to take pictures of frozen bodies in the snow after the massacre at Wounded Knee. The most famous of all Indian photographers, Edward S. Curtis, had anthropological aspirations to preserve and record Native culture before it vanished through extermination or assimilation.⁹⁸ His collection, *The North American Indian*, was published in several volumes after 1907.⁹⁹

From the early twentieth century onward, film has been the most efficient medium disseminating dominant images of Native Americans. Some of the first moving images recorded Natives: Thomas Edison filmed a group of Sioux performing the Ghost Dance in his studios in 1894.¹⁰⁰ By the time movie production moved to Hollywood, Indian-themed and Western-themed movies had become a prolific and popular genre.¹⁰¹ The decades between 1890 and 1930 saw the production of around “5,400 feature, documentaries, shorts, and serials” involving Native Americans.¹⁰²

With a few ups and downs, Native Americans have been among the most popular topic of American cinema since the silent era. The silent era offered Indian-themed movies as well as Westerns. Movies such as *The Call of the Wild* (1908), *The Squaw’s Love* (1911), *The White Chief* (1908), or *White Fawn’s Devotion* (1910) brought somewhat diverse images to early cinema. The talkies of the 1930s established the “classic Western,” which was a popular genre into the 1950s. Emblematic of this type of Indian-containing classic Westerns are John Ford movies such as *Stagecoach* (1939) or *The Searchers* (1956). At the same time, the 1930s and 1940s were the decades of the

radio and the radio Western. In these decades, literally thousands of half-hour episodes or radio Westerns were broadcast. *The Lone Ranger* alone—arguably the most famous of all of them—aired 2,956 episodes between 1933 and 1955.¹⁰³ Radio lost some of its appeal when TV took over as the entertainment medium of choice for private households.

Most TV representation of Native Americans did not differ substantially from the established film traditions. The bulk of TV Indians appeared within the Western genre.¹⁰⁴ One part of TV Westerns consists of re-runs of classic Westerns on channels such as Turner Classic Movies, American Movies Classics, or the Hallmark Channel.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, TV serials have also portrayed Indians since the 1950s.¹⁰⁶ Native Americans have been conspicuously less visible on television as a subject of news reports. Even at the height of the American Indian Movement's (AIM) activism between 1968 and 1979, NBC covered less than 50% of protests in a year, usually “significantly less,” even though this was arguably the time with the most incentive to cover Native issues, and NBC was the channel which devoted most time to this topic.¹⁰⁷ By the 1990s, images in newspapers and television were somewhat more varied than they had been. Most importantly, they finally included Native voices.¹⁰⁸

In 1990, *Dances with Wolves* catapulted Native Americans back into the center of the American imaginary. Since then, a variety of successful movies have captured current imaginations about Native Americans, such as *Thunderheart* (1992), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1994), *Pocahontas* (1995), or *Smoke Signals* (1998). More recently *The Revenant* (2015) and *The Lone Ranger* (2013) have captured mass audiences. TV series such as *The X-Files* (1993-2002), *Northern Exposure* (1990-1995) and *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991), or more recently *Law and Order: SVU* (1999-) and *Longmire* (2012-),

included Indian characters.¹⁰⁹ Beyond film, the NMAI opened its doors in 2004, bringing Native Americans into the heart of the nation's capital.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, in the last few years, debates about Native American protests against Indian mascots in sports¹¹¹ and against the destruction of their land¹¹² have made Native issues more prominent on digital and social media.

One area in which little progress has been made over the last five decades is history books currently in use in the American public school system. In their groundbreaking 1970 study, Jeannette Henry and Rupert Costo pointed out that textbooks need to exceed popular media in terms of "truth, accuracy, and objectivity" because their audience has no opportunity to reject the representations contained within the books and often has to uncritically take them at face value.¹¹³ In high school textbooks, the distorted representation of Native cultures and history has changed little since the 1970s.¹¹⁴

The Western Genre

While this last medium, the schoolbooks, might arguably be least influenced by the Western genre, the preceding list of media is undoubtedly indebted to the Western as one of the most durable and prolific genres of American popular culture.¹¹⁵ The diversity of these media highlights two points. First, it shows that the Western genre itself does not "really depend upon the history of any particular medium to any great extent."¹¹⁶ As described above, the genre had its roots in captivity narratives, dime novels, and Wild West shows.¹¹⁷ The advent of film and later sound film did not fundamentally change the narrative of visual representations of Native Americans.¹¹⁸ Second, the diversity of media highlights that the Western functions both in visual and narrative formats. Thus, the Western genre's legacies also work in the visual and narrative form. To give a fair

assessment of the genre, I situate the Western as a narrative with similarities to the myth of Manifest Destiny as an American master narrative. I then define the genre and give an overview of the history of Westerns in film since film is the medium that most contributed to the Western's dissemination and the establishment of visual images of Native Americans.¹¹⁹

The Western as American Master Narrative

The Western genre is one of the foundational narratives that allows Americans to make sense of their history and their identity. As the story of How the West Was Won, the Western needs to make sense of a violent period in American history but, unsurprisingly, the narratives constructed in the process are light on history and heavy on myth. Because the Western genre ultimately deals with territorial expansion, the genre is closely intertwined with Manifest Destiny as an American master narrative.

This connection is likely one of the reasons for the genre's versatility and endurance. The general popularity of the Western genre speaks to its relevance for American identity and its appeal as a founding myth of the country. Because the Western genre is central to American identity, it stays relevant by connecting to the "audiences' social and psychological needs."¹²⁰ Another factor in the genre's endurance is without doubt the Western's ability to adapt over time. As Jim Kitses remarked in 1969, the Western allows for "a wide range of intervention, choice and experiment" by authors and directors.¹²¹ However, regardless of its potential for variability, the central narrative of the Western must engage narratives and imagery from the story of How the West Was Won as a foundational US American myth.

The story of *How the West Was Won* reflects symbolisms that are meaningful to American audiences as part of the “national mythology” or master narrative—a cultural story that unifies smaller narratives with its overarching purpose.¹²² As Richard Slotkin argued in 1973, the myth of the American West is foundational to American identity.¹²³ The central narrative focuses on “endlessly repeating the great triumph of settlers against the hostile wilderness... and... serv[es] to ‘naturalize’ the process of westward expansion and Manifest Destiny.”¹²⁴ Therefore, the Western is not just an entertaining story but intersects with American self-conceptualization and foundational myths in a way that give it meaning in relation to American master narratives. Manifest Destiny—the idea that westward expansion of Americans as the chosen people was the will of God—characterizes the central conflict in the Western genre: the conflict between civilization and savagery.¹²⁵ However, Manifest Destiny is more than a mere story-telling device. It is an ideology that justifies and naturalizes the conquest of Native American peoples and lands and invokes a particular kind of “imagined community” of Americans—one that excludes Native citizens.

The concept of Manifest Destiny is one of the ways in which Americans have made sense of American history over the last century and a half. It originated as a partisan concept that was contested rather than universally accepted in the nineteenth century and it only developed its explanatory powers for American expansion policies in the twentieth century.¹²⁶ With roots in Puritan ideals of the “City upon a Hill,” Jeffersonian agrarian ideals, and Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis, Manifest Destiny justifies American expansion as a “moral or even religious duty of the nation” rather than merely a political or economic endeavor.¹²⁷ Therefore, narratives that reflect

this concept potentially justify American behavior in the epoch of continental expansion.¹²⁸ Ethnic minorities, such as Native Americans or Mexicans in the Western genre, fulfill the role of the subaltern within the state, whose subordination is justified through reductive stereotypes.¹²⁹ In the nineteenth century, the idea of Manifest Destiny justified inequality, exploitation, and even racism as the “white man’s burden.”¹³⁰ Today, the overtly racist or even overtly religious aspects might have receded within the explanatory power of the concept. Yet, as a continuously vital part of US national identity, narratives of Manifest Destiny have the potential to highlight how Americans construct their own identities as Americans.¹³¹

The Western: A Definition

The Western as a founding narrative of the United States is an articulation of the master narrative of Manifest Destiny. Fundamentally, the genre offers a benevolent vision of white settler society as symbolized by cowboys as benign heroes who “civilize” the land. This emphasis on civilizing processes enables audiences to overlook imperial violence since the Western myth alleges that the civilization process “offer[s] to both Native Americans and Euro-Americans an improved and more productive land and life.”¹³² In the US public sphere, the Western genre has been used to tell and retell this story in different forms and with different frequency.

From the 1940s to the 1960s the genre’s popularity was mirrored in the fact that roughly one-fourth of Hollywood’s annual output consisted of Westerns.¹³³ John Cawelti identified three reasons for the decline of the filmic Western since then, which are all connected to changing sensibilities in the American public audience. Westerns were increasingly anachronistic because they showed “sanitized violence;” were blatantly

sexist in a way that was increasingly alienating; and—most importantly—engaged in representations of minorities such as Native Americans, African Americans, and Latinos in ways that became less salient during the time of the various civil rights movements.¹³⁴ Even counting recent Western movies such as *Cowboys and Aliens* (2011), *The Lone Ranger* (2013), and *The Revenant* (2015), the genre is dramatically less prolific than it used to be. However, the “fact that westerns are still being made... is a sign of the genre’s continued power and hold over the collective cultural imagination.”¹³⁵

As a genre, the Western can be defined in terms of narrative structure, setting, and characters. Its foundational structure relies on pitting good against evil in a conflict that ends in the (re)establishment of order from chaos.¹³⁶ Ultimately, good prevails over evil.¹³⁷ This theme of conflict is the central narrative device of the Western and connects the genre back to master narratives that justifies expansion. In order to emphasize conflict, Westerns must take place during a time when white society is either not quite established yet or threatened from the outside.¹³⁸ Considering that Westerns are fundamentally about How the West Was Won, this setting is usually the time of westward expansion at the moment “when social order and anarchy meet, when civilization encounters savagery, on the frontier of White expansion.”¹³⁹ Mostly, this means the “Wild West” or frontier during the time between the Civil War and 1890.¹⁴⁰ On the one hand, this time and place create a particular visual aesthetic in Western films: wide-angle shots of vast Great Plains or Southwestern landscapes signify the precariousness and distance of white settlers to civilization.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, the geographical and historical setting reflects and crystallizes the fundamental conflict at the heart of the genre.¹⁴² Lawlessness and savagery must make way for civilization.¹⁴³

Furthermore, the time and place creates a relatively fixed set of characters within the genre.

The two sides of the conflict are symbolized by a relatively stable set of characters, which scholars described as three fundamental types. First, townspeople and settlers represent “agents of civilization.” Second, outlaws and/or Indians challenge settler society and create the central conflict—meaning that Indians are usually firmly located on the antagonists’ side of the conflict. Third, the hero, usually the white male cowboy, resolves the conflict. Often, he represents a blend of the first two character types.¹⁴⁴ Ultimately, though, he enforces the values of dominant society. Women belong in Westerns but in contrast to male characters have less “iconic immediacy and value.”¹⁴⁵ They are often either morally depraved or outrageously virtuous—roles usually reserved for women of color and white women, respectively. The division of characters into either heroes or villains leaves little room for moral gray zones.¹⁴⁶ The conflict usually leads to a showdown involving these characters, most famously the shoot-out between the hero and the main villain.¹⁴⁷ The relationships between these three character types thus drive the narrative story lines.¹⁴⁸

Although Westerns can employ other minorities or Easterners as antagonists, Indians lend themselves to the genre in particular ways.¹⁴⁹ First, they are uniquely American and function as a “hallmark of American film,” originally used by the film industry to distinguish “authentic American westerns from those made by foreign companies.”¹⁵⁰ As such, they mark the exceptionality of the American story. Second, they symbolize the wilderness which Euro-American settlers need to overcome in the American national myth.¹⁵¹ As “people of the land” they are “subjects of the violence...

that brought forth the new nation.”¹⁵² Lastly, as the perfect foil against which white society can measure itself, Indians in film embody the cultural Other regardless of whether they are portrayed as good or bad.¹⁵³

In Indian-containing classic Westerns, Indians are always at the heart of the narrative but almost never protagonists. Westerns differ from Indian-themed movies that focus on Indian characters and story lines in that they usually only afford three functions for Native Americans. First, they function as background characters who underline the time and place. Second, they function as plot devices and pose an imminent threat to settler society, crystalizing the central conflict.¹⁵⁴ Third, they function as a buddy or sidekick to the white hero.¹⁵⁵ Even when Indian roles have significant screen time, like Tonto in the 2013 version of *The Lone Ranger*, the characters usually lack the depth necessary for complexity and ambiguity.¹⁵⁶ Because of these limited functions, Indians in classic Westerns usually affirm the validity of conquest.

The Ignoble and the Noble Indian

These three narrative functions of Indians in Westerns underpin the formulaic portrayal of Native Americans as either noble or ignoble in classic Westerns. As part of a long tradition of talking about “primitive,” non-Western societies, the trope of the Noble Savage is much older than the “discovery” of America. In the Enlightenment period, “primitivism,” or “cultural primitivism,” associated the best human condition with “contemporary ‘primitive’ cultures, especially because of their perceived relationship to ‘nature’ or their ‘natural’ way of living.”¹⁵⁷ The idea of the Indian as the *bon sauvage* complimented contemporaneous ideas of the *bon ethiopién* or *bon oriental* in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.¹⁵⁸ Philip Deloria remarks that the terminology alone

already communicates the contrast within the concept: At once noble and savage, the concept could emphasize nobility in order to use “pure and natural Indians... to critique Western society.” Conversely, if emphasizing savagery, it could justify conquest.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, even the earliest conquistadores like Christopher Columbus already possessed a lens through which they could look at the Native Americans they encountered. On the one hand, Columbus portrayed Native Americans as the embodiment of “prelapsarian Christians” and “ideal subjects”: handsome, virtuous, brave, peaceable, and innocent. On the other hand, he described them as debased, natural slaves who were cruel, violent, sexually promiscuous, wicked, and cowardly.¹⁶⁰ The Noble Savage could, thus, be either “good” or “bad” depending on viewpoint. In the Western genre, this ambivalence is visible in the potential for Indians as bloodthirsty enemies or as sidekicks and Helpers—often within one movie.

The distinction between good and bad Noble Savages led enlightenment philosophers to look toward the dichotomy between nature and civilization to distinguish between good and bad Noble Indians. In this view, what was natural was good and, therefore, what was civilized was decadent and artificial.¹⁶¹ Civilization as a process had the power to corrupt the noble, natural side of the Noble Savage.¹⁶² Centuries later, in the “sympathetic” view point of Cooper’s novels or the revisionist Westerns of the mid-twentieth century, this conceptualization is visible in the possibility for Indians being the “good guys.” Whereas white society is civilized but cruel society, Indians’ relation to nature renders them “savage” but pure and honorable. This does not preclude the existence of debased Ignoble Savages, who strayed from nature’s path due to corruption by settler society.¹⁶³

The advent of a romanticized image of Indians complicated the relatively simple dichotomy between the Noble and the Ignoble Indian. During and after the American Revolution, Americans came to see themselves more in opposition to England than in opposition to Native Americans, which led to a more “romantic” image of Indians.¹⁶⁴ This included an emphasis on the positive qualities of Indians: their Americanness, their “claim to the landscape,” and their individual liberty. Even the more “savage” traits were interpreted as “martial prowess” when attached to an “American Self.”¹⁶⁵ At the same time, the Vanishing Indian trope gained popularity as a variation of the Noble Indian.¹⁶⁶ In the old dichotomy of nature and civilization, progress was sure to eradicate those clinging to nature. Imagined like this, the Noble Indian could exist for a while after contact, helping white settlers succeed in their civilization efforts. Ultimately, though, he was doomed to pass away just as much as his evil twins, the Ignoble Indian.¹⁶⁷

As part of the foundational story of how the United States came to be, Ignoble and Noble Savages have little to do with Native American history and all to do with US American identity constructs focused on the idea of a nation that wrested civilization from a wild continent.¹⁶⁸ The frontier myth pits civilization against savagery and, as Richard Slotkin argues in *Gunfighter Nation*, this contrast is reflected in the dichotomy of the Noble and the Ignoble Indian in the Western genre.¹⁶⁹ Both these images legitimize expansion and Native conquest in the story of How the West Was Won as reflective of Manifest Destiny. On the one hand, the brutal Bloodthirsty Savage as an antagonist to the righteous white settler stands in the way of progress as a hurdle to be overcome. His eradication is legitimized because he is savage and an obstacle to progress. On the other hand, the Noble Indian legitimizes conquest and expansion because he can be replaced by

white settlers. The Noble Indian has long been a point of fascination for Euro-American society because of his innocence, his freedom, and the superior knowledge of the continent.¹⁷⁰ Ultimately, the Western hero and western settler society can absorb the beneficial traits while discarding the rest, leaving the Noble Indian superfluous and ready for vanishment. Vanishing through eradication or replacement, both the Ignoble Indian and the Noble Indian conveniently leave the land open for white settlement.¹⁷¹ Anything more complex than this simple dichotomy, John E. O'Connor argues, would introduce ambiguity into the foundational myth about national identity as displayed in the Western, which would make the genre less attractive for possible non-Native audiences.¹⁷² After all, they then would have to think about the historical realities of colonialism rather than glossing it over with entertaining narratives.

Specific Articulations of Nobility and Ignobility

Even though the origin and function of the dual image are little contested in scholarship, the specific shapes of the Noble and Ignoble Indian are not generally defined in a fixed set of characteristics. Partially, the confusion exists because the differences cannot easily be reduced to either purely visual or purely narrative strategies but usually constitute a mix of both. The confusion is compounded by the fact that the terminology within scholarship is often imprecise: Noble/Ignoble Indian, Noble/Ignoble Savage, and the Good/Bad/Bloodthirsty Indian are often used synonymously.¹⁷³ When talking about narrative genres like the Western, the categories “good” and “bad” suggest more about the function within the story—good guys versus bad guys—than about the dichotomy of nobility/ignobility. Indeed, Indians do appear as “good” and as “bad guys” throughout Westerns.

One marker discernible from scholarship draws a connection between spirituality and nobility. Exotic and mystical practices as markers of nobility are often connected to spirituality.¹⁷⁴ Jacquelyn Kilpatrick argues that the major differentiation between Ignoble Indian and Noble Indian rests on the idea that the Noble Indian is imbued with a “certain nature-based nobility and spirituality on and off screen.”¹⁷⁵ Other scholars, such as Elise Marubbio, see spirituality as a marker of nobility without making it the key factor for distinction. She asserts that in general, “the spiritual relationship to the vanishing wilderness” can serve as a good indicator for nobility.¹⁷⁶

However, the most common argument in scholarship on “the white man’s Indian” sees the primary distinction between nobility and ignobility in the different attitudes toward white culture. In his groundbreaking monograph *The White Man’s Indian* (1978), Richard Berkhofer defines Noble Indians in the Western genre as those who “act... as friends to Whites” whereas the Bloodthirsty Savage is usually “being plain malicious at the expense of white people, especially women.”¹⁷⁷ Similarly, Marubbio sees Good or Noble Indians as “friendly” toward whites and “assimilated” into their society. Bad or Ignoble Indians are “hostile” and unable or unwilling to assimilate.¹⁷⁸

Characteristic for this reading is the idea of Noble Savages as Helper figures and Ignoble Savages as futilely resisting progress. As Helpers, Indians or other subordinate populations recognize “white man’s natural superiority and acquiesce to his control.”¹⁷⁹ Examples are Pocahontas, Tonto, and Friday in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. Helpers enforce white society’s norms by actively cooperating with white society, regardless of white violence toward them, and they often serve as a link between whites and Ignoble Indians.¹⁸⁰ Female Helpers traditionally perish as “collateral damage” in the

central battle or at the hands of their own people.¹⁸¹ Instead of creating romantic nostalgia for Native cultures, the singularity of Indian Helpers highlights the benevolence of white society as well as the savagery of the rest of their tribes.¹⁸² The Ignoble Indian—thrown into relief by the Helper—irrationally refuses to assimilate and brutally fights progress. An example is the Reactionary Warrior, such as Magua in *The Last of the Mohicans*, who resists not only white expansion but also endangers female virtue.¹⁸³ Both tropes ultimately construct racialized images that justify conquest: Helper figures directly legitimize white motives; resistant, crazed savages justify their own destruction.¹⁸⁴

However, loyalty to white society is not the only condition Western Indians have to fulfill to be noble. As Marubbio describes, both men and women as Nobles represent “innocence, purity, and an ideal man unfettered by civilization and corruption.”¹⁸⁵ Even though they “represent... the possibility of assimilation into society,” like Pocahontas or Uncas, this adds the nature/civilization dichotomy described in connection to the Noble Savage concept to the question of loyalty.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, the Ignoble Savage—as the Noble Savage’s antithesis—is not only an enemy and danger to white society, but he is also often diminished by contact with Western civilization: He is “downtrodden, impoverished, vanquished.”¹⁸⁷

This contrast introduces into the dichotomy the question of moral fiber. Noble Indians do not only have to be loyal and/or uncorrupted by civilization. They are usually also men of “principle, resolute courage, martial ability, unyielding honor, and magnanimity”—just as Cochise in John Ford’s *Fort Apache* (1948).¹⁸⁸ Ignoble Savages are cannibalistic, and bloodthirsty, have generally questionable morals, and pose legitimate threats to dominant society.¹⁸⁹ Berkhofer adds to this list: inadequate hygienic

habits, following a “weird diet,” laziness, a penchant for “constant warfare” and treacherous behavior, sexual promiscuity and polygamy, treating women as slaves.¹⁹⁰ The Ignoble Indian is furthermore connected to vengeance, drunkenness, kidnapping, torture, and attacks on whites.”¹⁹¹ These ignoble traits are contrasted by the friendly and courteous manner of the Noble Savage, who has “great stamina and endurance,” shows bravery in combat, is “tender in love toward family and children,” is “calm and dignified at all times,” and has “pride in himself and independence.”¹⁹² In contrast to the Ignoble Indian, the Noble Indian is “spiritually pure,” “uncorrupted by civilization,” and “at one with nature.”¹⁹³ As Berkhofer sums up: Noble Savages are all about “liberty, simplicity, and happiness.”¹⁹⁴ Therefore, as long as they are friendly rather than hostile, Noble Savages can be perfect symbols for Americanness.

In terms of behavior, the Ignoble Indian and Noble Indian are often at opposing ends of rationality. The Ignoble Savage is “war-crazed,” “menacing,” or “frenzied.”¹⁹⁵ Emblematic for this is what Robert Baird calls “the Massacre”: Indians attacking innocent whites, killing them, and often scalping them as well.¹⁹⁶ The unnecessary act of violent slaughter and such incomprehensible customs as scalping are offset by the Noble Indian’s behavior. The Noble Indian behaves in a calm and wise manner, usually making decisions generally accepted as rational.¹⁹⁷ If he has to kill, he does not take pleasure in it, does not prolong the suffering of the victims, and does not scalp them. As such a “model... of restraint,” the Noble Indian is connected to one of the most enduring visual ideas about Native Americans: their stoicism.¹⁹⁸

Visual markers of nobility/ignobility are, thus, often connected to the question of rationality: Crazed hordes on horseback, howling and whooping are contrasted with calm,

wise behavior. Furthermore, the Ignoble Indian usually is more prone to be scantily dressed or completely shirtless.¹⁹⁹ Noble Indians, on the other hand, are often more modest in their dress and more handsome in general.²⁰⁰ Among other things, the dichotomy between nobility/ignobility is, thus, also maintained by a display of rationality and values, which are visible both through behavior and through outward appearance.

The least complicated way to tell apart Noble and Ignoble Indians therefore rests on narrative and visuals. Reduced to the most simplistic version, Noble Indians are loyal to white civilization but mostly uncorrupted by its culture, and they stick to values recognizable as “good” or “rational” by dominant society that are reflected in behavior and dress. It is a short fall from grace, though, and Indians are liable to be corrupted by white society. Indians who reject or even fight white values and society are irrational and therefore ignoble. They behave more “irrationally” and dress less “respectably.”

As story-telling devices within the Western genre, the Noble and Ignoble Indian can serve different purposes. The Ignoble Indian promotes the “superiority of the white hero” whereas the Noble Indian creates the opportunity for “cultural commentary on political, social, and moral themes of the day.”²⁰¹ Since the construction of both images is intimately connected to how white people view their own society and culture, the development of the Ignoble and Noble Indian over the decades mirrors these different views to some extent.²⁰²

This possibility for ambivalence over the noble/ignoble dichotomy is thrown into sharp relief by the emergence of the revisionist Western from the 1960s onwards. As soon as the rigid conventions of the classic Western changed, Indian images also did. In contrast to classic Westerns, revisionist Westerns delivered more sympathetic portrayals

of Native Americans and reversed the dynamic between “good” white people and “bad” Indians. Allowing for a morally more complex world, the previously easily identifiable characters of cowboy-heroes and Indian-villains became blurred. *Little Big Man* (1970), *A Man Called Horse* (1970), and *The Return of a Man Called Horse* (1976) are good examples.²⁰³ Most scholars agree that in these revisionist Westerns, “the Indian” became a substitute for oppressed populations in general: African Americans, hippie youths, or other minorities who were alienated from the contemporary mainstream.²⁰⁴ The Noble Indian gained salience as a countercultural symbol.²⁰⁵ Native-white conflicts in the Western genre became stand-ins for the conflict in Vietnam.²⁰⁶ Directed toward a generally “young audience... involved in the antiwar movement,” revisionist Westerns became “the expressions of the producer’s and director’s feelings about Vietnam” and a critique of the US military’s behavior toward Native Americans in the past and Vietnamese people in the present.²⁰⁷

Revisionist Westerns introduced a new vocabulary to portray the Noble Indian on screen apart from reversing the roles and portraying settler society and the US military as the “bad guys.” The relative poverty of Native Americans was reinterpreted as an appealing “simplicity,” often expressed through scarcely more dress than a loincloth and a headband, which lent itself to the convergence of “the consummate brave with muscles and [the] quintessential hippie.”²⁰⁸ Other markers transferred from countercultural civil rights and antiwar movements to film Indians included the portrayal of Indians as sexually liberated and liberal in their drug use. The portrayal of Native cultures as “nonmaterialistic” and “communal,” in Valdez’s words, celebrated “countercultural rejection of modern commercial and consumer society.”²⁰⁹ The Noble Savage in the

tradition of primitivism, thus, made a comeback. Loyalty to white society remained integral as well but was turned on its head: Within the strong countercultural movements of the civil rights era, Native Americans were admired for their real or imagined confrontational stance toward to the imperialistic, consumerist United States. Nobility could now also be characterized by Native Americans' loyalty to their own cultures.

Even though the Western genre, thus, allows for reversal of the ideas of “good guys” and “bad guys,” it rarely troubles the narrative of “good vs. evil.” After all, the conflict at the heart of the Western narrative demands this black-and-white approach. As established above, in the last few decades, Indians have existed on both sides of this essential conflict in classic or revisionist Westerns, but rarely as complex characters. Regardless, good and bad Noble and Ignoble Indians in the classic or revisionist Western usually affirm the ideological demands of the master narrative. Even though revisionist Westerns acknowledge racism and wrong-doing, they also relegate them to the past and limit their causes to a few evil white people.²¹⁰ The only aspect that changes in the way that the genre reinterprets the Manifest Destiny of Americans concerns the emotions viewers are supposed to attach to the narrative: in classic Westerns, conquering the Indians is a triumph; in revisionist Westerns, it's a tragedy. Despite these different evaluations of expansion, both classic and revisionist forms draw and play with the same Indian stock characters, which have grown out of the rather formulaic narrative structure throughout the centuries.

Indian Stock Characters in the Western

Stock characters such as the Indian Brave or Warrior, the Indian Chief, or the Indian Princess are well-known to audiences of the Western genre and so formulaic that

they become generic both in their individual iterations and as an overarching Generic Indian concept.²¹¹ As maybe the most common character representing Native Americans in Westerns, the Indian Warrior or Brave can be either noble or ignoble. Usually, he is a young man gifted with exceptional strength, prowess, and skills to survive in the wilderness and in war.²¹² As an example for nobility, the young Indian Brave is fierce, proud, and honorable.²¹³ Examples are Uncas in any variation of the *Last of the Mohicans* or Wind-in-his-Hair in *Dances with Wolves*. On the ignoble side, classic Westerns show faceless swarms of Indian Warriors attacking innocent white settlers in wagon trails.²¹⁴ The Ignoble Warrior is crazed, bloodthirsty, revels in attacking white people, and impedes westward expansion.²¹⁵ In the increasingly sympathetic Westerns from the 1950s onwards, honorable and brave Warriors were to some extent portrayed as victims of white mistreatment and greed, for example in such movies as *Broken Arrow* (1950), *Devils Doorway* (1950), or *Apache* (1954).²¹⁶ This connects the Indian Warrior or Brave to the idea of the Vanishing Indian, who is doomed to extinction in the Darwinian struggle for survival.²¹⁷

The image of the wise old Indian Chief or elder can also underline this theme of vanishing, especially when portrayed as dying.²¹⁸ An example of this variation of the elderly Indian Chief as Vanishing Indian is Lionel in *Medicine River* (1993). Usually, wise old Indian Chiefs are Noble Indians who possess wisdom unknown to white people.²¹⁹ Often, they encourage their tribe to peacefulness, rationally recognizing the superior weaponry of white society as well as the alleged inevitability of Indian culture passing away. Chief Ten Bears in *Dances with Wolves* represents this idea.

Native American women, Elise Marubbio argues in her monograph on the subject, appear in Westerns as three variations of the Celluloid Maiden: as the Celluloid Princess, the Sexualized Maiden, or as a hybrid of the two.²²⁰ This echoes Leslie Fiedler's description of Native women as either ignoble, dangerous temptresses or noble, pure maidens who align themselves with the white colonizers as helpers or lovers.²²¹ Both variations are judged by their sexual behavior since classic Westerns tend to "uphold moral conventions and gender norms" typical of their time of origin.²²²

Key characteristics of the Celluloid Princess (Pocahontas as the most well-known example), are her "connection to nature and American landscape," her "innocence and purity," her "exotic culture and beauty," her "attraction to the white hero," and her tragic death.²²³ Like male Indian sidekicks, she symbolizes Native acquiescence to the conquest of their lands through her voluntary alliance with the white hero.²²⁴ The Sexualized Maiden, on the other hand, encapsulates the essence of interracial mixing. She is more directly erotic than the Celluloid Princess and is fetishized sexually. As the female embodiment of the Ignoble Savage or Indian Warrior, she represents "moral and social depravity" through her "racial exoticism," "sexual promiscuity," and the physical threat to western civilization.²²⁵ Chihuahua in John Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (1946) represents this trope perfectly. A hybrid of the two combines the positive traits of the Princess with her seductive power over the white hero, facilitating the hero's rejection of civilization in revisionist Westerns. An example of this hybrid figure is Maggie Eagle Bear in *Thunderheart*.

Other stereotypes also exist. For example, Westerns often include characters falling into the category of the Drunk or Degraded Indian.²²⁶ As an example of the

depraved Ignoble Indian, he is connected to alcoholism, drunkenness, and abuse.²²⁷ His addiction can be interpreted as weakness and an inability to assimilate.²²⁸ Another stereotype is the Medicine Man, who is a staple of Western narratives as well.²²⁹ Kicking Bird in *Dances with Wolves* exemplifies a noble Medicine Man whereas Massasoit in *Black Robe* is an example of an ignoble Medicine Man.

Out of these stereotypes arises the Generic Indian who, despite different iterations, is easily recognizable as a Western Indian on a purely visual level. The Generic Indian is male and reflects a particular time and place, regardless of whether he is an Indian Warrior or Indian Chief, regardless of whether he is noble, ignoble, good, or bad. The Generic Indian is a Plains warrior of the mid to late nineteenth century, who is most readily identified by his outward appearance: He has bronze skin and long black braids, with a full headdress or an individual feather, often wearing clothes with bead work or leather fringes. Maybe he carries weaponry, most likely he is on horseback. Maybe, there are some tipis in the vicinity.

Cultural markers such as headdresses, tipis, or horseback riding, which are associated with Plains tribes, have a long tradition within pictorial representations of Indianness. These props have been effectively but not exclusively used within the Western genre, as John M. Coward points out in his analysis of Indian images in the nineteenth-century illustrated press conventions.²³⁰ Even today, Native American identities are still often communicated through racial markers or props such as the ones named above. Native Americans are invoked through visual symbols and specific objects which suggest Indianness. These visual characteristics of Indianness are part of the fragmented markers that can behave as a synecdoche that includes “the Indian itself and

Indianness.” The metonymy makes superfluous or even impossible actual Native presences, and it works both visually and verbally.²³¹ Rather than acknowledging the existence of complex people with a rich history and intricate cultural, political, and social identities, the Generic Indian is boiled down to a few easily legible props which highlight the Otherness of Native identities.

Racial markers as shortcuts for Indianness rely mostly on skin and hair color as well as hair style. In the nineteenth century, racial markers used to convey difference in the pictorial press established a hierarchy in which the visual difference between white people and Native people painted the latter as an “uncivilized primitive people.”²³² Creating this type of hierarchy led to both an exaggerated sense of racial difference and an increase in newsworthiness for Indian topics: After all, difference makes for better stories than similarity.²³³ In correlation, the twentieth century saw Native American actors playing Western Indians on screen in “redface” because they did not fulfill dominant society’s expectations of what it means to “look Indian.”²³⁴

The Generic Indian is generic beyond the visual. He is a stand-in for all Indians, regardless of time, place, tribe, or individuality. The tendency to collapse tribal nations into the Generic Indian creates a dynamic in which historically, tribally, or individually specific expressions of Indianness are devalued or questioned for authenticity. The Plains Warrior as the Generic Indian renders invisible all other forms of Indianness, especially modern Indianness and is the most commonly used Indian image both within the Western genre and outside of it. The next section highlights some aspects of generic Indianness as it plays out in non-Western narratives.

Western Legacies in Depictions of Contemporary Native Americans

Depictions of contemporary Native Americans in modern Western or non-Western narratives are influenced by the dynamics and tropes outlined in the previous section. From mocking Indian stereotypes in *Smoke Signals* to *Longmire*'s casino owner Jacob Nighthorse dancing around in an over-the-top feather mask to curse his enemies: depictions of contemporary Native Americans happen in conversation with tropes handed down from Westerns. The long Western tradition of the Noble and Ignoble Indian has created other conventions for depicting contemporary Native Americans apart from the concrete stereotypes of the Indian Warrior, Indian Chief, etc. These Generic Indian images appear in depictions that are not strictly Westerns but indebted to the genre. Several conventions govern the way that generic Indianness is communicated. First, the Generic Indian is always portrayed as the racial Other to dominant American society. Second, Native cultures are represented as an antecedent stage of civilization in comparison to dominant society. Third, Native Americans are usually portrayed as Vanishing Indians. Lastly, Indians are confined to a specific time and location both in terms of narratives and visuals. The conventions lead to updated versions of stock characters and updated visual conventions that I outline as well.

The Contemporary Generic Indian

First, within the Western genre, Native Americans have always been quintessentially Other regardless of whether they were portrayed as noble, ignoble, good, bad, exotic, or degraded.²³⁵ This Otherness connects the Western again to US master narratives and the national imaginary, which require an identity that divides “us” from “them.”²³⁶ As a measure for what it means to be “American” and as a “colonial rhetorical

strategy to promote a national American identity,” Indians as Other are both fearsome and desirable.²³⁷ Indians can be both the “ideal American” or the “marginalized other.”²³⁸ As a foil for American identity, the Indian Other is “constructed at the intersection of real and imagined Indians”—Native American realities are relatively unimportant in comparison to the usefulness of the Indian image to national identity.²³⁹ Indian images are so tied up with American identity and Otherness that difference and exoticness are the guiding principles in representation in any medium. Whatever “Indians” might be, they’re not “us.” This colonial view of looking at and representing of Native Americans limits what can be said about these various cultures.

Second, the narrative of the Western genre as reflective of foundational myths repeats colonial conceptualizations of Native Americans by framing them as fundamentally backward. Native Americans, in this interpretation, are relics of the past and representative of earlier stages in the development of “civilization.” Because the central conflict in Westerns concerns the advance of law and order as a sign of progress, Native Americans in their backwardness are obstacles. Manifest Destiny as a justification of expansion can legitimize the solution to this conflict: Native Americans must make way for the more civilized society in one way or another. This idea of progress underlines the idea that a modern version of society will always replace an outdated one.²⁴⁰ In the tradition of primitivism, Native culture is regarded as chronologically anterior to western culture.

The intuition to connect Native Americans to a more primitive stage of humanity continues through an emphasis on spirituality, on the alleged oneness with nature, on their simple life style (or their poverty), and on their environment as rural rather than

urban.²⁴¹ For example, *Longmire* focuses on a fictional Cheyenne reservation in Wyoming. The main Indian characters, Henry Standing Bear (Lou Diamond Phillips), police chief Mathias (Zahn McClarnon), and casino owner Jacob Nighthorse (A. Martinez), are depicted as heavily involved in traditional spirituality. One of the few “city Indians” around, Chester Lake on *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* (as always, Adam Beach), who might have been arguably conceived as exemplifying some modern Native issues, was not on the show long enough to highlight them.²⁴² Instead, Native Americans continue to be portrayed as rural, spiritual, and belonging to a simpler time even when the setting is 2008. Or, even more often, they are not portrayed as modern at all and instead relegated to narratives set in the nineteenth century or earlier.

Third, these conventions perpetuate the concept of the Vanishing Indian. If Native cultures are relics of earlier stages of humanity, they are bound to disappear either through extinction or assimilation. The only way that Native cultures exist, then, is in the past. The impossibility of modern Native American culture creates the problem that there should not be any Native peoples left—after all, they should have disappeared with the natural progression of history. This allegedly inherent incompatibility of Native Americans and modernity leads to the ethnographic dilemma that dominant society expects modern Native Americans to exist “in the past” or as if in the past.²⁴³ Therefore, even popular depictions of contemporary Native Americans are likely to depict contemporary Natives as living “as if” in the past because “modern Indians” living “modern” lives is inherently impossible.

Fourth and last, the limitation of Native Americans to the geography of the “Wild West” and the time between the Civil War and the alleged closing of the frontier

complicates the representation of modern Native Americans. As described above, the geography and time are dictated by the central narrative of conflict between white westward expansion and Native resistance. Visually, this tradition was shaped in the nineteenth century, with painters such as George Catlin or Carl Bodmer and later photographers such as Edward S. Curtis, all of whom depicted befeathered Indians in primitive costumes on horseback, preferably in the plains or in the Southwest.²⁴⁴ William F. Cody's Wild West show, among other factors, focused attention on the Sioux tribes of the Great Plains. Over the decades, Hollywood costume designers' interpretation of these tribes' visual markers have become the central visual stereotype most Americans (and people around the globe) envision when they think about "what Indians should look like."²⁴⁵ Having rarely met Native Americans in real life, people rely on familiar images from popular media. In many cases, these familiar images involve bareback riding, feather bonnets, long flowing or braided black hair, buckskin loin cloths or chaps, beadwork, moccasins, and tomahawks.²⁴⁶

In depictions of contemporary Native Americans outside the Western genre, the limitation to a time and place creates several problems. First, the reduction further emphasizes the idea of Indians as antecedent to white culture discussed above. After all, they belong in the Wild West both geographically and chronologically. Second, the limitation reinforces the idea of the Vanishing Indian. After all, those times are gone and with it gone are the Indians. If there are no Indians on horses to be found in the Great Plains anymore, then there cannot be Indians anywhere. Third, the conflation of all Native Americans into these specific visual stereotypes both mischaracterizes Plains cultures and renders non-Plains cultures invisible. Essentially, all Native Americans need

to correspond to the generic Plains image or are rendered invisible. Combined, these issues make depictions of contemporary Native Americans unattractive per se unless they privilege stories reaffirming conventional Western motives and tropes. Films and TV shows must focus on images that the American public easily recognizes.²⁴⁷ Therefore, contemporary American audiences are hindered in decoding (modern) Indianness that is unrelated to these stereotypes, decreasing the accessibility of non-Western genres for non-Native audiences.

Non-Western narratives portraying contemporary Native Americans exemplify how these legacies limit the way that modern Indianness can be negotiated in public. Because of diverse Native rights movements in the 1960s and 1970s, mainstream media became somewhat more interested in depicting contemporary Native cultures and issues in the news. The trend arrived in cinema and TV a few decades later: Mainstream movies such as *Powwow Highway* (1989), *Smoke Signals*, and TV shows such as *Northern Exposure* and *Twin Peaks* offer Indian-themed narratives or story lines that move away from the dynamics of the Western genre. In many ways, however, the Western genre dominates depictions of Native cultures to such an extent that it becomes difficult for any representation to escape its influence completely. For example, both *Twin Peaks* and *Northern Exposure* fall outside the classic Western genre and allow for complex, three-dimensional Indian characters. However, traces of Western conventions can be found in the way that Indians in both shows typically come from unmentioned, generic, and already vanished tribes and have stereotypical traits such as being expert trackers.²⁴⁸ The heritage of the Western genre also becomes abundantly clear in movies or TV shows such as *Lakota Woman* (1994), *Thunderheart*, and *Longmire*, which pit white civilization

against Indian tribes in the familiar setting of the Wild West—just in contemporary times. The police procedural *Longmire*, for example, flaunts the trope of the white savior hero, who maintains law and order in the wilderness of present-day Wyoming. The Cheyenne of the adjacent (fictional) Indian reservation function as a convenient Other, who serve as plot devices in mostly stereotypical roles.

Western dynamics, thus, play a role in depictions of contemporary Native Americans. Depictions that recycle Western narratives have to some extent reflected the Western's dichotomy of Ignoble and Noble Indians. These reflections do not just copy the tropes and insert them into contemporary Western or non-Western narratives. Instead, the necessary modification of the foundational narratives of How the West Was Won, Manifest Destiny, and the Vanishing Indian render the concepts less stable or rigid when contemporary Native Americans are concerned. The modification of these underlying narratives and myths results in the necessity to modify and adapt Indian images.

Narratives that both revolve around modern Native Americans and include some Western dynamics must thus rearticulate the dichotomy of nobility/ignobility. They do so through two main mechanisms: They rely on the old image of Indians as male Braves/Warriors at the expense of representing women; and they make connections between nobility and cultural traditionalism as well as ignobility and the corruptive force of white culture. The updated dichotomy of nobility/ignobility is visible in several revised Indian images currently circulated.

Updated Indian Stock Characters

The Warrior image exists in a classic form in American war movies and in an updated version revolving around resistance: the Militant Warrior. American war movies

lend themselves to the trope of the Noble Warrior as much as the Western. Modern war films developed in the 1960s and 1970s and reflected the Western's themes of American exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny as well as the idea of a civilizing mission.²⁴⁹ Just like Western narratives, war films usually rely on black-and-white story lines of good triumphing over evil, of order triumphing over chaos. In this context, "Americans" are obviously the good guys, and for once, Indians are on their side. Instead of being ignoble enemies, Native Americans thus get to be noble allies. In public memory, the Navajo code talkers of World War II encapsulate perfectly the tradition of the Noble Warrior.²⁵⁰ The 2002 movie *Windtalkers* (2002) exemplifies this concept with the Indian main character, Ben Yahzee (Adam Beach), who is supportive of the war effort, good-looking, stoic, and loyal to the real (white) hero, Sergeant Ender (Nicolas Cage). Moreover, even though he is a modern farmer from the Navajo reservation, Yahzee realizes he merely has to unleash his "real" Indian instincts to become an accomplished warrior.

Another updated version of the Indian Warrior is the Militant Indian. This image of the Militant Indian was added to the available frames for televisual and print news from Indian country in the 1960s due to the Red Power movement.²⁵¹ The main characteristic of the Militant Indian is his resistance to assimilation and oppression. The American Indian Movement itself recycled and modified traditional images of the Noble Savage.²⁵² In order to do so, AIM built on the idea of the "legendary warrior, fighting a modern conflict to preserve the ancient rights of his people."²⁵³ Like previous images, the Militant Indian is ambiguous: S/he can be read as a Noble, idealistic figure whose intention is to "save society from destroying the planet and itself." Alternatively, s/he can be interpreted as a brutal, uncivilized Bad Indian in the tradition of the Ignoble Savage.²⁵⁴

Both *Lakota Woman* and *Thunderheart* showcase prime examples of the Militant Indian. In *Lakota Woman*, the protagonist AIM men are granted a three-dimensional portrayal as individuals but are also highlighted as honorable, upstanding freedom fighters as a group.²⁵⁵ An exemplary Noble Militant Indian is Leonard Crow Dog, the medicine man of the group who exemplifies the connection between nobility and spirituality. In *Thunderheart*, nobility is a question of loyalty to white society. Since white society is characterized as depraved and corrupting, loyalty to it becomes a marker of ignobility rather than nobility, which is the case in many revisionist Westerns. Therefore, it turns out that Ignoble Indians are those who betray the Aboriginal Rights Movement, whereas Noble Indians are those that stick with the movement.

The theme of loyalty to white society, thus, functions similarly as in classic Westerns provided that the central conflict revolves around racial differences and their consequences for territorial conflicts. When Native-white conflict is not central to the plot, the problem of Indian loyalty simply does not arise with the same urgency. *Smoke Signals* and *Powwow Highway* do not pit any “noble” group against any “ignoble” group because both movies tell stories that move far beyond the black-and-white narratives of the classic Westerns. This renders moot loyalty to white people as a working distinction of nobility/ignobility.

Apart from updated Indian Warrior images, the second dynamic determining nobility follows in the tradition of connecting Noble Indians to the pure, original state of the Noble Savage. Obviously, this trope must change from its original form as soon as the Indian characters in question exist in a modern setting. After all, modern Native Americans are hardly untouched by civilization. However, three conventions of

portraying modern Native Americans can be traced to the Western dichotomy of nobility/ignobility: the Indian as a spiritual ecologist, the Degraded Indian, and the Casino Indian. As described above, Indian nobility within the Western genre rests to some degree on the trope of innocent Savages in the pristine wilderness. The more civilization influences the Native Americans in question, the greater their likelihood to be corrupted, depraved, and ignoble. In modern settings, depravity is usually connected to the loss of “cultural purity” and the corruptive impact of western civilization. The most used stereotype to communicate Native “traditionalism” is the Indian who is spiritual and, because of his spirituality, also an environmentalist.

This Spiritual/Ecological Indian is a twentieth-century version of the Noble Indian, who had long been presumed to possess spirituality and an inherent “closeness to earth.”²⁵⁶ In *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*, Shepard Krech III describes the Ecological Indian as the trope of Native Americans as ecologists, conservationists, and environmentalists who show “ecological wisdom and prudent care for the land and its resources.”²⁵⁷ The Ecological Indian’s purity connects him to the Noble Indian and is emphasized by “a spiritual, sacred attitude toward land and animals,” which contrasts with the utilitarian attitudes of the non-ecological White Man.²⁵⁸ The 1995 Disney version of *Pocahontas* is a 90-minute ode to this version of the Noble Indian.²⁵⁹ In depictions of contemporary Native Americans, prime examples are commercials such as Iron Eyes Cody as the crying Indian or the Mazola Margarine corn maiden in the 1970s.²⁶⁰ The connection between spirituality and nature is also made clear in, for example, the mystery thrillers about the Navajo nation based on the Tony Hillerman

novels. In the movies, policeman Jim Chee's (Adam Beach, again) practice of traditional spirituality is repeatedly connected to isolating himself in the wilderness.

The flipside of this way of looking at nobility interprets the interruption of traditions as a direct cause of degradedness. The Ecological/Spiritual Indian serves as “a powerful indictment of white Americans,” who are presented as polluters of the once pristine nature of the American continent.²⁶¹ This dynamic portrays those Indians connected closely to white culture as equally polluting/polluted. In *Thunderheart*, the fictional reservation as the story's backdrop is an example of this kind of collective Indian abjectness and destitution. The Drunk and Degraded Indian types have a long tradition as part of the Ignoble Indian images as pointed out above.²⁶² Furthermore, often the image of drug abuse is further dramatized through the idea that Indians are living off public money and therefore financing their drug abuse through other people's tax payments.²⁶³

This introduction of the idea of “leeching” Indians connects to the recent appearance of the stereotype that Kilpatrick calls “those rich Indians”—the idea that, by the end of the twentieth century, Native Americans had illegitimately amassed enormous personal wealth.²⁶⁴ The emergence of the trope can be connected to the legalization of gaming on reservations in the late 1980s, which created the faulty assumption in dominant society that Native Americans somehow are now raking in vast profits from countless casinos.²⁶⁵ Celeste C. Lacroix describes the dynamics that make the Casino Indian a negative image: He (rarely she) is presented as mining his own culture for personal profit; he is a scheming and immoral version of the Indian Chief image; and he is presented as not “authentically” Native American.²⁶⁶ In her analysis, she finds that

Family Guy, *Saturday Night Live*, *Chappelle's Show*, *The Sopranos*, *South Park*, and *Drawn Together* repeatedly abuse the stereotype. Another clear example of this trope is casino owner Jacob Nighthorse on *Longmire*, who fits Lacroix's description perfectly. Capitalist values, the stereotype asserts, are un-Indian.

Visual Conventions for the Modern Indian

Jacob Nighthorse also fits the visual characteristics that seem to indicate nobility/ignobility for modern Indians. Like with more classic Indian images, the visual distinction between Noble and Ignoble Indians is complex. However, in general it seems that the less "Indian" an Indian looks, the more interference from white culture is presumed, which indicates ignobility. For example, Jacob Whitehorse, lacks any specific signs of alleged markers usually connected to the Noble Indian. Instead, his cropped hair and conventional suit make him indistinguishable from any business man of dominant culture and, therefore, mark him as ignoble. This absence of any signs of presumed "Indian" cultural codes communicates the interruption of traditionalism by dominant culture.

The modern "Noble Indian," hence, must pull off the balancing act of looking "modern" while also looking "Indian." As Amanda Cobb says, modern Noble Warriors therefore "cannot wear loincloths, but they can also not wear three-piece suits."²⁶⁷ Often, the identifying item of the modern Indian is hair. Long dark hair, often in braids, combined with racial markers such as dark skin, is one of the most visually enduring signs of Indianness. Other markers still harken back to the visual Western: buckskins, turquoise jewelry, beadwork.²⁶⁸ To communicate nobility, any demonstrable difference from "mainstream" white America in hair and clothing is often sufficient since the most

important aspect is to mark Indians as “intentionally” or “traditionally” Indian. Sometimes, as in *Smoke Signals*, the idea of nobility includes the idea that Indians should still be “stoic” and maybe look a little “mean.”²⁶⁹

The Militant Warrior, noble or ignoble, is connected to more specific visual traits that can be traced back to AIM’s media presence. AIM constructed a self-image that played on the Western themes of Cowboys versus Indians, presenting themselves with long hair, red bandanas, and prominent weaponry.²⁷⁰ These visual cues of Indian males with bandanas and rifles go back to the photographic conventions to portray Indians in the nineteenth century. For example, the image of Geronimo kneeling with his rifle across his knee comes to mind.²⁷¹

Women remain essentially absent from both visual and narrative representations of Indianness. Theoretically, there should be a wider range of story lines and character developments available for Native women in non-Western formats. After all, Native women are freed from their responsibility to legitimize conquest by falling in love with the white hero when the central Native-white conflict is absent. Indian-centered narratives like *Smoke Signals* and *Powwow Highway* do a fair job of showing Native men and women in a variety of roles and functions, portraying complex and three-dimensional women even if they are not quite portrayed as heroines.²⁷² Obviously, a bio-pic like *Lakota Woman* excels at giving an in-depth portrayal of a complex modern woman, who is “neither degraded nor glamorized.”²⁷³ However, TV shows incorporating modern Native Americans have been notoriously bad at allowing screen time for Native women at all.²⁷⁴ *Northern Exposure* contains one character, Marilyn Whirlwind, who is a three-dimensional individual without any similarities to the squaw or the oversexualized

maiden. Other than that, there is a great dearth of modern women—or women at all. Even with movies such as *Pocahontas*, “living, breathing American Indian women have become largely invisible in mainstream popular culture” since the mid-1990s, Elizabeth S. Bird argues.²⁷⁵

Self- and Other-Representations in non-Western Narratives

The complexities of sidestepping Western tropes in non-Western narratives does not prevent all change for the better. TV shows such as *Twin Peaks*, *Northern Exposure*, *Law and Order*, and *Longmire* include modern Native characters that move beyond the simple duality of either Bad/Ignoble or Good/Noble Indians. However, one specific group seems to best achieve the most innovative representations, aimed at implicitly or explicitly dismantling stereotypes used to the detriment of Native Americans for centuries: narratives created with significant Native American input. Despite the improved representation, Sam Pack argues that authorial intent and therefore self-representation will not achieve meaningful changes as long as audience expectations do not significantly change.²⁷⁶ This is aggravated by the fact that movies such as *Powwow Highway*, *Smoke Signals*, *Lakota Woman*, *The Business of Fancydancing* (2002), or *Atanarjuat* (2001) did not reach the mainstream in the same way that Hollywood movies can. Even the most successful of these movies, *Smoke Signals*, did not receive the same attention as major Hollywood Indian movies, for example *Dances with Wolves*.²⁷⁷

I have used *Smoke Signals*, *Powwow Highway*, and *Lakota Woman* as examples of mainstream-produced movies because they were financed and distributed through conventional, mainstream avenues. However, *Powwow Highway* was written by a Native author, David Seals (Huron), and most of its Native characters were played by Native

people.²⁷⁸ *Lakota Woman* is based on the autobiography of Mary Brave Bird (Sicangu Lakota) and had a 90% Native cast as well as a 40% Native crew.²⁷⁹ *Smoke Signals*, finally, is usually regarded as the “first feature film written, directed, acted, and co-produced” by a Native person.²⁸⁰ The three movies, therefore, do form part both of “mainstream” story-telling and of self-representation.

This possibility to be simultaneously mainstream and self-representation guided the selection in the case studies and means that questions arise around two different complexes or dynamics. First, how do portrayals of modern Native Americans deal with the legacy of Western images? Celeste Lacroix argues that the “dualistic reasoning” portraying Indians as “either good or bad” or “innocent or evil” is visible in present-day representation.²⁸¹ I very much agree. At the same time, interrogating the connection between the dichotomy and images of modern Native Americans shows that the dichotomy clearly transcends questions of Good and Bad Indians, especially in the absence of the most racist iterations Bloodthirsty Indians as savage killers. When contemporary Indians are articulated outside the Western genre, is the difference between the Noble and the Ignoble Indian even still important? How is Otherness rearticulated when texts center on contemporary Indianness? If Indians aren’t the Other, as for example in the war movies, is there a potential for Indians to be truly “us”? What happens when Native American publicly contest representations and insist on corrective interventions into conventional images of Indianness, handed down from the Western and embedded into master narratives? This leads to the second question complex, which asks whether self-representation is meaningfully different from other-representation. Can self-representation offer a way out of the confining frameworks of centuries-old Western

dynamics? Or are Native Americans, indeed, as vulnerable or beholden to these images as mainstream society?

Indian images are ubiquitous in American popular culture. Indians inspired by our imaginations about the indigenous populations and the long tradition of representing them in Western films appear as mascots, on butter cartons, in cigar stores, at hipster music festivals, at Urban Outfitters stores, re-enactments, history books, and a myriad of consumer products. These images of Indianness are driven by visuals and by narrative: by ideas of what Indians should look like and by ideas of what they do or who they are.

All three of my case studies contain and negotiate visual and narrative tropes that articulate Indianness: the photographic essay in the *National Geographic*, the news media reports on the Cowboy and Indian Alliance, and *Americans* at the NMAI. All three of my case studies also wrestle with containing both other-representation and self-representation: the non-Native photographer Huey incorporated a community project that allowed Lakota people to upload their own images; the Native participants of the CIA exploited visual expectations about Indianness to achieve press attention for the protest; and the NMAI is federally funded but generally perceived to be a Native museum. Therefore, these case studies allow insight into how representatives of mainstream America and Indian country articulate Indianness and affirm or intervene into Western representations.

Preview

The remainder of this dissertation focuses on the rearticulation of Western images through three specific cases. In the first chapter, I examine Aaron Huey's photo project surrounding Pine Ridge reservation, which was published with twenty-three pictures in

the *National Geographic* magazine in 2012 under the title “In the Shadow of Wounded Knee.”²⁸² As a reaction to Lakota criticism of the project, Huey added the Pine Ridge Community Storytelling Project called “Voices of Pine Ridge,” which is a platform hosted on the *National Geographic* website that supports user-generated visual, textual, and voice material uploads.²⁸³ I argue that Huey’s images reflect the convention of depicting Native Americans in the duality of the traditional and spiritually-minded Noble Indian on the one hand, and the modern, poor, and decrepit Ignoble Indian on the other. Both the visual culture of the *National Geographic* and Huey’s own identity construction as an ally and “savior” of the community limit the possible articulations of Oglala Lakota identity.²⁸⁴ The Storytelling Project complicates these articulations and intervenes into Huey’s Western tendencies by articulating the reservation as beautiful and Oglala Lakota identity as modern, diverse, and normal.

Chapter 2 examines the news coverage of the CIA Reject and Protect protest through the lens of Kevin DeLuca’s image event. I argue that the Reject and Protect protest functions as an image event in the sense that it invited press coverage with a specific projection of Indianness in terms of both visual and narrative tropes from the Western. On the one hand, this performance invited coverage that articulated Native identity as generic Indianness. The press located the newsworthiness of the protest in the coalition of the Native nations and white farmers and ranchers rather than in the goals and motivations of the protest. On the other hand, the projection of visual tropes of Indianness also created an opening to articulate Native identities that emphasized tribal nations as sovereign both politically and territorially. This rearticulation meaningfully disrupts Western narratives of How the West Was Won.

Lastly, in chapter 3, I consider a current exhibit in the NMAI, *Americans*. The exhibit seeks to illustrate the extent to which Indian images are ubiquitous within the American public sphere. In its execution, it illustrates the uneasy existence of the NMAI as a national museum attempting to represent indigenous voices. I argue that the national framework limits the extent to which the NMAI can explain the destructive force and racist nature of colonialism. Accurately contextualizing Indian images in colonial history would interrupt US master narratives and self-concepts. Instead, *Americans* articulates Indianness as part of Americanness, which allows the exhibit to sidestep attributing responsibility for colonial atrocities. Rather than meaningfully intervening into American master narratives, the exhibit affirms identity constructions of Native Americans as Generic Indians and portrays Indian images as harmless entertainment.

In the conclusion, I reflect upon my findings concerning how non-Native people and Native Americans negotiate Indianness within the legacy of the Western genre as representative of American master narratives about the nation and its history.

CHAPTER 1: NATIVE IDENTITIES IN THE *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC*

Photographer Aaron Huey started photographing the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota in the context of a wider project on poverty in the USA that he initiated in 2005.²⁸⁵ Pine Ridge is home to the Oglala people, who are part of the greater Lakota nation.²⁸⁶ The reservation is arguably one of the poorest regions in the United States. In the short film, *Honor the Treaties*, Huey admits that initially he was interested in little more than the “extreme poverty and violence and gangs” among the Lakota people. His agenda, he states, was to depict the poverty and its outgrowths “because I [couldn’t] believe this exist[ed].”²⁸⁷ Today however, his project has achieved remarkable complexity in comparison to its early conceptualization.

Once Huey moved away from poverty as a lens, his project blossomed into various, loosely connected multimedia texts: the 2012 short film *Honor the Treaties*, a TED talk (2010), the 2013 photo book *Mitakuye Oyasin*, and lectures such as “Seven Years on Pine Ridge” at the Annenberg Space for Photography.²⁸⁸ One of the products of this larger project is the *National Geographic* article “In the Shadow of Wounded Knee” (2012), which in print includes fifteen images from Huey’s collection as well as a photo for the issue’s title page. Online, twenty-three images are available. An article by Alexandra Fuller accompanies the images both in print and online.²⁸⁹ The website also features a map entitled “The Lost Land” that tracks the loss of reservation land since 1851 and foreshadows the activist position Huey takes toward the recuperation of the Black Hills.²⁹⁰ Online, “In the Shadow of Wounded Knee” is accompanied by the Pine Ridge Community Storytelling Project. This project is embedded into the *National Geographic* website and allowed Oglala Lakota self-representation through user-

generated content on a multimedia platform. With this Community Storytelling Project, Huey reacted to push-back he had received for his photographs of Pine Ridge even before the *National Geographic* article was published.

This dialectic between Huey's images and the Community Storytelling Project creates a unique dynamic between insider- and outsider-representation. Interrogating the Oglala responses allows insight both into counterimages of Native identity and into self-representation through user-generated content. Examining Huey's portrayals enables conclusions about how outsider-representation by allies works or does not work well. At first sight, Huey's project seems to highlight all that is problematic about representing Native Americans today both in written and visual texts. Here we have a white man who, according to his own words in the short film and several talks he delivered, spent a few years traveling to the reservation on and off, made some friends there, and arrived at the point where he felt comfortable representing "the Oglala" in a small number of images, published in an ostensibly renowned but problematic publication. Following his argument, his position as a friend, ally, and activist legitimates this project. His track record corroborates that he indeed is a friend, ally, and activist, which makes the criticism he received all the more interesting. What makes this project truly a fascinating case study is Huey's reaction to criticism by the people he wanted to represent: He used the feedback to create a platform for self-representation rather than responding negatively to the criticism.²⁹¹

The dialectic between Huey's project and the Lakota response is a valuable case study to answer the overarching research questions of this dissertation. Looking at Huey's images through the prism of the Western allows me to trace and highlight the

recurrence and renegotiation of conventional portrayals of Native Americans. Furthermore, the project offers an opportunity to interrogate an attempt to dismantle these traditions. In Huey's own words, his goal was to "show the world [the Oglala Lakota] are not just what we keep seeing in all these goddamn magazines, all these pictures of drunks."²⁹² Additionally, the dynamic of action and reaction allows insight into the duality of self- and other-representation that is rarely as clear and pronounced as here: The posts in the Storytelling Project directly respond to Huey and all participants are aware of this dialectic. The identity constructions in the Lakota posts can, therefore, be seen as renegotiations of Huey's version of Lakota life and identity.

In this chapter, I strive to answer two main questions. First, how are Western patterns reflected or interrupted in Huey's photo project? Second, how do the participants in the Community Storytelling Project contradict or affirm these narratives or patterns?

I approach these questions by, first, situating Huey's project in the broad context of visual conventions of Indian photography. Second, I outline the *National Geographic's* conventions for depicting indigenous Others that constrain Huey's opportunity to subvert Western imagery. Huey's project is well-intentioned, and in some ways, his goal to educate his audience on the current state of the Lakota nation is successful. However, the images in the *National Geographic* offer a simplistic version of Lakota identity that perpetuates harmful conventions of portraying Native Americans. Whereas his other texts give a more nuanced version both of Lakota history and Lakota identity, "In the Shadow of Wounded Knee" echoes a dichotomy well-known from the Western genre. I argue that Huey's images emerge as reiterations of the Noble and Ignoble Indian by articulating a connection between the Ecological/Spiritual Indian and

traditionalism on the one hand, and a connection between the Degraded or Drunk Indian and “progress” on the other.

The Storytelling Project can intervene into these images because it aims to do so, and because the platform exists outside the conventional publication of the *National Geographic*. I argue that the Storytelling Project replaces the simplistic Western identities with alternative articulations in three ways: First, the posts reject the idea of ignobility by celebrating life on the reservation as beautiful, joyful, and worthwhile. Second, they contextualize the current conditions on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in a history of colonialism, which corrects misconceptions of historical responsibility for these conditions and articulates a resistive identity for the Oglala Lakota. Lastly, the participants articulate contemporary Oglala Lakota identities as modern, diverse, and American. These alternative identities negate Huey’s simplistic duality of the Ignoble and Noble Indian. Thus, the Storytelling Project offers insights both into how to correct Huey’s image specifically and how to intervene in Western legacies more generally.

Indian Photography

Huey’s project exists within a long history of Native American images, which has created a strong visual culture surrounding Indian photography. As outlined in the Introduction, when photography became a phenomenon of mass culture in the late nineteenth century, a tradition of Native American portraiture was already well-established in the United States. In the nineteenth century, painters in the tradition of George Catlin popularized romantic images of Plains Indians, establishing some of the key visual markers mainstream audiences are still familiar with today: buckskins, horses, tipis, feathers, buffalo.²⁹³ Filled with meaning by Wild West shows and other popular

media, these conventions found their way into the illustrated newspapers and magazines, such as Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper* and *Harper's Weekly*, which satisfied a public constantly hungry for Indian illustrations.²⁹⁴ Commonly, the illustrated magazines portrayed Native Americans through conventional stereotypical racial lenses, either idealizing and romanticizing Indians or portraying them as downtrodden and repulsive.²⁹⁵ The advent of the camera continued these traditions and exploded the availability of Native photographs. As Rayna Green claims, "[e]verybody in possession of a camera at the turn of the last century took images of Native North Americans."²⁹⁶

What made, and still makes, photography specifically dangerous for Native people is the assumption that photographs depict that which is "real" and that, therefore, what is seen in photographs is "authentic" or "true." While non-scholarly audiences might perceive photographs to have an indexical relationship to nature or "reality," rhetorical scholars largely accept the rhetorically discursive, constructed nature of photographs. As "co-constitutive" with reality, photographs produce "the visualization of the social world even as they are simultaneously produced by it."²⁹⁷ Accounting for the "naturalistic enthymeme," or the audience assumption that photographs depict the "real," allows for a complex understanding of how images work within the public.²⁹⁸

Photographs reference, in Roland Barthes's words, the "this was" but cannot do so without privileging a certain view point, world view, framework, or bias. As Susie Linfield adequately summarized, photographs do not

explain the way the world works. They don't offer reasons or causes; they don't tell us stories with a coherent, or even discernible, beginning, middle, and end.

Photographs can't burrow within to reveal the inner dynamics of historical events.

And though it's true that photographs document the specific, they sometimes blur—dangerously blur—political and historical distinction.²⁹⁹

Audiences, however, are not likely to critically interrogate the relationship between history and photography.

Instead, assumptions exist that history can be known through photographs and that photographs have the power to portray the past objectively and without deforming it.³⁰⁰ This assumption of naturalism asserts that photography accurately “represent[s] a specific moment in the past.”³⁰¹ Therefore, photography is sometimes understood to have a “documentary” function, which means that it can be relegated to illustrative functions for linguistic texts.³⁰² Popular mainstream audiences might not think about the fact that photographs are just as ambiguous as linguistic texts as evidence for the past. Alan Trachtenberg's assertion that photographs are “free to serve any representational function desired by a photographer and his audience” might be lost on audiences of photography in general and Indian photography in particular.³⁰³

Considering that much of Indian photography catered to mainstream imaginations about Native Americans, the assumption of capital-T Truth in photography is especially damaging to Native American people. Consider the “before-and-after” photograph, which was popular in the nineteenth century at Indian boarding schools such as the Carlisle Indian school. This genre heavily emphasized the contrast between Native “barbarism” and Western “civilization” by highlighting the cultural change in Native children attending these schools, and affirmed racial stereotypes of the period.³⁰⁴ The truth claim within the photographs—Native children were Ignoble Indians when they arrived but are now assimilated citizens—justified the harrowing practice of tearing apart Native

families and of subjecting Native children to abuse that had deep psychological repercussions and has been equated to cultural genocide.

In the genre of Indian salvage photography, truth claims centered on Native Americans as the Vanishing Indian. The best-known photographer within this genre—and of Native subjects in general—is without any doubt Edward S. Curtis. Like many photographers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Curtis was motivated by the concern that Native American cultures would soon disappear from the face of the earth.³⁰⁵ This type of photography as “salvage ethnography” focused on “ennobling” Native Americans, such as portraying Native men in the tradition of visual conventions for depicting great men and women (Danish photographer Benedicte Wrensted) or portraying Native Americans in a pictorialized, romanticized manner (Curtis).³⁰⁶ These photographic depictions of the Noble Indian romanticized pre-contact days and idealized the benefits of governmental policies for Native Americans at the same time. In this way, Curtis offered both a romanticized version of traditional ways of life and a progressive ideal of contemporaneous Native identities within the American public.³⁰⁷ Even though James Faris deems Curtis’s work as “phony” because the photographer staged and sometimes even excluded Native Americans, Faris concedes that Curtis was a “better photographer and person” than his critics admit.³⁰⁸ While “phony” might be a debatable evaluation, it is generally accepted that Curtis erased all markers of modernity from his pictures in order to suggest a pre-civilization Noble Savage, who was beautiful but tragically vanishing.³⁰⁹ Traces of these nineteenth-century popular images are visible in American popular culture today, especially considering visual expectations that assert that Native Americans “should look” like they just stepped out of the late 1880s.³¹⁰

Curtis's influence is also reflected in current projects that focus on salvage ethnography in photography. For example, Jimmy Nelson's project called *Before They Pass Away* amply borrows from Curtis's words and visuals.³¹¹ Interestingly, Native Americans are excluded from the twenty-nine "tribes" Nelson photographed even though Nelson sees himself to be "walking in the footsteps of Edward Sheriff Curtis" explicitly.³¹² Then again, one of Nelson's goals is to establish "a body of work that would be an irreplaceable ethnographic record of a fast disappearing world."³¹³ In Nelson's own words, this kind of "definite record" has already been created for Native Americans by Edward S. Curtis.³¹⁴ Furthermore, Native Americans might not have been "unspoiled" enough for Nelson. Like Curtis, Nelson looked at "remote tribes" and excluded virtually all references to the influence of modernity or western culture in the images.

The lasting impact of Curtis's work highlights that the visual culture within which Huey undertook his project is dominated by a strong canon of Native American photography. This canon functions as the dynamic that "make[s] certain things visible in particular ways" at the same time that it makes "other things unseeable."³¹⁵ Arguably, the canon emphasizes romanticized images of the nineteenth century and specifically Curtis's style. For Huey to make his images legible as "Indian" photographs, he must react to this omnipresent body of photography.³¹⁶ Absent conventions of contemporary visual culture, audiences might struggle to decode the images as Indian images.

Having thus briefly established the visual context within which the images in the *National Geographic* exist, the immediate context of the project needs to be considered as well. The following section establishes the *National Geographic* as part of this

immediate context and highlights how the publication encourages some visual articulations of Otherness while discouraging others.

The *National Geographic* as Immediate Context for Huey's Images

Traditions of representing Otherness in the *National Geographic* echo Western conventions and limit possible rearticulations of Indianness in Huey's photographs. Acknowledging the *National Geographic* as a meaningful framework for the photo projects recognizes that the photographer does not have perfect control over the end product of his or her work. Huey was only one among other *National Geographic* contractors or workers who influenced what his photographs would eventually look like in the magazine. He took the photographs but in the end other people chose the specific images for publication, wrote the captions, and arranged the images in sequence.³¹⁷ The cooperative nature of the work means that Huey's images are framed in the style of the *National Geographic*, which distinguishes "In the Shadow of Wounded Knee" from his larger project, over which he had more authorial control. In this section, I outline a brief history of the *National Geographic* magazine and its visual conventions in order to situate Huey's images in their immediate context.

Within US discourses of representing others and ourselves to ourselves, the *National Geographic* occupies a unique position. The magazine takes a central space in the landscape of the illustrated press and speaks with an authoritative voice. The *National Geographic*'s circulation numbers highlight the magazine's influence within the national public sphere. Even though subscription numbers have dropped in recent years, like those of all print magazines, the reader numbers have an impressive history and remain high. The *National Geographic* was first published in 1888 and became a monthly circulation

in the late 1890s. By the 1920s, it had a circulation of 750,000. In 1998, the National Geographic Society had more than 10 million members.³¹⁸ In 2003, there were still 6.3 million subscriptions.³¹⁹ Today, US subscriptions hover around 3.5 million domestically, with another 3 million subscriptions abroad.³²⁰ In 2012, according to data published by the *National Geographic* itself, the magazine was still the seventh largest publication in the USA and had a circulation of 4.3 million in print and online, 2.9 million app downloads, 19.4 million monthly unique visitors to the website, 11.7 million Facebook likes, and 2.7 million Twitter followers.³²¹ These numbers speak to the publication's continued influence on American public discourse.

Besides its circulation, the influence of the *National Geographic* stems from both its claim to a scientific voice and a quasi-governmental function. The *National Geographic's* quasi-scientific voice creates a simplistic framework within which local inhabitants of geographically or socially “far territories” can be represented.³²² The magazine presents itself as a publication interested in hard facts, authenticity, and Truth—in the tradition of scientific magazines.³²³ On the magazine's website, the society self-describes as “a nonprofit scientific and education organization that pushes the boundaries of exploration to further our understanding of our planet and empower us all to generate solutions for a more sustainable future.”³²⁴ Throughout the website, the emphasis is on scientific research (“to date, we've given out more than 13,000 grants to scientists”), conservation (“we support critical projects like the Big Cats Initiative, which has helped stop more than 2,6000 big cat mortalities in the wild”), and education (“our education programs give teachers the tools they need to engage students of all ages ... and inspire new generations of responsible citizens, explorers, and changemakers”).³²⁵

This emphasis supports an assumption of objectivity within the magazine that pushes aside the fact that the publication is not a “forum for the free exchange of ideas about or from the third world. It’s a glossy, stylized presentation of a highly limited number of themes and types of images.”³²⁶

Furthermore, the magazine’s authority in US discourses stems from what Lisa Bloom suggests is a “discursive space that normally belonged to governmental institutions.”³²⁷ The National Geographic Society has, David Jansson agrees with Bloom, integrated itself into the national political institutions of American society and implicitly supports state policies, consumer culture, and the national ideology of the United States.³²⁸ As Bloom puts it: The magazine uses “discourses of nationalism, empire, and white male heroism to justify its own identity and to install itself as an authoritative medium of cultural communication.”³²⁹ Consequently, even though the *National Geographic* is a “commercial discourse of mass culture,” it manages to inhabit a space that aligns it more closely with the authoritative voice of scientific or governmental institutions. The magazine thus becomes one of the major discursive spaces in which the United States represented/represents the rest of the world to itself.³³⁰

This pseudo-scientific position has encouraged traditions of looking that have changed at best slowly. The magazine mixed, and still mixes, photographic and narrative modes of presentation that hover between the scientific and the aesthetic. Further complicating the relationship of history, Truth, and photography, in the *National Geographic* “objectivity, unambiguousness and pure information” intersect with sentimental representations focusing on sex, want, and spirituality.³³¹ This blend of

aesthetic and scientific approaches can be quite misleading, especially considering the topic selection of the magazine.

The content of the *National Geographic* focuses on the triad of animals, nature, and people. The highlighted people are usually representatives of the Other. Concentrating on the Other articulates an identity for the (mostly white) American audience by virtue of showing them who they are not. Otherness in the *National Geographic* is articulated in similar ways as in other mainstream avenues and ultimately positions indigenous people as exotic and timeless antitheses to modernity in the way that they are visually framed.

The Other emerges as an essentialized, reductive representative of (mostly) third-world countries and cultures who reifies the power differential between the West and the rest, and, therefore, the superiority of (white) Westerners. In their analysis of more than six hundred photos from the *National Geographic*, Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins highlight that the magazine achieves this portrayal by rendering non-Western people exotic, idealized, naturalized, sexualized, and ahistoric.³³² As editor-in-chief Susan Goldberg summarizes in the April 2018 issue, the magazine conventionally depicted “Natives” as “exotics, famously and frequently unclothed, unhappy hunters, [and] noble savages” at least until the Civil Rights era.³³³ Indeed, Sylvie Beaudreau argues, the paradigm of exoticism is so paramount that even Canada needs to be portrayed through an exotic lens.³³⁴

The exotic Other in the *National Geographic* was historically articulated as an earlier or lower stage on the evolutionary ladder.³³⁵ One way in which the magazine achieved this idea of anteriority was through overtly sexist and racist portrayal.³³⁶

Conventions such as the “tits and tots” pictures illustrate this dynamic when pictures voyeuristically present naked women of color with babies. The “erotic exotic” both in male and female form increased the Othering effect of non-Western portrayals in sexual and racial terms.³³⁷ To highlight the difference between self and Other, American identity was articulated as civically and technologically superior in its modernity and yet distinctively benign, friendly, and helpful.³³⁸ In comparison to the sexualized Other, American identity seems “rational, generous and benevolent.”³³⁹ In this way, the *National Geographic* openly presumed white or western superiority and established indigenous peoples as contemporary ancestors.³⁴⁰

Within the American mainstream, there has been a noticeable effort to shift away from this biased way of portraying indigenous populations in the last decades. To some extent, these efforts are visible within the *National Geographic*. In the April 2018 special issue on race, the *National Geographic* announced a series on diversity in America that covered Muslims, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. About the last group’s coverage, the issue announced: “Their culture at times erased or appropriated, Native Americans are rising up to fight the marginalization they’ve endured.”³⁴¹ The resulting Native-authored (!) articles, “Reclaiming Our Stories” and “Our World, but Not Our Worldview,” are testaments to Native diversity, modernity, survivance, and the compatibility of Americanness and Indianness.³⁴²

Even though the most overt racist depictions have receded, conventions of Otherness still influence the representation of non-white people in the magazine. For indigenous peoples, this focus constrains contemporary representations in three ways. First, the continued emphasis on exoticism means a focus on ritual and traditional dress.

Lutz and Collins found that one-fifth of all photos showed indigenous people engaged in or preparing rituals, and about half of all images showed people in traditional dress or ritual costumes.³⁴³

Second, the indigenous Other is portrayed as the antithesis to modernity. The *National Geographic* generally only recognizes two states of human society in history. On the one hand, the traditional, unevolved societies of the third-world Other. On the other hand, the “modern,” developed societies of the West.³⁴⁴ As remnants and representatives of the past, the indigenous Other is a “living aspect of a dead past whose purpose in the magazine is to make the past present.”³⁴⁵ This stable, knowable Other is contrasted with the continually progressing Us.³⁴⁶ Capturing the ahistoric, timeless Other requires an eradication of references to modernity and often a placement of the Other in nature. Thus, the images obscure modern realities of indigenous Others and preclude portrayals as, for example, modern professionals.³⁴⁷

Lastly, the magazine’s visual representation of Otherness still rests on “types” who represent their entire group as culturally essentialized prototypes who are often inserted into specific recognizable natural settings.³⁴⁸ Reducing Native Americans to certain “themes” or “types” grouped them with endangered or exotic cultures or “species,” whether it be big cats or Nenets herders of the Russian Arctic or people with albinism in Tanzania.³⁴⁹ For example, throughout the twentieth century, the magazine focused on visual representations of traditional behavior and clothes when portraying the “Eskimo” (Inuit, Inupiat, and Yupik people). This focus on traditional behavior mirrored Admiral Robert E. Peary’s coverage of these nations. Pearson first reported on them when he was trying to reach the North Pole in 1909. Later coverage imitated Peary’s,

creating the impression that Native people have undergone essentially no cultural change or modernization since 1909.³⁵⁰

The three characteristics of representing indigenous Others mean that the *National Geographic*, thus, articulates Otherness in ways that can insert itself relatively seamlessly into US American foundational myths. As Rae Lynn Schwartz-DuPre argues, the “rhetorics of progress, rescue, and colonization depicted in the magazine” are in part what makes the *National Geographic* “authentically American.”³⁵¹ By creating a hierarchy between the exotic, anterior, primitive Other and the modern, civil American, the magazine did not only establish an American identity distinct both from old European and non-western identities.³⁵² It also legitimized the territorial and economic expansion of American influence.³⁵³ As Lisa Bloom argues, this connection to the expansionist American project was especially influential in “the way [the magazine] was able to use visual images to connect U.S. colonialism to a project of modernization and progress.”³⁵⁴ Following this tradition, the *National Geographic* represented Euro-American culture as modern and civilized and non-western cultures as backward and uncivilized.³⁵⁵

With their emphasis on tradition and ritual, on the split between the historical Other and the modern Self, and on “types,” the visual conventions of representing Otherness in the *National Geographic* thus create a specific frame for representing Native Americans. In effect, the *National Geographic* frames allow for an unproblematic incorporation of Western dynamics, and these Western dynamics are clearly reflected in Huey’s images.

Articulations of Native American Identity

Rejections of Western Dynamics in Huey's Projects

In photographing the Oglala Lakota Huey attempts to shift indigenous representation away from exoticism and toward social justice. His lectures, TED talk, short film, and book draw attention to the current state of the people on Pine Ridge reservation, to their roots in a long history of colonization, and to possible activism to change these conditions.³⁵⁶ Except for the *National Geographic*, all of Huey's texts offer an overview over his personal narrative. Clearest among these is the Annenberg lecture, which outlines his evolution from photographer to photographer/activist who "chose a side" in order to fight for better conditions on Pine Ridge, the return of the Black Hills, and "advertising space that is traditionally held by movies, games, TV shows, and other commercial products. Space that is always owned by the dominant society."³⁵⁷ From this activist position, he denounces the inability of dominant society to consistently acknowledge the connection between historical developments and present conditions.³⁵⁸ To position himself, he highlights the complexity of speaking for a group you do not belong to without drowning out their voices and without negating their agency.³⁵⁹ In the end, he suggests that political activism is a solution to this dilemma.

The specific goals of raising awareness for the history of Native-white relations and returning the Black Hills to the Lakota move Huey's project into the realm of what Paula Rabinowitz calls documentaries with political missions. She isolates two functions within this category: Either these documentaries back a specific solution to a problem, or they serve as acts of representation of a particular political subculture to the in-group, which is an "act of identity," or to out-groups, which is an "act of recruitment."³⁶⁰ Huey's

work fulfills both functions. The platforms he chooses for his project—TED talk, short film, *National Geographic*, mural in Los Angeles, lectures—communicate to out-groups an identity of being an ally to the Lakota and allow him to recruit people to join his cause.

Considering the talks, short film, lectures, and book, Huey achieves some of his goals. Because of his sweeping goals and his high standards for himself, his project manages to sidestep some Western pitfalls. For example, conventional narratives of the Western are absent because he thoroughly contextualizes and historicizes current issues in the TED talk, lecture, and the short film in several ways. First, Huey steers clear of historical distortions prominent in the Western genre. Instead of delivering a mythical account justifying conquest, he offers a counterhistory that openly and harshly criticizes colonialism.

Second, he portrays the current situation as an outcome of neglect by dominant society rather than Native shortcomings, shifting blame from the Oglala nation to American society. Huey explicitly ties the condition of the Oglala Lakota into the history of federal Indian policies and Native-white relations, and therefore emphasizes structural reasons for Oglala Lakota hardship.³⁶¹ He states that the “legacy of colonization, forced migration, and treaty violations” is responsible for the destitute situation of the Lakota today. His enumeration of shocking rates of unemployment, disease, and suicide as well as his account of the abhorrent housing conditions aptly describe the situation and serve as evidence.³⁶² In a moving statement he summarizes this process: “The last chapter in any successful genocide is the one in which the oppressor can remove their hands and

say, ‘My God, what are these people doing to themselves? They’re killing each other. They’re killing themselves.’ While we watch them die.”³⁶³

Thus, rejecting the narrative of Manifest Destiny, Huey articulates expansionism as genocide committed by the government against the Lakota and evaluates the current chapter of Native-white relations as the perpetuation of such atrocities. This historicization of conditions on the reservation both deconstructs Western narratives and artfully avoids what Cara Finnegan has called the “ahistorical narrative about poor subjects” in early photographic works concerned with poverty, which presented poverty as natural and/or the fault of poor people themselves.³⁶⁴

Therefore, Huey’s depictions effectively circumvent some pitfalls created by the topic and the long tradition of Indian representation within the Western genre. While classic Westerns affirm notions of the beneficial impact of progress and civilization through an uncritical incorporation of the idea of Manifest Destiny, the narrative in Huey’s broader project complicates this narrative and constructs a connection between Indianness and history by portraying Oglala identities as shaped by US oppression. In contrast to the Generic Indian images that conflate time and people, Huey offers a nuanced image that makes visible a usually invisible version of history by locating Oglala Lakota in the here and now and by tying that here and now to history. Furthermore, as a talented photographer and knowledgeable ally, Huey skillfully portrays drug addiction without falling back into the worst clichés of Native Americans as Ignoble Indians as Drunk Indian or the Degraded Indian types.³⁶⁵ In the cases in which he depicts addiction, he leaves out any stereotypical markers of Indianness such as traditional clothes, horses, or feathers. The absence of Indian props means that the individuals and groups

represented are generalized as “humans” more than marked as Native Americans.³⁶⁶

Visually detangling Indianness and addiction prevents viewers from jumping to any conclusions about causal connections between addiction and Native identity.

Furthermore, the generalization as “humans” reflects the *National Geographic*’s longstanding dedication to the humanistic idea that despite class differences and outward distinction, all humans are the same on the inside.³⁶⁷ In a last rejection of Western tropes, Huey’s images of spirituality, while not avoiding romanticization, mostly steer clear of the reductive mysticism often connected to Native American spirituality.³⁶⁸ In many ways, Huey’s images therefore seem to represent people without the lens of Indian “types” inherited from both photographic and filmic traditions of the Western.

Affirmations of Western Dynamics in Huey’s Project

While the short film, lecture, and TED talk avoid Western themes on some level, Huey’s project also prominently echoes Western dynamics. Both the broader project and his images in the *National Geographic* reflect the genre in specific ways. First, in the broader narrative articulated in the lectures and the movie, Huey presents himself as a spokesperson for “the people,” goes Native, and in many ways usurps the potential for Native voices emerging. Second, the Western dynamic of the Generic Indian is visible in the way that Huey treats “the Lakota” as a uniform, undifferentiated group across all parts of his project, including the *National Geographic*. Lastly and most importantly, he echoes the dynamic of Native Americans as either Noble or Ignoble Indians by presenting Lakota identity as a dichotomy: either Lakota are traditional and functional or “modernized” and worse off for it. These last two points are especially pronounced in the

National Geographic images and reflect the visual conventions that have dominated representations of Otherness in the magazine throughout its history.

Speaking for the entire tribe

Huey's narrative in the TED talk, the Annenberg lecture, and *Honor the Treaties* centers his own personal experience over that of the people whose history he allegedly wants to highlight. Rather than making space for their own words and experiences, Huey devotes most of the narrative to his own development from ignorant photographer to friend of the people to activist. Both in the TED talk and the Annenberg lecture, Huey legitimizes his representative position by stating several times that he considers the Oglala Lakota family, and his obvious emotional involvement underlines this connection.³⁶⁹ As a consequence, in the course of the narrative, he emerges more as a spokesperson for than an ally to "the people."

This narrative paternalism is not new in the history of representing minorities. In the Western genre, its most popular form is the white man switching sides and "going Native." One of the best-known examples of this narrative is Kevin Costner's John Dunbar in *Dances with Wolves*, exemplifying Indianness is something that white men can learn. When they do, they become the "best Indian among Indians."³⁷⁰ Even though Huey never quite usurps an Oglala Lakota identity, he portrays himself as assuming all functions of an Oglala leader in his project-related movies and speeches by claiming to be part of the family as outlined above. His self-construction as an ally tilts the narrative from activism enhancing Lakota causes to a narrative of self-discovery. Ultimately, Huey emerges as a white hero who is dedicated to saving the Lakota.

This savior complex is typical for both the Western genre and ways in which the *National Geographic* (and other mainstream media) represent the exotic Other. In Western movies, the hero-and-sidekick narrative establishes the paternalism of the white hero who saves the Native population—from the *Lone Ranger* (2013) to *Dances with Wolves* (1990) to *Thunderheart* (1992).³⁷¹ Similarly, non-western territories and their inhabitants in the *National Geographic*'s portrayal need the “scientific expertise of ...explorers/scientist/photographers to intercede on their behalf, to save peoples and animals from extinction, and to preserve the beauty of nature and protect it from destructive human demands.”³⁷² Through his narration in his multimedia texts, Huey's goal comes across as both a version of salvage ethnography and as speaking for a community that cannot speak for itself. This photographer-as-hero narrative resonates with the paternalism of the Western genre.³⁷³ In turn, this paternalism perpetuates the “timeless myth about the superiority of whiteness,” a fundamentally racist narrative.³⁷⁴

To his credit, Huey is aware of the problem of speaking for others. In his 2010 TED talk, he postulates that his project will be successful only “if the people's actual voice is out there, not my interpretation of their voice or my photographs.”³⁷⁵ He corroborates this in his lecture, saying that his “goal at this point really is to step off the stage. I don't want to be on the stage with this project. This is the time for the people to speak now.”³⁷⁶ However, the conditional sentence and the relegation of the goals to the future indicate that in 2010 as well as in 2013, the time had not yet come for Lakota self-representation. The logical conclusion is that the Lakota still need him to speak for them, even if this remains unsaid. One reason why Huey's voice is more amplified than any Native voice, Huey claims, is that his target audience is non-Native. Native people, after

all, “know what’s going on. They don’t need to be reminded of this shit.” He muses that because of non-Native audiences, his centrality might even be more effective than Native leadership.³⁷⁷

Despite his in-depth knowledge of the complexities of both representing and speaking for Native Americans, Huey does not manage to detangle himself from either Western or *National Geographic* conventions. Rather than rejecting the central position of the Western hero or the savior photographer, Huey emerges as the benevolent white hero speaking for and saving the tribe, and in the process the Oglala Lakota nation becomes an iteration of the Generic Indian.

The Lakota as Generic Indians

The Oglala Lakota as Generic Indians emerge in the way that Huey flattens their identity into a homogenous, non-specific group as he articulates the group’s identity as uniform and uncontested. Contained in Huey’s photographs is a strong truth claim that this is how Oglala Lakota are.

In his narrative, Huey collapses Oglala Lakota identities into a homogenous group with the non-differential use of the terms “Oglala Lakota” or “Lakota.” Postulating that his own activist goals and positions are those of “the Oglala Lakota” or “the Lakota” reaffirms the Western tradition of treating all Native Americans as Generic Indians, and each nation as a homogenous, bland Indian group.³⁷⁸ In Huey’s telling, the Oglala nation is unified in its singular purpose, its singular voice, and its univocal demand for the return of the Black Hills. The idea of unity of “the Oglala Lakota” leaves no room for a complication of modern-day issues on the reservation and within a nation of about 15,000 people. Differences of opinion, demands, wishes, and identity are obscured, such as the

fact that some inhabitants of Pine Ridge understand themselves as “traditional” whereas others identify as “progressives.”³⁷⁹ This rift has repercussions for their attitude toward Lakota spirituality, which in turn most likely influences how people feel toward the Black Hills as a sacred place for Lakota culture. The failure to acknowledge complexity and nuance within modern Oglala identities extends into the portrayal of connections between the past and present, which are nuanced in the broader project but stunted in the *National Geographic*.

Huey’s images in the *National Geographic* are by the nature of the publication more limited than his other projects. The limitations function, first, quantitatively; second, in terms of Huey’s own voice; and, lastly, within the *National Geographic*’s tendency toward uncritical truth claims. All three dynamics contribute to presenting Oglala Lakota identity as generic.

First, in terms of quantity of information, the *National Geographic* cannot provide as much background information or as many images as a TED talk, a short film, or a book either in its print or online editions. Fuller’s article, while offering historical perspectives, is disconnected from the photos and does not provide any immediate context for specific images. Online, two different links house the article and the photos, separating them quite literally.³⁸⁰ In print, the pictures are embedded into the article but the lack of cross referencing between the narrative and the visuals makes it perfectly possible to consume one without the other without feeling like one is missing anything. Lack of space means less room for varied representations of Lakota people.

Second, *National Geographic* photographers do not generally insert themselves into their work, so Huey had to take himself and his narrative of activist awakening out of

the equation. Without his central narrative position, the clear activist stance of his broader project falls away. This absence renders the historical context of colonialism and Native-white relations secondary at best, meaning that the images must speak mostly for themselves. As demonstrated in the Introduction, images do not speak for themselves, however. Rather, the absence of context and critical information about colonialism allows readers to look at poverty and deprivation as Lakota-made. Huey's absence gives the images an air of documentary in an almost snapshot-like, candid quality despite their careful composition. This style imbues the recorded moment with the idea of objectivity, tasking the audience with observation rather than activism or criticism.³⁸¹

Lastly, the rendering of images as true or unproblematic through the absence of context is compounded by the authoritative position that the *National Geographic* occupies in American public discourse and by the magazine's focus on photography. The assumption that Huey's rendition of Oglala Lakota identity represents an authentic reality is increased by the magazine's scientific voice and the truth claims inherent in photography, which are in turn compounded by the absence of the activist-photographer. Huey's presence at least could have highlighted the constructedness of the photographs and introduced an activist perspective. Without his presence, the images represent the Other in the reductive tradition of the *National Geographic* and perpetuate faulty assumptions about essentialized Native identities.

Huey's two variations of Oglala Lakota identity

The *National Geographic* constraints that compound Huey's portrayal of Oglala identity as generic Indianness also enhance another Western dynamic visible in Huey's images: the dichotomy of the Noble and the Ignoble Indian. This third dynamic in which

Huey's project mirrors Western conventions is specifically visual. Huey's photos limit Lakota identity to two variations: either the Indian depraved by contact to modernity and "civilization," who is ravaged by poverty and drug abuse; or the Indian who by virtue of his traditionalism and spirituality retains a natural nobility. Huey's articulations of nobility and ignobility in the *National Geographic* mirror dynamics of the revisionist Western.

The dichotomy between nature and civilization has served as a guiding reference for distinguishing between Noble and Ignoble Indians for centuries. In this conceptualization, civilization as a process corrupts the noble, natural side of the Noble Savage.³⁸² This attitude toward nature and civilization reverses the dynamic between "good" white people and Bad Indians already appeared in the "sympathetic" viewpoint of Cooper's novels and became a staple of the revisionist Westerns of the mid-twentieth century. Whereas white society is civilized but cruel, Native Americans' relation to nature renders them "savage" but pure and honorable. This conceptualization does not preclude the existence of debased Ignoble Savages, who strayed from nature's path due to corruption by settler society.³⁸³ Like in Huey's narrative in his lectures, the short film, and the TED talk, the "sympathetic" approach allows the possibility of Natives being the "good guys."

Huey's images offer an updated version of the nature/civilization dichotomy in the renditions of Noble and Ignoble Indians. On the one hand, his images support the argument that "progress" and "civilization" lead to the decay of culture, health, and material wealth. This association is constructed in the photographs by attaching material markers of modernity to poverty and to unhealthy behavior. On the other hand, Native

cultural and spiritual activities are connected to healthy communities and individuals. Huey's images illustrate this latter dynamic by equating uplift with rituals and spiritualism.

Eight of twenty-three images online and in print create a direct connection between the amenities of modern civilization and the identity of the depicted people as corrupted by their closeness to "civilization." Huey communicates the connection between "progress"/"civilization" and abjectness in two ways. First, material markers of modernity underline poverty and destitution rather than wealth. Second, both individuals and groups in these settings are engaged in activities connected to or illustrating negative conditions: drug abuse, salvaging trash, or commemorating a teenage suicide.

Several examples illustrate the first dynamic, which associates markers of civilization with material poverty. In these images, almost all material markers of modernity, except for clothes worn by people, seem to take the form of clutter, trash, or other worthless items. Houses seem to be barely standing, piles of clothes resemble wet garbage more than useful donations, trash piles up in corners. In one image, toddler C.J. Shot sits naked in a dirty kitchen sink, dishes piled messily around her; in the background, the viewer glimpses a destitute house full of cheap and useless things, and a woman sitting at an untidy kitchen table, the child out of her line of sight. The caption accompanying the depressing picture merely informs the reader that there is "a housing shortage." Instead of tying the destitute living situation into structural causation and historical conditions, Huey ties the situation in the house to the "concept of *tiospaye*" or "the unity of the extended family" in Oglala culture.³⁸⁴ This association creates the impression that modernity has turned traditional family values into neglectful behavior

toward kids. In the Annenberg lecture, Huey gives room to explaining that he did not intend this as a sad image or an image of neglect, that C.J. was bathing in the sink only because it was cleaner there than in the bathroom. However, given the brevity of the image's caption in the *National Geographic*, it is safe to assume that the average viewer will compare the standard of living to general assumptions about acceptable living conditions. These assumptions can lead to an evaluation of the scene as depressing and of the mother's behavior as unacceptable. In this context, modern markers of civilization—the house, dishes, bottled water, soap, all the clutter, etc.—become signifiers not of wealth but of poverty. The viewer can measure their own conceptualization of materiality against that depicted in this picture, and invariably the trappings of modernity will spell out poverty rather than uplift.

Several photos illustrate the second dynamic that connects modern civilization to corruption by showing individuals and groups engaged in harmful behavior in the context of modernity. While photos showing “traditional” activities—riding, parades, celebrations, spiritual ritual—show healthy individuals and groups, photos absent the connotation of traditionalism show people like C.J. and her mother in the cheap cluttered mess of modern amenities. Or even worse: in the process of alcohol abuse. In one such image, a lone man is lying on a small piece of foam upholstery with only a small blanket drawn over his torso. The floors and walls are unfinished and dirty, the door to the outside is open. The caption explains that the man is “suffering from the effects of a neurological disease and alcoholism.”³⁸⁵ In another image, seven adults are standing in front of a mural of a landscape. Several faces show the puffy traces of drug or alcohol consumption, one person is drinking from a can; another person is on crutches, his stance

bowed, his face lined, exhausted, and hopeless. Even in the absence of any visible alcohol consumption, the caption informs us that “alcoholism afflicts eight out of ten Oglala families,” moving this image squarely into the context of drug abuse. “The tribe has filed a suit against beer distributors for knowingly making alcohol so readily available,” the text continues. With such thin information, the audience is left with the image as the only source of information.

In defense of Huey and as mentioned before, none of the images depicting drug abuse or poverty present people in an undignified manner even when they capture wildly depressing circumstances. However, the paucity of background information is problematic because meaningful interpretations of photographs require meaningful context. As outlined above, photographs do not include or articulate their own context.³⁸⁶ In the absence of in-depth historicization, the frames of reference for interpreting the conditions on Pine Ridge are limited. The only attempt at historicizing any of the depicted destitution is a vague caption in the introductory text of the article which acknowledges that “150 years of broken promises” led to the current “hardship,” which the Lakota are meeting with “resilience.” Even though that is an insufficient explanation of the situation, it is the only information available from the photo project.³⁸⁷ The *National Geographic* article thus does not create a context within which Huey’s photographs could be interpreted easily in accordance with any of the goals that Huey articulates in the project beyond the limitations of the magazine. Instead, without more narrative or visual contextualization, Huey’s images of Lakota people abusing drugs articulate individual failure rather than structural issues surrounding historical questions of alcohol and liquor sales. Surely, the desperate housing situation, terrible health

conditions, and unemployment rates as high as 80 percent contribute to the pervasive drug abuse on the reservation.³⁸⁸ Context of this kind would mirror the frame through which Huey connects current conditions to a long history of oppression and economic discrimination in his TED talk, lecture, and short film.

Worse than just decontextualizing, the *National Geographic* manages to twist poverty into an exercise of pride and dignity through the interplay between captions and images. The Oglala Lakota “and other Sioux tribes,” the reader is informed, “have refused a monetary settlement for the United States’ illegal seizure of the Black Hills, their spiritual home.”³⁸⁹ Economic deprivation, thus, is portrayed a conscious choice that maintains dignity and pride. Apart from the fact that this portrayal grossly oversimplifies the issue of economic hardship and ties it too closely to the return of the Black Hills, the narrative glorifies poverty as romantic. This is a dynamic with a long tradition in the depiction of poor people which often rests on the artful and glossy image of people carrying on despite their desperate conditions.³⁹⁰

Relating specifically to Native American images, poverty was reinterpreted in the revisionist Westerns of the 1960s. Speaking to the countercultural movement of the time, these movies portrayed Native poverty as commendable “simplicity” in the face of mainstream America’s materialism and consumerism, often connecting this idea to liberal drug use as well.³⁹¹ The portrayal of Native cultures as “nonmaterialistic” and “communal,” in Michael Valdez Moses’s words, celebrated the “countercultural rejection of modern commercial and consumer society.”³⁹² The Noble Savage in the tradition of primitivism thus made a comeback. Instead of historicizing the origins of poverty,

poverty thus was perceived as a natural state for Native Americans and was imbued with positive associations.

Huey's project clearly condemns the drug epidemic on Pine Ridge. However, his photographs also suggest that there are romantic aspects to poverty and that poverty itself is a form of both cultural survival and resistance rather than a condition created by colonialism, Indian policies, and the geographical confinement of Native people to reservations. The warm light and colors in Huey's images of a suicide vigil and (presumably) drug-addicted individuals talking in the street creates this kind of glossed-over image, portraying terrible social and economic conditions as aesthetically pleasing and even beautiful. Some scholars label this convention as "pornographic," accusing photographers of exploiting their marginalized subjects.³⁹³ Poor people are romanticized and stripped of any agency to influence their own representation.³⁹⁴ However, as mentioned in the Introduction, the labeling of images as poverty porn censors the reporting of said poverty rather than criticizing its existence in the first place. That accusation seems unfair both toward Huey and the allegedly voyeuristic audience, even though the photographs should be criticized for romanticizing and dehistoricizing poverty and for failing to provide adequate context. But, as Linfield points out, the issue with images perceived as poverty porn should not be that someone dared taking pictures of abject conditions. Rather, audiences should criticize the conditions that create the abject poverty.

In this context, then, it becomes possible to criticize Huey's simplistic approach to poverty while also appreciating that it is more important to condemn the horrendous living conditions on Pine Ridge than to silence the people or images reporting these

conditions with charges of pornography or exploitation.³⁹⁵ At the same time, it is important to recognize that Huey's construction of visual connections between markers of civilization and cultural, material, and moral destitution offers an image of revisionist ignobility that echoes the Drunk and Degraded Indian in no unclear terms.

Huey completes the Western dichotomy with the noble flipside of ignobility in ten images that show scenes of cultural uplift connected to traditional identities. The images articulate Native American identity as the Noble Indian in two ways: either by connecting uplift to cultural acts of revival, resistance, and commemoration; or by connecting uplift to traditional spirituality. Both strategies mirror the conventions of the *National Geographic* to display the cultural Other with a strong focus on tradition and ritual.

The first strategy is exemplified, for example, by an image of 94-year-old Oliver Red Cloud, sitting in the back of a pick-up truck in full regalia during the annual Oglala Powwow parade.³⁹⁶ His traditional dress consists of white buckskin clothes with beaded shoulder straps, a long bone chestplate, and a full headdress. In the left background, a procession of people in cars, on horses, and on foot is following the truck. A few people in camouflage carry rolled-up flags that seem to be MIA/POW veteran flags. In the right background, one rider gallops up a small hill with the blue water tower of Pine Ridge City behind it. Red Cloud has a content and proud smile on his face. Pride, in this construction of Native identity, is connected to communal traditions such as the powwow, or, traditional activities, such as horseback riding. Collective participation in ritual creates an enjoyable and wholesome Lakota identity, this image asserts.

Visual signifiers like traditional garb and horseback riding are prominent in many of Huey's depictions of this updated version of the Noble Indian. These signifiers are

often combined with open-air settings, which situate healthy Oglala people in nature and away from signifiers of modernity. The setting in nature mirrors the construction of nobility as distance from civilization, which is reminiscent of both Western narratives and *National Geographic* conventions of depicting the cultural Other.

The second dynamic of articulating contemporary Oglala identity as a variation of the Noble Indian draws a direct connection to spirituality. Again, the *National Geographic* framework draws attention to individual or communal ritual. For example, several images capture different stages of the Sun Dance ceremony. In two photographs, a group of men first carries and then erects a Sun Dance tree.³⁹⁷ The first image shows around fifty men who carry a felled cotton tree through green prairie grass under an ocean-blue sky. They are moving the tree toward the back left-hand corner of the image, confronting the audience with a vision of turned backs which collapses the men into an indiscriminate group of Indians. Even though their clothes are modern, their distance to the camera obscures any reference to individuality or poverty and thus avoids the connection to civilization. Their practice of spirituality is presented as a collective and positive ritual in nature. Furthermore, the fact that they are turned toward the left background of the image creates an impression of orientation toward the past. This orientation articulates the Lakota as strong and healthy when they remember the past and abide by traditions as a community. The caption corroborates this interpretation by informing the reader that the tree is revered “as a sacred being” and is part of the Sun Dance ceremony, which was revived in the 1970s. Even though the caption acknowledges the modernity of the ritual and the presence of Native Americans today, this image and caption still construct an updated Ecological/Spiritual Indian.

This articulation of idyllic simplicity and nature-bound practices is brought to an extreme in a photograph showing the moments after the end of a sweat lodge ceremony. Under a rosy sky illuminated with a full double rainbow, around ten people emerge from two sweat lodges and towel dry around a fire that is reduced to glowing embers. A puddle on the ground reflects the rose-colored sunset sky. The intense beauty of the composition and the centrality of the sky, fire, and water conjure up associations of spirituality that are supported through the depicted sweat lodge structures and the caption. The reader is informed that “after intense communication with the spirits, participants emerge from ... purification (sweat) lodge.”³⁹⁸ This description forces an interpretation of the depicted Native people as noble Ecological/Spiritual Indians onto the audience and, by virtue of brown people in nothing but towels, fulfills the *National Geographic*'s convention of portraying the Other as exotic and sexualized.

While Huey's focus on spirituality and nature is not necessarily misplaced, there are several issues with portraying Native spiritual rituals. Native practitioners of traditional spirituality as well as Native scholars have repeatedly expressed unease with the depiction of spirituality in film or photography. They point toward tactless coverage or intrusive behavior leading to insulting errors in the depiction of spirituality and the violation of individual and tribal privacy.³⁹⁹ Huey's proximity to the community in question gives him access to photograph the aftermath of a sweat lodge ceremony in the first place. However, it is fair to ask whether access legitimizes the representation of ritual or whether the depiction remains a transgression.

In the *National Geographic*, only one image offers the chance for a positively-connoted modern Lakota identity, disconnected both from nature, tradition, or spirituality

and from poverty or abjectness. At Red Cloud Indian School, ten students are preparing for their graduation ceremony.⁴⁰⁰ The mood seems a bit nervous but festive and the blue robes and caps make the scene recognizable as typical for life in the American mainstream. Potentially, this photo articulates a Lakota identity of similarity to Americanness, firmly grounded in the here and now. However, the concession to positive aspects of modern life is an exception to the general depiction of Oglala Lakota group identity, pride, and health resting in spirituality.

What emerges from Huey's images with or without the captions, then, is a twofold representation of the Oglala Lakota on Pine Ridge reservation: Those in touch with their cultural roots and spirituality, who maintain an identity that is distinct from or resistant to Euro-American culture; and those out of touch with their own traditions, who have fallen into the trap of Euro-American culture. Any wholesome activity that audiences can discern is related to spirituality. Cultural uplift, therefore, is exclusively and simplistically connected to collectivism, traditions, and spirituality. This dynamic is visualized by portraying people in nature, with horses, in groups, and sometimes with traditional dress reminiscent of generic Indianness. Reflecting the *National Geographic's* tendency to focus on ritual and tradition, Huey's Noble Indian is an updated version of the Ecological/Spiritual Indian.

The association of nobility with the past and ignobility with modernity maintains the visual conventions of the *National Geographic*, which presents the indigenous Other as belonging in the past and American society as representative of modernity. By associating the Degraded or Drunk Indian with modernity, Huey obscures that the Oglala Lakota have successfully integrated themselves into modernity, which ultimately affirms

the notion that “they” belong in the past whereas “we” are continually progressing.⁴⁰¹ Thus, Huey changes this *National Geographic* script in the same limited way that the revisionist Western updated the classic narrative: Huey’s images construct a connection between markers of American civilization and cultural decay and, therefore, reject the idea of benign modernization and progress. In his articulations of Lakota identity, modernity is corruptive and turns Noble Indians into Ignoble Indians; Oglala Lakota futures are firmly connected to the past.

Thus, the result of his update to Indianness is neither more complex nor less stereotypical than older versions of Native images. Instead, it reiterates images of Ignoble and Noble Savages that assume that pre-contact indigeneity was pure, innocent, and in tune with humanity and nature. Huey’s portrayal of cultural corrosion due to contact with settler society thus repeats two of the most damaging assumptions about Native Americans both in the Western and in the *National Geographic*: First, a loss of cultural traditions means a loss of Indianness. Traditional Lakota have an authentic claim on Indianness but non-traditional Lakota do not. Second, Huey’s images suggest that health and uplift can exclusively be found in that “authentic” Oglala Lakota spiritualism and tradition. In Huey’s articulations, alternative, modern, diverse Oglala Lakota identities—as workers, parents, atheists, middle class, Christians, musicians, consumers, friends, etc.—are obscured.

With recognition of the *National Geographic*’s cultural relevance and the strong truth claims in the documentary mode enhanced by the lack of context, these images present themselves as allegedly neutral depictions of the Oglala Lakota nation at the same time that they essentializes the entire nation to a few specific traits. Regardless of Huey’s

goals in his TED talk, lecture, and short film, the stereotypical images in the *National Geographic* affirm many of the worst Western conventions in the American public sphere.

The Response: The Community Storytelling Project

Unsurprisingly, Huey's photographic representation of the people of Pine Ridge did not sit well with his Native critics.⁴⁰² From 2009 onward, he received criticism from people he knew on Pine Ridge as well as from high school students at the Red Cloud Indian School who had seen his photographs in photo stories.⁴⁰³ In his Annenberg lecture, Huey offers a summary of the criticism: "Aaron Huey, you can do better! There is more work to do."⁴⁰⁴ This feedback underlines that digital publishing outlets increasingly subjects outsider-representation to criticism from the people represented, allowing them to challenge journalistic authority.⁴⁰⁵ Charlie Cuny's letter, quoted by Huey at length, demonstrates this:⁴⁰⁶

Aaron Huey! Hello, my name is Charlie Cuny. I've lived on the Pine Ridge reservation almost my whole life. It's really weird how you captured all the sad things. It's sad because it's real. I come from a really grounded family. They never let me do anything without them. I guess they don't want me ending up like the people in your pictures. I travel a lot and I think this area is way more sad than any other place in the U.S. I think you should take some pictures of the good side now...⁴⁰⁷

In one paragraph, Charlie effectively rejects Huey's articulations of Oglala Lakota identity by pronouncing clear criticism and by contradicting Huey's identity construct: Charlie is not like the people in the pictures!⁴⁰⁸

As part of Huey's narrative about discovering his activist soul, Huey outlines how this criticism made him realize that it was time to cast aside the notion of objectivity, pick a side, and do something. He started giving talks, worked with Shepard Fairey on a street art campaign, and collaborated with artists to get "the people's messages" onto posters and stickers. Most importantly, the idea of the Community Storytelling Project started taking shape in cooperation with Jonathan Harris, the creator of Cowbird (cowbird.com). Cowbird is an "embeddable storytelling platform" allowing user-generated content, and the Storytelling Project was co-launched with the 2012 cover story.⁴⁰⁹

Huey's main motivation for the Storytelling Project was the realization that even if he could "tell all the stories that I want to tell on Pine Ridge, ... [I couldn't] tell them the way the people want them told."⁴¹⁰ Recognizing that reporting rests on the newsworthiness of its content, Huey argues that "when [reporters] leave [marginalized communities], [the communities] are left wondering not if but how they will be misrepresented." Furthermore, he outlines that within magazines like the *National Geographic* often "there isn't space! We have to cut, flatten, simplify incredibly complex words so that they can fit between car advertisements in ever shrinking print publications." The goal of the project is therefore to "help the people speak without being edited" in the hopes of achieving a more complex, accurate representation of the people of Pine Ridge.⁴¹¹

The project's website confirms that none of the contributions were edited.⁴¹² Apart from unfiltered self-representation, this means that Huey excluded his own work in favor of letting the people speak for themselves. Says Huey:

At the end of the day I basically removed myself from the entire formula in creating this Community Storytelling Project and saying, you know what? You're right. I don't know how to tell this story. I will never know how to tell this story. I would never say that I know how to tell this story. Here is a place where you can do it and people will hear you.⁴¹³

This formulation of goals firmly breaks with his tendency to speak for the community in the rest of his project.

Huey, thus, emphasizes the power of self-representation to change representations in the public sphere. Lutz and Collins agree with this sentiment and argue that when “natives” hold the camera, the “prerogative of the Western surveyor to control the camera as well as other means of knowledge production” is interrupted.⁴¹⁴ In contradiction, Sam Pack argues that authorial intent cannot achieve meaningful change unless audience expectations change significantly.⁴¹⁵ James Faris agrees with Pack, arguing that handing the camera over to the “subaltern” is not a solution to the problems of representation, among other things because “photograph[ers] only represent themselves.” Because of the limited number of available frames for visual projects, Faris argues, “photography must continually repeat itself.”⁴¹⁶ While the Storytelling Project does not unequivocally answer the question of the impact of self-representation, the project highlights how self-representation can work to reject Western tropes and conventions of the *National Geographic*.

In 2012 and 2013, the people of Pine Ridge reservation responded to Aaron Huey's images in around two hundred fifty posts by over one hundred contributors.⁴¹⁷ The Cowbird platform requires contributors to set up a profile before allowing uploads of

photographs, video files, sound recordings, and written texts either separately or together. The participants can then enter a certain amount of metadata for each post: dates, places, topic tags, and links to other contributions. For the viewer, the Community Storytelling Project resembles social media platforms such as Instagram: Unless they filter the contributions, viewers see all posts related to the project at once, represented by their cover image, author name, and title. Clicking on a post makes it pop up and audiences can activate the sound or video recording if there is one. By clicking the arrow on the right side of the post, the cover image makes way for the connected text entry. Another click to the right makes visible the author profile and tags. Closing the specific post brings visitors back to the webpages showing all contributions, which they can scroll through until another one catches their eye.

The multimedia environment allows participants relative freedom to design their contributions and to express their ideas. Some people contributed only once, some people multiple times: Leon Matthews holds the record with thirty-four posts. Most of the contributions seem to be initiated by their authors, although some posts seem to be classroom⁴¹⁸ or prison projects⁴¹⁹ that stem from essay prompts tasking people with reacting to Huey's alleged claim that Pine Ridge is not beautiful. First and foremost, the Storytelling Project is an explosion of names, photos, information, stories, songs, prayers, jokes, and the entire range of human emotions: pride, happiness, sorrow, anger, hopelessness, hope. The collection of individual contributions under this umbrella created by Huey, Cowbird, and the *National Geographic* is, on first sight, everything that Huey's images are not: complex, heterogenous, unsentimental, human, individual, very much moored to the here and now, and devoid of clichés.

To some extent, this variety is connected to the nature of the platform. Interrogating how social media allows young women and athletes to challenge stereotypical representation, Kim Toffoletti and Holly Thorpe have pointed out that social media “allow... young women to express themselves by offering a platform to articulate their identities (particularly marginalised identities) to communicate their own perspective and experiences, creatively document their life worlds, seek support and validation from peers...”⁴²⁰ This “transformative potential of social media” enables women “to construct alternative discourses” to mainstream portrayals of female athletes.⁴²¹ A similar point can be made about the Cowbird platform, which allows Native Americans to disrupt dominant depictions without the threat of censorship.

That people uploaded their self-portrayals is already an intervention into Huey’s portrayals because the eager participation in the Storytelling Project affirms the notion that something was off with Huey’s representations in the first place. Furthermore, where Huey’s rather simplified images treat Lakota people as objects to be represented, the practice of self-representation through images, texts, or both allows participants to control their own image and move themselves from object to subject.⁴²² This alone, Magdalena Olszanowski argues, is a “threat to the social order of image production and consumption.”⁴²³ Rejecting Huey’s images by posting self-representations shifts the power dynamic in favor of the minority subject, denying the outsider-photographer control over the depictions.

Far from countering Huey’s project diametrically and one-dimensionally, the collection of Lakota posts reaffirms the complexity of recognizing beauty and destitution at the same time, without fusing the two into either a romantic vision of poverty or

reductive images of the Noble or Ignoble Indian. The posts intervene into Huey's representations in three ways: First, they reject the notion of abjectness by asserting that Pine Ridge is beautiful. Second, they reject the notion of poverty as a natural condition by contextualizing conditions in a history of colonialism. Third, the posts articulate diverse and modern Oglala Lakota identities that negate the Western dichotomy of the Noble and Ignoble Indian.

Intervention 1: Pine Ridge is beautiful

Emphasizing the beauty of Pine Ridge is the first intervention into the one-dimensional portrayal in the *National Geographic*. The collective posts make a defiant and convincing case that life on Pine Ridge is beautiful and worth living. Beauty is located in various aspects of life on the reservation. Most often, beauty is located in nature. Many people point out the beauty of reservation landscapes and post images of and texts about sunsets⁴²⁴ or of favorite sceneries.⁴²⁵ However, beauty is not confined to nature. Leon Red Kettle offers an enthusiastic enumeration of all things that are great: "What's great: nature! And the people! Powwow season! The spring thunder storms! Dancing, contests, singing, drumming!" and even the "struggle that comes with" reservation life.⁴²⁶ Yet others see beauty in the new generation of children on Pine Ridge, like Elicia Good Soldier or Richard Brown, who posts a close-up of a little girl sitting in a car with a pink jacket, pink highlights in her hair, and huge sunglasses. "There are many beautiful things on Pine Ridge Reservation and to me it's the children. To see the children of all ages playing and enjoying life, to see them running, laughing, climbing trees, and playing with their pets."⁴²⁷ Yet others highlight communal spirit and collective action.⁴²⁸ Angel White Eyes points out that beauty is subjective and calls outsiders out

for not being judgmental: “When people come to Pine Ridge they fail and neglect to see the beauty Pine Ridge has to offer. I’ve lived here my whole life and never realized anything was wrong until an outsider pointed it out to me.”⁴²⁹

Effectively, these posts force the viewer to acknowledge beauty where maybe they would not have found any before, which means audience have to redefine what beauty means. In the posts, superficial expressions of wealth don’t equal beauty and therefore poverty doesn’t equal ugliness either. Instead, beauty rests in what people make from their situation. This mentality refuses a simple binary of “good” and “bad” things on the reservation and already implicitly dismisses the notion of traditionalism as healthy/good/beautiful and modernity as unhealthy/bad/ugly.

Some posts concerning beauty contain romantic perspectives in the way that they talk about nature specifically or reservation life more generally—see Red Kettle’s enumeration. However, what distinguishes these romantic articulations of Oglala Lakota life from Huey’s images is that the central topic is not the glorification of poverty but the celebration of beauty. Huey’s romantic images of traditional people immersed in landscapes articulates the connection between people and nature as inherently spiritual and as the only option for a healthy community. Oglala celebrations of nature in the Storytelling Project are neither inherently connected to spirituality (even though they can be); nor, more importantly, are they the only feature of reservation life portrayed as positive. Beauty and positivity are not by any means confined to nature, spirituality, and traditionalism.

Most importantly, unlike Huey’s images, the focus on beauty and positivity does not deny that life on Pine Ridge can be difficult, and that poverty, suicide, and alcoholism

are indeed problems. For example, Wilhelmina Jumping Eagle posts about her brother Isaac Donovan-James Jumping Eagle's death in a drunk driving accident and adds a sound recording of "Tears Don't Fall" by the band Bullet For My Valentine because Isaac "loved hardcore."⁴³⁰ The distorted guitar sounding out while reading the post adds a personal twist to what otherwise could have been a somewhat sentimental post. Even less saccharine or corny, Christian Janis writes from prison:

I'm from a family that drink all the time. I drink and do other drug's. I been living on the rez all my life, never left the rez. I was in jail for 4.5 years as a juvenile... I'm happy for who I am...I didn't pass high school, but I like to go back... I like to play outside football and run and other things. I feel bad that other people talk bad about this rez... I'm in a gang called HOOD#. I'm try to change my life around. Most of the time I'm good.⁴³¹

Janis acknowledges a bad situation but does not ask for either pity or compassion.

Matter-of-fact accounts of racism and poverty, both historical and current, give the same impression as these two accounts: life can at times be hard and sad.⁴³² But the accounts reject the notion that there is something romantic or noble about hardship, suffering, and poverty.

Instead, people emphasize resilience or anger as a response to the hardship they endure. For example, Angel White Eyes talks about the suicide of her friend Jamzey: "This reservation sucks people dry. They become so hopeless that death becomes the only way out. Outsiders complain that we have it so easy here. They have no idea. Tell us to get over the past? Never."⁴³³ This does not make her friend's suicide any less tragic but the assertion of survivance at the end gives the post a defiant twist. Refusing to "get

over the past,” in this context, draws a connection between the history of the Oglala nation and the current conditions on the reservation that led to Jamzey’s death.

Both matter-of-fact acknowledgments of poverty and assertions of survivance, thus, become effective strategies to reject romanticizations of destitution. Pictures like Huey’s aestheticized images of abject conditions are completely absent from both photographs and narratives. Rather, people address the symptoms of poverty without echoing stereotypes connected to the Degraded or Drunk Indian stereotypes. This pragmatic approach to hardship embeds those posts in the Storytelling Project that focus on enthusiastic praises of the beauty of Pine Ridge in a context that precludes the maudlin approach of poverty porn. Instead of evoking pity through romantic portrayals of poverty, the unflappable portrayal of poverty and hardship makes it possible to read the enthusiasm for Pine Ridge’s beauty as realism or optimism rather than romanticism.

Intervention 2: contextualization

A second intervention into the Western dynamics as present in Huey’s images corrects the historical record and contextualizes the current situation within historical trajectories. This makes historical processes visible and removes both the idea that poverty is a “natural” condition and/or that the Oglala Lakota might be at fault for their own circumstances. Furthermore, it articulates a resistive Lakota identity that insists on American culpability for colonialism.

Almost all Storytelling Project contributions about historical context focus on the concerted onslaught on Lakota customs, cultures, and lives by the US government. Thomas Brings gives an extensive history of the boarding schools system as it figured

into the suppression of Lakota language and customs.⁴³⁴ Michael DuBray similarly says that

[s]ince the beginning of relations between the U.S. Government and the Lakota[,] the U.S. has tried to rid the Lakota of [their] identity and culture. This the U.S. has labeled the process of assimilation. ... The U.S. Government has made laws and policies meant to keep the Lakota from speaking their own language and practicing their spirituality.⁴³⁵

Other people point to outright violence in the assimilation project. Leon Matthews posits that reservations were intended to destroy the Lakota people and calls them “concentration camps.”⁴³⁶ Calvin Spotted Elk points out that the United States fought bloody wars against Native people and that the government still has not revoked medals of honor rewarded for what historians agree were massacres, such as the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890.⁴³⁷ Thus, the posts situate the current conditions in the context of colonialism and its legacies.

At the same time, they also emphasize that the effort to eradicate the Lakota was for naught: the Lakota are still here. Thomas Brings points toward a resurgence of cultural traditions such as language, song, and dances.⁴³⁸ Spotted Elk’s post about massacres is offset by a picture of himself, squatting smiling in the sun in the Badlands: Here is a very much alive Native man, in the same spot where the US army tried to kill the Lakota.⁴³⁹ In Spotted Elk’s post about the medals of honor, he includes a letter to Barack Obama, asking him to revoke those medals of honor. Revoking the medals “will help to heal a wound between the recent generations of Lakota people and generations of non-native settlers in the area who were brought up with the belief that this was a battle

instead of what it was. ... For many of us, acknowledgment of what happened is at the root of our healing.”⁴⁴⁰ These posts affirm the complex historical dynamics that have led to the current situation, pointing toward the systemic violence visited on the Oglala Lakota without reducing the Nation to hapless victims. Instead, the sentiment “we are still here!” communicates agency and activism.

In some respects, this strategy of pointing toward historical contexts and survivance does not differ much from Huey’s strategy to make visible US-Oglala history in his talk, the lecture, and the short film. However, two dynamics weaken Huey’s attempt at contextualization and celebration of survivance in comparison to the Storytelling Project. First, in the context of these representations, authorship matters. Huey talks about or for Native people, replacing them as the authors of their own images. This replacement leaves an impression of Lakota apathy, opening a space for the centering of the activist Huey as well as a space for the readers/audience to see themselves as potential saviors of the Lakota like Huey. This paternalistic assumption of white benevolence toward non-white people constructs Lakota people as incapable of steering their own fate—a long-practiced strategy for the justification of colonial policies.⁴⁴¹ Second, Huey’s images in the *National Geographic* exclude his activist and disconnect the visual evidence for to the abject conditions on Pine Ridge from their historical context. This renders the squalor as timeless and natural. Thus, Huey’s images in the magazine articulate the Lakota as helpless and passive because he stops short of connecting the historical and current conditions to cultural revival, resistance, and ultimately, the concept of survivance.

The Community Storytelling Project proves that the abbreviated articulation of Oglala identity is not inbuilt into photography. In contrast to Huey's images, the Community Storytelling Project posts draw a direct connection between historical trajectories, current conditions, and Native activism. Oglala Lakota people emerge as shaping their own presents and futures independent from white allies, and as engaged in survivance. The emphasis on a mix between survival and resistance is visible throughout the Storytelling Project and distinguishes this self-representation from Huey's project as it is in the *National Geographic*.

Besides the presence-affirming idea of "we are still here!," organized resistance features as another articulation of survivance. Among other images, organized resistance is reflected in an AIM flag in one image,⁴⁴² in the slogan "we want our country back" on one photoshopped image of Sitting Bull,⁴⁴³ and in several posts referring to collective action against alcohol sales in White Clay.⁴⁴⁴ The Oglala Lakota "Altern-Native" band Scatter Their Own plans on addressing the question of water pollution in a music video shot on Pine Ridge.⁴⁴⁵ Mostly, however, resilience and resistance are mirrored in posts about pride in cultural revival, such as language⁴⁴⁶ and spirituality.⁴⁴⁷ Photos of dancing, drum circles, and spiritual activities abound, as do voice recordings in Lakota. In many ways, Lakota language recordings indicate that the contributors consider their audiences insiders as much as outsiders, which in itself is protesting conventions. Instead of representing themselves exclusively to the (mostly) mainstream, white audiences of the *National Geographic*, the Oglala Lakota use the Storytelling Project for internal rhetoric as a strategy of protest.⁴⁴⁸

Intervention 3: Oglala Lakota identity as modern, normal, and diverse

This collective assertion of cultural pride and survivance is foreshadowing the diverse identity expressions in the Community Storytelling Project, which are the third and maybe most important rebuttal of Huey's images. The posts replace the essentialized Generic Indian with specific Oglala Lakota identities; articulate Oglala Lakota identity as modern; and portray Oglala Lakota identity as being American in an altogether regular way.

Most of the posts articulate identities that are specifically Oglala Lakota. Ellen Cushman (Cherokee) argues that self-representation as opposed to mere self-identification is an identity claim that "include[s] evidence of identity markers valued by multiple audiences."⁴⁴⁹ Using "Oglala Lakota" as a self-descriptor, then, is less convincing than locating identity in more than one's own claim. For most of the posts, this additional claim to identity is location: Pine Ridge reservation serves as the locator of Oglala Lakota identity. Furthermore, some posts include markers such as traditional dress, language recordings, and historical photographs, all of which can serve as "authenticity and accountability markers" by making claims to a specific iteration of cultural identity.⁴⁵⁰ This specificity rejects the generic Indianness Huey articulates in his projects.

The collective posts transcend generic Indianness and Huey's dichotomy of traditional Noble and corrupted Ignoble Indians in several other forms: First, the mere fact that contributions are individual and organized by name and profile picture lends individuality to each person and replaces the Generic Indian. The audience is not looking at a faceless, nameless representatives of Noble or Ignoble Indians. Instead, viewers are

presented with 17-year-old Dessa Star Comes Out's profile that shows her with a fashionable haircut and hipster glasses and describes her as not interested in much besides photography and blogging. There's Bim Pourier, with his white Stetson on his ranch. There is Ernest Weston, whose profile says he is a "student, athlete, book lover, music lover, and everything else in between," and Shelby Clifford, who lists all her closest family by name in her profile. These posts make it impossible to ignore the individuality and uniqueness of these people. This type of "self-disclosure" furthers the claim of authenticity by creating intimate and immediate connections to the audience through the emphasis on personal experiences and routines, anecdotes, selfies, and posts about favorite spots, foods, and hobbies, all of which figure into the Community Storytelling Project as well.⁴⁵¹

Second, this individuality is underlined by the non-essentializing image emerging from the conglomeration of posts. The posts suggest that what it means to be a modern Oglala Lakota cannot be reduced to a few cultural markers. For example, the posts make very clear that some Oglala Lakota practice forms of traditional spirituality whereas others are Christians, even if celebrations of traditional spirituality are more numerous.⁴⁵² The audience learns about the sacredness of the Badlands,⁴⁵³ the sweat lodge ceremony,⁴⁵⁴ and the Sundance tree at Crow Dog's Paradise on the Sicangu Lakota Nation.⁴⁵⁵ An abundance of voice recordings offer insight into prayer songs in English and Lakota, for example by Granton West and Devin Whirlwind-Soldier. These contributions offer unsentimental depictions of everyday spirituality and avoid romantic, melodramatic, or mystic portrayals of spirituality. Again, the posts disrupt the

equivocation Huey constructs between romanticized nature, spirituality, and traditionalism.

Furthermore, the posts about traditional spirituality do not undermine or negate the Christianity of some Lakota. As Norbert Bell puts it: “It doesn’t matter whether you are Catholic or pray Indian—what matters is that you’re sincere.”⁴⁵⁶ Without doubt, spirituality and religion emerge as important themes of the Storytelling Project. Obviously, it matters very much to a lot of people. However, these posts push back against the construction of traditional spirituality as essential to Indianness in the form that Huey’s images claim. Several posts emphasize this disarticulation by pointing out that Oglala Lakota can also exist off the reservation, a possibility that Huey’s images do not even recognize.⁴⁵⁷ In Huey’s and other dominant images the connection between land, spirituality, and people cannot be broken without a loss of identity.

In this first identity construction, then, contributors replace generic Indianness with a variety of individual articulations of Oglala Lakota identities and reject the simplicity of portrayals as the essentialized Other. This rebuke of the Generic Indian works well with the second dynamic in identity constructions in the Storytelling Project, which articulates the Oglala as modern people who belong into contemporary culture.

Posts that highlight this dynamic disarticulate nobility from traditionalism and show that modernity and cultural traditionalism are not mutually exclusive. For example, a post on Lakota language conservation features a photo of kids in mainstream clothes playing basketball in front of a South Dakotan landscape, with a pile of younger kids in the foreground is lying in the grass laughing.⁴⁵⁸ Absent markers of Indianness, cultural revival or survival is not constructed as something exclusive to spiritual ritual. Instead,

some posts locate it in everyday situations. The compatibility of modernity and traditionalism is also mirrored in Henry Red Cloud's account of how he accepted the Energy Globe award for the Lakota Solar Enterprise team working on sustainability, green jobs, and energy independence for the Oglala Nation. In the text he says: "I'm doing my warrior deed, honoring the old ways with the new ways." The attached image shows him—a Native man in a suit, with long braids, a feather, a choker—receiving the award, posing with a group of other people.⁴⁵⁹ The contrast between his "traditional" markers of Indianness and the folks in Western business attire takes "the old ways" away from nature and the reservation and inserts them into the idea of progress and modernity.

The dichotomy between civilization and the indigenous Other is deconstructed both by showing Native Americans without cultural markers or props of Indianness in ritual or spiritual situations, and by placing Native Americans in traditional or ritual attire into modern contexts. The imperative that dominant society expects modern Native Americans to exist in the past or as if in the past is neatly rejected.⁴⁶⁰ Off-handedly, the posts negate the dichotomy of the past-oriented Noble Indian and the Ignoble Indian corrupted by "progress" that dominates Huey's images specifically and the *National Geographic* at large.

A third articulation of Oglala identity represents the people of Pine Ridge as just like any other American. By presenting themselves as Us, the posts go to the foundations of Indian images in Western or pseudo-scientific narratives telling tales of difference: If they are Us, they cannot be the Other. People portray their identities and lives as normal and average in the way they talk about school and college.⁴⁶¹ The skate park in Pine Ridge gets several mentions.⁴⁶² One person posts jokes.⁴⁶³ Another enthusiastically posts

fry bread recipes.⁴⁶⁴ Kelcie Iron Crow likes to draw while listening to music; her cover image is a graffiti style tag in pencil of her name.⁴⁶⁵ Elicia Good Soldier posts an image of her teenage daughter Cante' Waste' Win doing Tae Kwon Do.⁴⁶⁶ Ms. Seger gives an enthusiastic account of what people like to do on weekends: making manicotti and pancakes, going on night runs, watching *Gossip Girl*, playing "Loaded Questions," riding a bike back home from Wounded Knee, discussing whether to "drive to Rap-rap-rapid city to buy an elliptical or go on a beautiful Manderson Sunday hike."⁴⁶⁷ Rikki Randall posts a bathroom mirror selfie with her two girlfriends, all three of them in blue, white, and gold cheerleader uniforms, explaining how excited she is for Homecoming week.⁴⁶⁸ Making goofy faces, the three of them look like any other group of teenage girls taking a mirror selfie.

Collectively, these visuals and narratives make the case that people on Pine Ridge enjoy the same things that anyone else in the United States likes doing. They are "normal," they are not more different than other people just because they like fry bread and crack "rez jokes." Their cultural identity as Oglala Lakota does not exclude them from what it means to be American. Effectively, these "we are just like you" posts refuse the notion of the Indian as the exotic Other that has influenced Indian images for centuries.

In summary, the Community Storytelling Project complicates or rejects the notion of generic Indianness which frames the Lakota as either Ignoble or Noble Indians in Huey's *National Geographic* images, and which is so reflective of American mainstream depictions. Elisha Yellow Thunder's post illustrates most of the Storytelling Project's interventional strategies. She recounts how she, her brother, and a friend decided to hop

out of the car at Wounded Knee on a snowy day to take a picture. “Not a tourist season picture, but a real one ...,” she writes, emphasizing the difference between how insiders and outsiders look at Oglala Lakota people. She contradicts this type of image with the images familiar to the public from the aftermath of the 1890 massacre, which depicted dead and frozen Oglala Lakota in the snow—symbols of the Vanishing Indian and a connection to the visual culture within which Native photographs exist. But that’s also not the image she wants: She wants an image of now, a picture of “two warriors” with “the snow blowing so cold, just like ... the day my people were slaughtered.” The picture shows two young men standing at the foot of a snowy hill on top of which audiences can see the entrance to the mass grave memorial at Wounded Knee. Their hair is blowing in gusts carrying snowflakes, blurring the image a little. They look cold. But, as Yellow Thunder asserts in her text, they are “modern day warriors, as they rode around the reservation. 2 long haired Lakota boys, in the midst of the storm, still alive. They were alive. We are alive. A people annihilated, still LIVE.”⁴⁶⁹

As an acclamation of survivance, her post illustrates how the different themes of identity construction can intersect within the Community Storytelling Project. The exuberant “we are still here!” sentiment of survivance only makes sense within its historical context. Without the struggle against colonialism as its context, survivance remains a relatively empty concept.⁴⁷⁰ Describing the two men as “modern day warriors, as they rode around the reservation” connects traditional and modern images of Native identities, regardless of whether the men ride horses or cars. This fusion rejects the notions both that Oglala Lakota culture is static and that Oglala identity is only authentic when it is connected to the past. This troubles the mainstream perception that Native

Americans are a people existing solely in or as if in the past. Like many of the more than two hundred contributors, Yellow Thunder rejects the idea of only two versions of Lakota identity as Huey portrays them: as either noble or ignoble.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Pine Ridge Community Storytelling Project contradicts and rejects most characteristics of Indian images in the American mainstream. Huey's project, on the other hand, reflects clear Western dynamics despite its author's dedication to activism on behalf of the Lakota and his awareness of the histories of colonialism and photography. Even though Huey clearly strives to make visible modern Oglala Lakota people in order to reject conventional Indian images, his photos ultimately perpetuate the dichotomy of the Noble and Ignoble Indian and their association with a pure natural or corrupted civilized state, respectively. While his suturing of nobility to cultural survival and of ignobility to progress turns the *National Geographic's* script on its head, Huey's images continue a long tradition of articulating Indianness as generic, essential, static, and timeless. Thus, Huey perpetuates harmful stereotypes and contributes to the invisibility of contemporary Oglala Lakota.

In the Community Storytelling Project, Oglala Lakota people articulate identities that disrupt in three different ways the Western and *National Geographic* scripts offered in Huey's images. First, the posts intervene into the Generic Indian by offering individual iterations of specific Oglala Lakota identities that reject the idea of ignobility and negate images of Native Americans as Drunk or Degraded Indians. Second, the posts contextualize current conditions on Pine Ridge, which highlights resistive identities that articulate agency for the Oglala Lakota and refuses to put the blame for the situation onto

the Oglala Lakota. Lastly, the articulations of diverse and modern American identities replace the Western dichotomy of the spiritually-minded Noble Indian and the wretched Ignoble Indian corrupted by civilization. This allows Oglala Lakota identity to transcend generic and essentializing images that tether nobility to traditionalism, ritual, and spiritualism in the conventions of the *National Geographic*.

In the end, the Community Storytelling Project provides an impression of Oglala Lakota identity that is more complex than most mainstream representations, very much lifelike, and very humanized. Any aspects of romanticism are appreciations of nature rather than glorifications of poverty. Thus, the Storytelling Project itself becomes an act of survivance, which “subtly reduces the power of the destroyer,” and Huey should be commended for creating the Storytelling Project in the first place.⁴⁷¹

The success of the Storytelling Project vis-à-vis the reductive representation in Huey’s photos is a matter of both the mode of representation and the question of authorship. First, the difference between insider- and outsider-representation should not be underestimated. Regardless how close Huey is to some individuals on the reservation and regardless how earnest his advocacy, his ethos of a white man speaking about or for an indigenous population is that of an outsider. Faris argues that “there is always a power imbalance when white people photograph Indians” and that “reading sympathy, empathy, resistance, or collaborations into these pictures is wishful thinking on the part of the critic.”⁴⁷² However, the reflex to dismiss contentious images altogether or to attack their authors creates an impossible standard for depicting the suffering of communities at the margins of society. There is no unproblematic way to show the “degradation of a person[,] the death of a nation[, or] unforgivable violence.”⁴⁷³ In Ariella Azoulay’s

words, “whoever seeks to use photography must exploit the photographed individual’s vulnerability,” especially when the photographed person belongs to a marginalized community. Photographs are “liable to exploit the photographed individual, aggravate his or her injury, publicly expose it, and rob the individual of intimacy.”⁴⁷⁴ However, despite Azoulay’s idea that photographers always commit a sort of violence against the photographed by exploiting their vulnerability, a “civil contract of photography” can allow marginalized or underprivileged groups to articulate their oppression.⁴⁷⁵ It seems, however, that Huey falls short of the ideal that this civil contract can “make politically present the ways in which [marginalized groups] have been dominated, making visible the more and less hidden modes in which they are exposed to... power.”⁴⁷⁶ Only the realization of the Storytelling Project, which removed his own influence, achieves complexity of this kind.

Second, there is a substantial difference between the *National Geographic* and the Cowbird platform as the respective frameworks of publication. The *National Geographic* as a framework for Huey’s images comes with its own history of representing the Other. In conjunction with a very real limitation in terms of space, which lowers the quality of representation because of the restricted quantity, the conventions of the *National Geographic* complement Western narratives and visuals that articulate Native Americans as the cultural Other in reductive tropes. In contrast, the similarity of the Storytelling Project to social media platforms means that it is mostly untethered from these limitations and, on top of that, has the advantage of unedited individual expression. As Chad Barbour points out, social media and, more generally, platforms that allow user-generated content, provide opportunities for marginalized communities to address issues that have

been largely ignored.⁴⁷⁷ While the Storytelling Project cannot single-handedly create widespread Lakota visibility in the public sphere, research indicates that social media are an adequate tool to address the absence of coverage as well as to renegotiate mainstream representations.⁴⁷⁸ The ability or inability to highlight stories of survivance, thus, does not only lie in the authorship but also in the medium.

The medium is especially important when acknowledging the harmful impact that negative representations or the absence of representation can have on Native people.⁴⁷⁹ While the *National Geographic* article arguably has a wider reach than the Storytelling Project considering that the latter exists exclusively online, the Storytelling Project is more likely to reach an Oglala audience. This audience profits enormously from seeing themselves represented in a positive manner.

In the end, the starkly different representation in “In the Shadow of Wounded Knee” and the Community Storytelling Project allows a few conclusions about how to reject Western stereotypes that reduce Indianness to generic tropes. First, it seems imperative to make connections between historical developments, the current situation, and indigenous activism/agency today. This contextualization rejects both an understanding of Native Americans as timeless or as belonging into the past, and the idea that Native Americans have been more acted upon than they have acted themselves.

Second, multidimensional portrayals of individuals who are not treated as “types” or mere representatives of their groups reject the idea of the Generic Indian and allow for alternative identity articulations. Joanna Scherer points toward the effect of the simple act of naming photographed people that de-objectifies them and is a “critical step toward rescuing such images from the realm of exotica.”⁴⁸⁰ However, for non-Native

publications such as the *National Geographic*, critical engagement with traditions of portraying Native Americans (and other indigenous populations) needs to go further than captioning conventions. They need to increase their sensitivity to historical conventions of looking at the Other and respond to criticism.

Commendably, the *National Geographic* seems to attempt to move in the right direction. In the last decades, articles about Native Americans have made efforts to move away from essentializing or exoticizing lenses in the magazine. The 1991 issue called “1491: America Before Columbus” included several articles illuminating Native perspectives.⁴⁸¹ Since the year 2000, the magazine has shifted Native American coverage toward modern-day concerns of the indigenous population. It has covered questions of cultural survivance and revival,⁴⁸² questions of environmental concerns,⁴⁸³ and recent protest actions.⁴⁸⁴

Most recently, the National Geographic Society is making a concerted effort to address questions of representation and race within its own history. As mentioned in the background section on the magazine, the series on diversity in America covered Native Americans in its fourth installment with two articles that specifically address the erasure of indigenous people. “Most of today’s narratives about indigenous Americans,” author Tristan Ahtone (Kiowa) writes in the first article, “are cast through a negative lens, focusing on health disparities, economic disadvantages, poverty, or addiction...”⁴⁸⁵ The article grounds Native invisibility in colonial history, offers diverse articulations of current identities, and emphasizes the necessity for alternative narratives and storylines in the American public. The second article, by Shoshone-Bannock author Mark Trahant, specifically addresses Indian images: “...the story sold to the new Americans was the

fiction that endured, enhanced by dime-store novels, shows such as Buffalo Bill's Wild West, and eventually, Westerns on TV and film."⁴⁸⁶ With a call to make Natives more visible, Trahant's article includes a double page on the NMAI exhibit *Americans*, incorporating images of objects that the exhibit chose to highlight how Indian images are everywhere.⁴⁸⁷ Truly, these articles are refreshingly frank takes on contemporary Native issues and their connection to visual and narrative representations.

The two articles, written by Native people, showcase that creating spaces for extensive representations by Native people themselves can enable multidimensional perspectives on Native issues today. In general, despite limitations of the benefits of self-representations, it seems that Native people do a better job at representing indigeneity.⁴⁸⁸ Swinomish and Tulalip photographer Matika Wilbur's *Project 562*, for example, manages to express tribal identities and individual identity at the same time. Her photographic attempt to capture images from all federally recognized nations, complete with Instagram account and blog, moves Native identities squarely into the twenty-first century. The digital world seems uniquely positioned to host projects of these dimensions. The more projects representing modern Native identities are out there in terms of quantity, the less damaging the occasional negative image becomes.⁴⁸⁹ In terms of interrupting Western narratives and visuals, the last point seems to indicate that quantitatively representation enables qualitatively more *diverse* representation, which is key to rejecting essentializing visions of Native identity. Furthermore, non-Native narrators should be attentive to criticism and take a backseat, letting Native people do their thing, as Huey did in the Storytelling Project for the *National Geographic*.

Despite the two Native-authored articles in the *National Geographic*'s 2018 Race Issue, it is still questionable whether these apparent strides forward are indicating a change in the overpowering institutional frame the magazine usually embodies. In this allegedly subversive issue, the first images of Indianness offered to readers are not the two above-mentioned articles. Instead, barely a few pages into the magazine, seven pages offer aesthetically stunning images of the Inupiat, a group of Inuit living in northwestern Alaska. Russian indigenous (Nanai) photographer Kiliiii Yüyan shows members of the tribe in a manner right out of the *National Geographic* playbook: brown people in traditional clothes involved in traditional activities in nature. In many ways, these 2018 photographs are virtually indistinguishable from those popular in the magazine since Admiral Robert E. Peary brought back images of Alaska Natives in 1909.⁴⁹⁰ For those *National Geographic* readers flipping through the magazine for the images, therefore, the photographs affirm the same reductive frame that the magazine has preferred since its inception.

CHAPTER 2: NATIVE IDENTITIES IN THE CIA PRESS COVERAGE

In April 2014, I witnessed an intriguing protest on the National Mall: The Cowboy and Indian Alliance (CIA) was in town for a week-long camp called Reject and Protect, which opposed the Keystone XL pipeline. I visited the camp because I supported the goal and because I was fascinated by the “unlikely alliance,” by the idea that Native Americans and white “cowboys” should overcome their differences to work toward the same goal. White tipis in front of the Washington Monument and the Capitol made for a picturesque scene; Native Americans in full regalia and cowboys on horses made for another. The mood was uplifting, inclusive, and educational, and still I could not quite get over the feeling that the camp was a type of performance, a show meant to draw spectators in with the colorful costumes and the Western theme.

Even a cursory glance at news media coverage of the Reject and Protect protest revealed the press drawing upon predictable stereotypes of cowboys and Indians. Most visibly, the press fixated on the “unlikeliness” of a functioning coalition between Native Americans and white farmers or ranchers. Indeed, it seemed to be the predominant lens through which the protest was covered. Furthermore, the press focused their cameras mostly on Native participants of the protest, and within that group almost exclusively on those Native people who most resembled mainstream stereotypes of Indianness, such as the Indian Warrior. Visually, many news outlets focused on feathers, horses, traditional dress, and tipis. Narrative tropes also abounded: some journalists framed the CIA protest in Western narratives of high noon shoot-outs or vast wind-swept landscapes. This type of coverage can easily be charged with being the typical reductive, uninvested reporting to be expected from non-Native news outlets covering Native issues.

However, an examination, informed by history and insight into Native American representations, suggests the glimmers of survivance within this trite cowboys and Indians frame. Considering that the alliance chose to frame itself within the Western dichotomy of the Cowboy and the Indian, the press coverage needs to be reconsidered. Clearly, something more complex was at work than Native Americans being portrayed either stereotypically or “accurately.” First, considering the name and visuals of the event, it seemed clear that the protest group had deliberately staged their protest to engage Western imagery. Second, the stereotypical Western frames seemed to be working both against *and* for the Native protestors of the CIA.

Thus, in this chapter, I treat the Reject and Protect protest as an image event. The guiding research question asks: How does the CIA’s Reject and Protect protest as image event disrupt and confirm stereotypical notions of Indianness in the tradition of the Western? I argue that the Reject and Protect protest functions as an image event that invited the press to cover the protest through conventional media frames that made Native presences in the CIA legible to mainstream audiences. Interrogating the CIA press coverage in the framework of an image event, I first examine how reporters relied on frames focusing on Othering Native Americans in the tradition of the Western genre. Native presences were reduced to the absent or Generic Indian stereotype, the Ecological/Spiritual Indian stereotype, or to the Cowboy/Indian dichotomy. However, the CIA as image event also created opportunities to interrupt the Western frame and to rearticulate Native identities. Recognizing the protest as spectacle explicitly and implicitly, media outlets had to acknowledge Reject and Protect as political rather than cultural in nature. This acknowledgement meant that generic images of Indianness and

the Cowboy/Indian dichotomy were renegotiated to reflect Native identities as diverse and modern and, most importantly, as politically active. These updated articulations of Native identities reject basic assumptions and stereotypes from the Western genre.

In order to make this argument, the case study includes approximately seventy articles from print and online publications. I did not choose certain publications but instead indiscriminately pulled everything I could find: articles, news reports or videos, and news website-accompanying blogs. I excluded social media and private blogs both because I am interested in how corporate news media framed the protest and because social media coverage was relatively scant at no more than a handful of tweets and Instagram posts. Part of the collection stems from mainstream publications such as the *New York Times*, the *National Geographic*, the *Washington Post*, and news outlets such as CNN, NBC, or MSNBC. The non-mainstream coverage stems from *Indian Country Today* and environmentally-minded publications and websites such as 350.org, Democracy Now!, and Earth First. While these seventy articles are most likely not exhaustive, especially not on local levels, they seem to be a good cross-section of what internet-using citizens found if they wanted to inform themselves about the CIA.

This case study is uniquely situated to answer the overarching research questions of this dissertation because it engages Western themes so deliberately.⁴⁹¹ The press coverage allows insight not only into how diverse US American press coverage handles Native American issues today but also into how the press handles Native Americans through the lens of the Western. Whereas the first chapter looked in depth at photographic renditions within one specific publication, this chapter offers insight into a much broader and less expert-driven world of talking or writing about Native Americans

and specifically Native protests. Furthermore, the topic selection allows me to continue interrogating the tension between predominating Western patterns and their possible interruptions: On the one hand, press coverage seems to rely heavily on Western imaginations frame the protests. On the other hand, that lens was deliberately invited by the protestors. Therefore, the analysis of the press texts allows me to look at a sort of tug-o-war: The stereotypical, reductive coverage versus the agency of those Native Americans who instrumentalize Western images for their purpose. It is especially important to interrogate this latter question of agency considering that media frames concerning Native Americans are so deeply ingrained in the American public that it is easy to miss that Native American people are modern political actors. This chapter attempts to acknowledge that political agency and wants to figure out how Native protestors can wield it even in the face of powerful media frames.

Framing the Press Coverage

The CIA staged their Reject and Protect protest as an image event. The specific form of the staged spectacle invited certain media frames by invoking particular visual and narrative tropes. This section conceptualizes image events and outlines how the protest functioned as an image event. Furthermore, it outlines how media frames work regarding Native American protests. Lastly, this section illustrates how image events can lead to negative press frames for protestors using the example of the American Indian Movement (AIM).

Reject and Protect as Image Event

Kevin DeLuca introduced the idea of image events in his monograph *Image Politics* analyzing the symbolic action of radical environmental groups.⁴⁹² DeLuca's definition rests on three components that emerge as central to the concept: First, image events are visual "critiques through spectacle."⁴⁹³ Second, they work within dominant news logics. Lastly, they are often deployed by countercultural groups that are excluded from media access and representation in the mainstream.

The first characteristic of image events is that they are "ocular, rather than verbal" and staged as visually engaging scenes.⁴⁹⁴ Image events are familiar to mainstream audiences as dramatic embodied action by organizations such as Greenpeace, who create sensational moments for mass media dissemination: They might steer a dinghy in front of a whaling ship or unfurl a "resist" banner over the White House. As such, image events reduce complex political or social issues to image form.⁴⁹⁵ For example, the Animal Planet documentary series *Whale Wars* reduced the complex question of whaling rights, practices, and activism to anthropocentric conflicts between Sea Shepherd Conservation Society and whalers, staged in intense sequences of direct confrontation at sea.⁴⁹⁶ As staged protests, image events are thus part of visual discourse. This visuality means that image events lend themselves to the means of countercultural groups.

A second characteristic of image events is that they work within dominant news logics. DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples argue that "although certain news conventions work against activist groups, others, most notably the emphasis on the new, drama, conflict, objectivity, and compelling visuals, open up" public discourse to protestors.⁴⁹⁷ In their case study concerning the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle, they demonstrate that the use of

“symbolic violence” was what made the protests newsworthy because the news is attracted to “what is out of the ordinary” and to “disturbers of order and deviation from routine.”⁴⁹⁸ Far from being a distraction, the violence created coverage for the protest that ultimately enabled deeper understanding. Image events, therefore, “obey the rules” of publicity by being “brief, visual, dramatic, and emotional...[and] by making the mundane malevolent, the familiar fantastic.”⁴⁹⁹ Image events must accordingly be deliberately provocative, shocking, or different.

Lastly, as a tool for grass-roots activists, image events enable marginalized groups to participate in public discourse. As DeLuca and Peeples outline, image events are often employed by groups who have limited access to public discourse because they lack “organization, resources, and a large membership.”⁵⁰⁰ Grass-roots activists, DeLuca argues, use image events as their primary rhetorical tactics because other avenues to insert their arguments into public discourse are closed to them. This rhetorical exclusion means that orchestrated political dramas create a stage for “subaltern counterpublics” through their dramatic visibility.⁵⁰¹ These “critique[s] through spectacle,” DeLuca argues, can be successful regardless of their policy consequences.⁵⁰²

For grass-roots activists or countercultural groups, elbowing their way into mass media and mainstream discourses is a necessary first step for policy change. Image events might not lead to the immediate end of industrial whaling or the impeachment of President Trump, but they can influence public opinion by bringing topics into the mainstream and suggesting to audiences who they should side with. For example, parts of the public recognize many of Greenpeace’s propositions as important issues twenty years after the group first introduced them.⁵⁰³ As Frank Zelko has argued, Greenpeace has

contributed to popularizing an “ecological sensitivity” and a holistic ecological world view with its “mind bombs.”⁵⁰⁴ Image events can thus “achieve astonishing success” for the groups who employ them because as “weaponized staged drama” they disseminate alternative interpretations of the world in the mainstream even if they fail as direct action.⁵⁰⁵

The CIA Reject and Protect protest functioned as an image event in several ways. Like radical environmental activists, Native American activists have been excluded from mainstream public discourse, leaving them to seek out alternative avenues into mainstream conversations.⁵⁰⁶ Because of their relative lack of power, Native Americans can do little about their under- and misrepresentation in the dominant news or popular media.⁵⁰⁷ Typically, Native social movement organizations, like the radical environmental groups that DeLuca describes, are small and lack significant resources, which means that “aggressive” media strategies are not uncommon.

Per news logics, the more unusual the event, the greater the likelihood of media coverage.⁵⁰⁸ The Reject and Protect camp and rally put on a spectacle for the press that employed a decisively Western theme. This theme was most recognizable in the visuality of the protest, which centered on displaying cultural markers of Indianness such as horses, feathers, tipis, and beaded and/or fringed leather shirts. The collection of tipis on the mall and the protest rally both created opportunities to put on a show, as evidenced for example by the covered wagon and fire pits in the camp or the visually stunning traditional garb worn by Native participants in the parade. For the press audience, both the visualization of popular conceptions of Indianness and the visual allusions to the Western underlined the chosen theme: cowboys and Indians.

The group put on display those popular images of Indianness that lend themselves to visual display because they can be communicated through visual shortcuts that are easily decipherable for the public. Feathers, horses, beads, and tipis as props of Indianness are in and of themselves photo-worthy because they focus on Otherness, exoticism, and difference with a whiff of Western drama. These markers work for image events both because they are visually intriguing and because they make Indianness familiar and legible and allow a visual reduction of Indianness to single items.⁵⁰⁹

The protest group's choice of name and logo—the back-to-back profiles of a man with a cowboy hat and a man with a porcupine roach and two feathers—underline that the press was invited to cover the event through the lens of the Western.⁵¹⁰ At the end of the protest rally in Washington, DC, Jane Kleeb announced: “Today, boots and moccasins showed President Obama an unlikely alliance has his back to reject Keystone XL.”⁵¹¹ Without a doubt, the name and logo playfully engaged Western themes and imagery in order to use the Cowboy/Indian dichotomy as a press strategy—and the press ate it up. However, considering the relatively small organizational scale of the CIA, the group did not have the resources to carefully control their image by, for example, creating or buying direct media services.⁵¹² As a result, the press coverage indicates that even though the Western image was invited, it also remained stereotypical, harmful, and reductive. Regardless of whether Native participants of the CIA acquiesced to putting a certain image out there, the press unsurprisingly did with the image as they pleased.⁵¹³

The CIA coverage, thus, needs to be analyzed with an eye toward the stereotypical reductions conventionally found within Western narratives and images without disregarding the agency that Native people bring to staging the protest as a

performance. The benefit of DeLuca's concept for this analysis, then, is that it allows me to highlight Native press representation at the intersection of self- and other-representation. The protest was not a spectacle for spectacle's sake but a means to an end, and Native protestors deliberately created it for press consumption. This lens focuses attention on Native people and protestors as active political, social, and cultural actors. Thus, instead of a neocolonial function of power relations in the public sphere, the Western frame becomes a tool wielded by cognizant political actors.

However, the press used Western imagery not only in this emancipatory function but also in a reductive, stereotypical way. The CIA staged an image event that invited specific press frames by emphasizing the visibility of Western-inspired Indianness: generic Indianness, the Indian Warrior, and the Ecological/Spiritual Indian. These specific frames lend themselves to creating press attention because they are both well-known Western tropes and conventional press frames. Thus, by inviting specific frames of Indianness, the CIA created an opportunity for press coverage that created attention but also relied on reductive media frames. In its function as staged drama, the visibility of the protest activated media frames that have conventionally shaped Native American coverage in the news.

Media Frames and Native Americans

Press coverage of Native American protests exists within a long history of negotiating both social movements and Native American dissent in the news, and news media shape public perception of the events they cover in such a manner that they sometimes "help determine the course of events."⁵¹⁴ For audiences, the information in the mass media "tends to become 'the movement'" because of the lack of alternative sources

or personal experience. In effect, mass media get to define the meaning and significance of movements or, by not reporting on them, to reduce their relevance.⁵¹⁵ Clearly, the advent of social media has changed the balance of power to some degree. During the NoDAPL protests, there was—in my experience—a noticeable split between the “mass media” reports and the information I received through my admittedly curated networks on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. However, there is no extensive coverage of the CIA protests on these social media platforms. For the Reject and Protect protest in 2014, the “dominant” or “mass media” outlets were still the main outlets. Their frames shaped public interpretation of both the protest and its Native participants.

According to Todd Gitlin, media frames “are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentations, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual.”⁵¹⁶ Repetitive use of frames means that a preferred reading of the facts comes to dominate public understanding.⁵¹⁷ For audiences, frames facilitate comprehension by parceling information into neat, predictable packages.⁵¹⁸ Especially in the context of audiences unfamiliar with Indian country and Native concerns, this parceling is advantageous for reporters. However, for Native Americans protestors, easily legible frames mean that they are often doubly excluded from public discourse: as indigenous people and as protestors.

Frames, thus, have considerable power to “interpret, define, and give meaning to social and cultural phenomena.”⁵¹⁹ Because indigenous people tend to be under-represented in public discourse, news media hold a tremendous amount of power as interpretive guides for Native American political participation in the American public sphere. First, news content that is beyond the audience’s immediate realm of experience

means that audiences cannot contradict the version of events that the news offer.⁵²⁰ Since the general public is relatively uninformed about Native peoples and issues, audiences are ill-equipped to interrogate representations of Native American issues today.⁵²¹ Because the press has the power to offer their interpretations as salient, alternatives remain limited or contained.⁵²² Second, political actors generally can influence their own portrayal only when they hold power to do so, which again puts Native protestors at a disadvantage.⁵²³ Thus, media frames remain influential in the realm of Native American news.

Native Americans in general tend to be covered through conventionally accepted tropes of Otherness that mirror images from the Western genre: tropes of exoticism, spirituality, nobility/ignobility, poverty, and/or the dichotomy of backwardness and civilization abound. Reporters depend on “familiar romantic and savage Indian identities by relying on a conventional set of Indian myths, stories, and images ... that [meet] the ‘civilized’ public’s expectations and progressive ideas.”⁵²⁴ In recent decades, this reliance on familiarity has generally meant framing Native Americans as “exotic people from the past or degraded Indians beset by poverty and social problems.”⁵²⁵ While Native Americans are rarely represented as dying or disappearing in the nineteenth-century sense of the Vanishing Indian anymore, frames focus on poverty, drug abuse, gang activities and gambling, which renders Native Americans invisible and politically powerless and trivializes Native cultures through their reduction to sports mascots.⁵²⁶

For Native American protestors, press coverage is even more precarious. Generally, mainstream news frame any political dissent and protest from the perspective of institutions and populations in power to depict counterpublics as outside the “bounds of legitimate social controversy.”⁵²⁷ These frames often benefit the dominant public to

the detriment of any, but especially Native American, protestors.⁵²⁸ In this context, the Western genre becomes especially salient as a meaning-making mechanism in the US public sphere: The parallel between Native protest against the US government and/or its policies and the Western narrative is both obvious and a convenient explanation that allows audiences to understand US history in patterns they are familiar with.

Because it is so easy to portray Native protestors as eternal enemies in the tradition of the Western, Native protestors are often framed through this lens. In his study of media frames for Native social movements in the 1970s, Tim Baylor isolated five frames that are dominant in the press coverage. The Militant Indian, enabling a focus on violence and/or the breakdown of “law and order,” was the most common.⁵²⁹ The Militant Indian is related to the tradition of the Bloodthirsty Indian or Militant Warrior, who can both be noble or ignoble depending on perspective.⁵³⁰ Through this lens, Native causes are either justified and noble because of Native insight and closeness to nature and a purer form of humanity; or Native causes are ignoble, radical, aggressive, irrational attacks on the United States.⁵³¹ Regardless of questions of nobility, Native protestors are often framed as obstacles to reasonable economic progress even if they are also admired for their tenacity or ethics in the face of modernity.⁵³²

According to Baylor, another common frame was the “stereotype frame.” Like the Generic Indian trope, the stereotype frame focuses on “stereotypical artifacts, actions or characterizations” such as “singing, dancing, the peace pipe, tepees, Indians on horseback, feathers, war paint” or “characterizations of Indians that ranged from drunkards to being quietly stoic.”⁵³³ Further frames focused on civil rights questions that had first sparked the protests and on factionalism within the social movements. Least

used was the treaty rights frame, which would have enabled a focus on questions of Native sovereignty.⁵³⁴

Native protestors, thus, deal with frames that constrain both Native representation in general and indigenous protestors specifically. In the 1970s, 93% of the news segments in Baylor's analysis used at least one these five frames, and the frames used were generally those that focused on easy legibility for the audiences. This dynamic "most often did not necessarily advance the protestors' cause" but "directly hindered it."⁵³⁵ This focus on legibility demonstrates the double bind that the CIA was in: Is any press coverage really better than none, if that means perpetuating harmful stereotypes? Clearly, staging events that invite certain frames is risky business, which can be illustrated by a short overview over the American Indian Movement's relation with the press.

Consequences of Image Events for Native Protestors

The CIA is not the first Native American protest group portraying themselves through the Western lens despite the risks of projecting Indian tropes that correspond to received stereotypes. Already in the age of Wild West shows, "show Indians" co-created an image of Indianness, which allowed them to leave reservations and earn money. In this context, Chad Barbour describes Natives playing Indians as "perform[ing] a role popularly understood to be 'Indian.'"⁵³⁶ Public conceptions of Indianness are therefore central to these performed identities, which is not surprising considering what José Muñoz calls the "cultural imperative within the majoritarian public sphere that denies subaltern access to larger channels of representation, while calling the minoritarian subject to the stage, performing her or his alterity as consumable... spectacle."⁵³⁷ This imperative has created the paradox that today Indianness has become an identity that

actual Native American people sometimes have to perform in order to be recognized as “Indian.”⁵³⁸ This dynamic introduces an aspect of theater or performance to public displays of Indianness and demonstrates that Native Americans have wielded Indianness to their advantage and for specific purposes before.

In the context of Native American protest, performing Indianness is more about projecting types of Indianness that protestors assume to be advantageous in that moment than about acting: Indianness becomes a tool. The most prominent example is the American Indian Movement, which engaged in a trade-off between molding themselves into commonly received stereotypes and winning attention for their quests. AIM’s self-representation toyed with images straight out of the Western movies of the 1960s and 1970s: Indians with long hair, bandanas, and guns, engaged in militant resistance.⁵³⁹ The 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee was the central event of those protests and had a clear Cowboy/Indian theme both in its execution and the resulting press coverage.⁵⁴⁰ The occupation was its own kind of image event, the “final performance of a daring brand of political theater.”⁵⁴¹ T.V. Reed even suggests that AIM orchestrated their protests along visuals and narratives that followed “internalized Hollywood scripts,” arguing that those stereotypical expectations were enacted by both the broader American public *and* the Native activists themselves.⁵⁴²

Wherever the images originated, there are some indicators that the stereotypical images helped AIM’s cause—to some extent. The press coverage of the occupation waxed and waned but was intermittently extensive despite both the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal rocking the news cycle.⁵⁴³ Considering how absent Native issues were from mainstream media in the early 1970s, this type of attention was a remarkable

achievement. However, the reliance on stereotypical images—the generic, exotic Indian Warrior engaged in a stand-off with the US military—achieved press coverage at the price of providing in-depth explanations of the issues at hand.⁵⁴⁴ Partially, this lack of depth stemmed from the FBI’s awareness that positive press for AIM meant more trouble for them, which led to restricted media access to the AIM camp and even arrests of progressive press representatives who the FBI feared might report more sympathetically on the protestors.⁵⁴⁵

AIM’s “excessive reliance upon the mass media” was thus both its strongest strategy and its weakest spot.⁵⁴⁶ John Sanchez and Mary Stuckey summarize that in order to achieve policy changes, “Indians had to change their national image; to obtain the rhetorical leverage to accomplish this, they had to reinforce stereotypes that were, in their understanding, at least partially responsible for the negative policies.”⁵⁴⁷ For AIM this trade-off meant that in the American public, the protestors were seen less as the “romantic” types and more as “the bad Indian renegades” from the Western.⁵⁴⁸ However, as Reed acknowledges, the organization managed for brief moments to use “effective guerilla theater” to draw attention to Native issues that were otherwise completely invisible in the public sphere.

The cost was government-based rhetorical exclusion that defined “dissidents as inherently inimical to ‘national interest’.”⁵⁴⁹ AIM and other Native civil rights groups were categorically articulated as dangerous, radical, and marginalized Militant Indians both by the press and representatives of law enforcement. As Mary Ann Weston points out in regard to the news coverage of AIM’s occupation, the press framed the occupiers either as an updated version of the Ignoble Savage: militant, angry, bloodthirsty, hostile,

and disloyal; or as an updated version of the Noble Savage: idealistic, wise, and so in tune with nature that they would save the earth's inhabitants from themselves.⁵⁵⁰

Focusing on the “rhetorical counterinsurgency” against AIM by the FBI, Casey Kelly argues that the FBI constructed AIM as “an insurgent guerilla terrorist organization with communist ties.” This portrayal curtailed the resources available for public interpretation and obscured any rational motivations for AIM's actions, and “decontextualized their use of force, and justified the extreme response to their agitation.”⁵⁵¹ Ultimately, this public image served as a justification to eclipse the Indian movement and its various organizations through the use of the US court system.

The press coverage of the CIA protest half a century after AIM's most spectacular events did not employ the Militant Indian image at all. In fact, hostile or antagonistic portrayals are absent completely. This absence is important because, as Tim Baylor points out, associations with violence generally lead to negative outcomes for protest groups because radical or militant frames mean that protestors lose public sympathies.⁵⁵² Native CIA member avoided the frame of the Militant Indian renegade associated more with domestic terrorism than with political action. However, they did not avoid stereotypical and reductive frames in general. For the press, the CIA constituted a specific dilemma: Within the tradition of the Western frame as outlined in the Introduction, and in light of the related Cowboy/Indian dichotomy, the press struggled to find a frame that allowed legibility for a self-proclaimed alliance of cowboys and Indians. After all both the Western frame and conventional press frames dictate that white settlers and Native Americans should be enemies. Absent opportunities to articulate Native

protestors as Militant Indians, the press focused on frames that constructed Native protestors as Generic Indians, Indian Warriors, and Ecological/Spiritual Indians.

Affirmations of the Western Frame in the Press Coverage

The CIA as image event created a spectacle that offered little impetus to interrogate Western frames. As a result, the press coverage echoed Western conventions in two main ways: First, the press coverage perpetuated Native American invisibility by resorting to reductive tropes of Indianness from the Western genre. This reductive, generic Indianness increases legibility for the broader public but leaves modern Native identities invisible. Second, news outlets used Western tropes as a simplistic framework for their articles. Here, the alleged antagonism between cowboys and Indians perpetuates a trope that ultimately locates the newsworthiness of the protests in the alliance itself and not in the impetus for the protests. Thus, the CIA as image event invited tropes that have created difficulties for Native Americans activists before, as I demonstrated in connection to the AIM. However, the CIA as image event also created opportunities for rearticulations of reductive Western visual and narrative tropes. In the second part of the analysis, I show how Native CIA members were articulated as complex, modern political agents in the context of the protest.

Native Invisibility: Making the Indian Legible

Native self-projection at the Reject and Protect protest toyed with the visually spectacular image of the Indian Warrior, which was always going to be the biggest visual draw for the CIA. As Pauline Wakeham argued in regard to the opening march of the NMAI in 2004, the “‘traditional’ regalia-clad image of Indianness” unsurprisingly

focuses the gazes of photographers and reporters on the “most colorful and costumed Indigenous participants” at the expense of other expressions of Indianness.⁵⁵³ The CIA banked on this dynamic and accepted potentially reductive coverage.

The press took the bait and the reductionist Indian manifests itself in the press coverage in several ways. First, Native Americans emerge as the generic, homogenous group to which the Western genre has generally reduced their identities since its inception. This reduction facilitates legibility for readers because only those Native Americans fulfilling conventional expectations, curated by the Western, received coverage. Visually, the generic Indian Warrior therefore dominated the coverage. Second, some news reports made room for Native Americans issues but only in the context of “conventionally Indian” topics, such as spirituality or spiritually-motivated environmentalism. Therefore, invisibility can also mean the replacement of Native peoples and concerns by stereotypical conventional representations of Indians, such as the Ecological/Spiritual Indian frame.

The Generic Indian

The legible Generic Indian is, in its purest form, an essentialization of cultural identity that dubitably serves to represent all possible iterations of Native identities in the public imaginary, supplanting the necessity of actual Native presences. Legibility in this context means representing Native Americans in “familiar and easily understood categories,” which allows easy comprehension for audiences but also leads to stereotypical depictions.⁵⁵⁴ As Gitlin points out, oversimplification has several advantages for news reporting that go beyond legibility: condensing complex issues into reductive, legible stereotypes saves both time and space, which are essential for news

reporting.⁵⁵⁵ Easily processed stereotypes therefore solve a host of issues for journalists, and the “imperative of finding ‘good pictures’ ... adds to the premium on simplification.”⁵⁵⁶ For this reason and in the vein of Gitlin’s concept of media frames, the legible Indian cannot diverge from traditionally and conventionally articulated Indian images but rather has to follow traditional stereotypical depictions. For the press coverage, therefore, reducing Native American identity to a few essential, easily legible images is a logical conclusion for the sake of accessibility to the audience.

One characteristic of the accessible Generic Indian image is that it is tribally non-specific and fails to recognize differences or complexities in tribal identities, instead articulating a homogenous Plains-inspired Indianness. In her 2006 monograph *Media and Minorities*, Stephanie Larson postulates that reporters often miss the difference between Generic Indians and cultural identities of tribes because of a lack of background knowledge.⁵⁵⁷ Instead of specific knowledge, reporters approach Native topics with the same information base as the majority of Americans: a steady diet of reductive Indian images a la Western.

The CIA coverage affirms the Generic Indian by failing to establish cultural differences either in text and captions or in images. Visually, the CIA as image event provided renditions of Indianness that enabled the press to look at Native Americans through the frame of the Plains Indian Warrior—people on horseback, with feathers in various forms, often wearing clothes with bead work or leather fringes. In captions and texts, generic Indianness frames both prominent Native CIA protestors and rank and file Native activists. For example, the *Huffington Post* captions a stereotypical image of befeathered horseback rider Shane Red Hawk as “a Native American tribal leader,”

which reduces the man's identity to bland Indianness, undercutting both his tribal affiliation and his individuality. Even more starkly, for the *Washington Post* blog, Colby Itkowitz uses the labels "cowboys" and "Indians" to denote the two participating groups as if the labels were self-explanatory or as if they described political, ethnic, or cultural realities.⁵⁵⁸ While not all Native participants are described this generically, even well-known figures like Rosebud tribal president Cyril Scott are often left unidentified, even if they appear in captioned images of articles that otherwise report extensively about both Native and non-Native involvement.⁵⁵⁹ Native Americans, thus, have to content with reductive descriptors that highlight them as representatives of Otherness instead of as complex, modern, individual, and political agents.

However, just because the CIA invited the Indian Warrior image or the Generic Indian as a lens, the reduction was not inherent in the protest. Instead, the reduction is a choice to exclude alternative frames for the event. The dramatic scenery of tipis or horseback riders in front of the Washington Monument or the Capitol building clearly formed part of the visual draw of the image event. However, the press coverage affirmed reductive frames of generic Indianness by focusing on these props as stand-ins for Native American presences. A *Politico* article illustrates this focus already in its title, "Horses, teepees in Keystone protest," which foreshadows which specific cultural objects will replace Native presence. The only image accompanying the text shows four white tipis on the Mall, with the Capitol in the background. The brief caption below merely reads: "Things kick off ... with a short 24-horse ride from the Capitol."⁵⁶⁰ The reader is left to infer Indianness from the tipis or horses exclusively, while the headline, image, and caption fail to recognize the human presence behind the trope. Tipis are also in the

background of a photo showing the crowd at the protest concert in Nebraska, as covered in the *New York Times* article “Nebraskans Raise their Voices in Fight Against Keystone XL Pipeline.”⁵⁶¹ The crowd is visibly mixed but the white cone-shaped tents in the background are a powerful shorthand for the original owners of the land. In these images and headlines, props literally make superfluous the presence of Native American people. The presence of cultural objects is enough.

Even when Native people are depicted, the focus on riders on horseback, with feathers and/or beaded garb, focuses the readers’ attention on the generic Indian Warrior, often with symbols of the American nation in the background. One of the most popular captured scenes of the day focused on Native men with full headdresses on horses, with the dome of the Capitol or the Washington Monument in the background. The *New York Times* used an image of Shane Red Hawk on horseback, his entire silhouette visible against the Capitol in the background, his feather headdress prominently centered in the image.⁵⁶² *NBC* and *Huffington Post* both used a similar image showing the profile of a Native American man on his horse from the waist upwards. Similar to the *New York Times* image, the photograph draws attention to the colorful full headdress and beaded vest, the Capitol in the back.⁵⁶³ The *New York Times* article on the concert in Nebraska offers one image of a Native person: a young girl on horseback with a plume feather on her head.⁵⁶⁴ She wears a beautifully beaded and adorned dress and dark, neat braids. Her horse is equally splendidly decorated with beaded blankets and a chestcover. Her props—horse, beads, feathers—fall along mainstream representations of Indianness just as much as her brown skin and black braids. All of these components lead into the realm of signifying Indianness through markers of racial difference on top of cultural props.⁵⁶⁵

Racial difference is another way of signaling Indianness in the press, as Coward outlined in his analysis of Indian images in newspapers and the illustrated press. Native Americans are supposed to “look Indian,” which usually means focusing on darker skin, long black hair, and maybe prominent noses or high cheekbones.⁵⁶⁶ While the 2014 press coverage of the CIA does not overtly articulate a racial hierarchy between the participating groups, racial difference is still highlighted through the same tropes that have served as visual markers to distinguish between white people and Native folks for centuries. The girl’s hair and skin in the above-mentioned *New York Times* article function as the “meaningful markers of racial difference” that Coward outlines.⁵⁶⁷ Associated closely with visual props for Native people, side braids have become a symbolic shortcut for Indianness even more than the so-called “Mohawk,” which has been appropriated in the mainstream to such an extent that its association is much broader than Indianness.

Props and markers of racial difference accumulate into a reductive image of Indianness that, in some publications, is remarkably uniform even in extended coverage. For example, the *Huffington Post* manages to keep all seventeen images in their picture gallery on the protest strictly reductionist.⁵⁶⁸ This quantity clearly demonstrates a fascination with the picturesque traditional garb rather than with the people beneath it. Seventeen images provide enough space to go beyond the brief reduction and still, the photographs focus exclusively on items symbolically standing in for Indianness, people who fit the visual description of the Generic Indian, and Native Americans engaged in activities commonly associated with Indianness.⁵⁶⁹ The impression viewers can gather

from this collection is that there is only one way that Indians can possibly look, and only about three or four activities that Indians usually engage in.

This reductive image is not just a benign reflection of cultural expressions of Indianness available to the photographers. Instead, it is a deliberate choice excluding other expressions of Indianness that were present: As an eyewitness to the protest, I can attest that a diverse array of identity expressions complemented the visual of the Plains man in a headdress. This observation is corroborated in some of the news coverage: The crowd was mixed in a double sense. Among many Native American protestors were many non-Native, mostly white protestors. And among the Native Americans, many did not take part in the protest in full regalia, headdresses, leather-fringed shirts or dresses, or on horseback. Many Native people came in jeans and t-shirts, without feathers or beads or horses or braids. Furthermore, many Native people did not raise tipis or fix tipis and generally did not hang out in front of tipis for prolonged times. Many Native folks did not spend any time on horseback at all either. Choosing photographs exclusively of those Native people who fit the public assumption of what Indians “look like” and of what they “do” excludes any other expression of Indianness from registering as Native American. Those cultural items or activities connected to generic Indianness, such as headdresses, beads, jewelry, clothes, horseback riding, tipi raising, are the ones readily recognized as Indian by American audiences.

Whereas, clearly, these cultural items were both strategically dramatized in the protest and are legitimate expressions of cultural identity, the way they are framed in the CIA press coverage panders to recognizable Native features that exist as stereotypes in dominant society’s perception of who Indians are or should be. By focusing their lenses

on those Native persons who were conveniently representative of archetypes, the press reinforced clichés, reduced diversity of identity expressions, and eliminated individuality or tribal differentiation.⁵⁷⁰ Furthermore, many of the above-mentioned photographs do not only display an abbreviated idea of generic Indianness, they also toy with a deliberate contrast between signifiers of Indianness and markers of American political life and progress: The Capitol, the Washington Monument, and the cars visible in the streets serve to underline the difference between the setting and the attire of the Native people. This contrast affirms the essential dichotomy of the Western, which pits backward Indians against progressive white settler, a dynamic which I address below.

The Ecological/Spiritual Indian

The reductive stereotypes of Indianness are not exhausted in the Plains Indian Warrior image. The press also framed Native participants in the tradition of the Ecological/Spiritual Indian in order to make Native motivations understandable for the readers. As an iteration of the Noble Indian, the Ecological/Spiritual Indian perpetuates the stereotype that Native Americans are more in tune with nature than non-Native people. This powerful contemporary stereotype is often intimately tied in with conceptions of Native spirituality. Traditional Native spiritualities do indeed rely on a connection between people and nature. Land, water, and nature are conceptualized as having inherent value apart from conservation for human exploitation. Therefore, justifying the environmental protection can be related to spirituality in profound ways.⁵⁷¹ Indeed, Al Gedicks points out that, “as native groups defend their land and cultures they invariably draw upon their own spiritual traditions which emphasize the sacred duty to protect the environment for future generations.”⁵⁷² However, the exclusion of political

goals revolving around self-determination and sovereignty reduced the complexity of the issues at stake and perpetuated the stereotype of the Ecological/Spiritual Indian.

The press invoked the Ecological/Spiritual Indian by selecting quotations that represent Native motivations as exclusively inspired by a universal and preservationist philosophy of protecting life, human and otherwise. Given the pipeline's precarious implications for the critically important Ogallala Aquifer, many Native members of the anti-Keystone XL protest emphasized the centrality of water to their concept of the interconnectedness of humans and nature. News outlets prolifically quoted tribal members on the topic. Winona LaDuke (Ojibwe) specified: "The Lakota understand that water is life, and there is no new water."⁵⁷³ This convergence of water and life is mirrored in quotations by then Rosebud Tribal President Bryan Brewer, who said, "It's about water. Water is the giver of life for everything. You me, for every person on this planet."⁵⁷⁴ Rosebud tribal member Aldo Seoane concurred, saying that the "pipeline is certainly the worst thing that can happen to our land, our water, and our people."⁵⁷⁵ Within the context of media frames pushing stereotypical images, Native credibility rests on the dubious assumption that Native people have natural knowledge that white people lack, suggesting Indian identities that still rest on Iron Eyes Cody's shoulders.

This impression of the wise, shaman-like nature-lover was enhanced by a focus on specifically metaphor-rich language. Indeed, speaking in metaphor has been a way of signifying Indianness since the eighteenth and nineteenth century.⁵⁷⁶ In the CIA coverage, *The Examiner* quotes Reject and Protect activists Daryl Hannah and Debra White Plume (Lakota) calling the pipeline "the black snake" or "serpent," whose "mouth opens on the Gulf of Mexico, spewing toxic emissions."⁵⁷⁷ Tom Poor Bear, vice

president of the Oglala Lakota Nation, is quoted using the same metaphor, describing the pipeline as a 1,800-mile long “black snake boring into Mother Earth and spitting venom into earth.”⁵⁷⁸ And Lakota tribal member Charlotte Black Elk is quoted saying that the “Black Hills are at the heart of everything that is... If the Black Hills [die], nothing else can live.”⁵⁷⁹ Since these quotations are verbatim, they reflect what the Native protestors in question said. However, they are also selective utterances that conform to ideas of “how Indians speak” and drive home the connection between environmentalism and spirituality, framing the participants as Ecological/Spiritual Indians.

It is true that in connection to the Ecological/Spiritual Indian stereotype reporters face a complex duality. On the one hand, spirituality and land protection are powerful motivators for Native communities. When mainstream news cover Native American motivations, it is reasonable that Native people would use spiritual beliefs to explain actions that for non-Native readers look like they are environmentalist in character.⁵⁸⁰ On the other hand, the absence of motivations other than spirituality articulates Native political action as indicative of the stereotype and affirm mainstream assumptions that cling to New Age conceptions of Indian environmentalism a la Iron Eyes Cody. In this way, Native American protestors’ motivations are safely framed and contained as spiritual endeavors, making the protest intelligible to the broader American public as consistent with stereotypical frames of Indians as the better environmentalists.

Native invisibility, in conclusion, is perpetuated in news outlets through reductive Indian images. The press generally depicted the CIA image event through conventional media frames and typical Western tropes that increased legibility for non-Native audiences. At least to some extent, the form of the image event enabled the reductive

frames because of the visual and narrative tropes that the CIA projected. The Generic Indian image as exemplified by the Indian Warrior and Ecological/Spiritual Indian was clearly present in the visual self-portrayal of the Native CIA participants. While this choice of self-portrayal does not justify the unnecessary reduction through the press, it might explain it. Similarly, the spectacular visuality of the Reject and Protect protest made plausible the Western narrative tropes as frames for the articles and some news outlets barely tried for subtlety.

The Western Frame as a Narrative Tool

The Reject and Protect protest invited the Western frame through the group's name and the deliberate creation of stunning displays of tribal regalia, people on horseback, and a flood of feather headdresses. The Cowboy/Indian antagonism lies at the heart of the Western narrative and there might be no Indian image more recognizable than the Generic Indian locked in eternal gridlock with "the cowboy." Inviting the theme had clear advantages in terms of the quantity of press attention. At the same time, the dichotomy comes with dangerous preconceptions about Indianness: since cowboys are Us, Native Americans are necessarily not. Instead, Native Americans are the Other, the obstacle that white settlers must overcome, the hurdle to progress and civilization, and the natural and eternal enemies of the United States. As part of this central foundational myth, the Cowboy/Indian dichotomy creates newsworthiness at the expense of portraying the complexity of political motivations for the protest.

All types of news outlets enthusiastically used explicit Western references and the trope of the "unlikely alliance" in order to invoke surprise in their readers. The trope of the age-old antagonists promises dramatic effect and attention-catching properties. In the

most illustrative example, Kristin Moe and Garth Lenz wrote for the *National Geographic*: "... the dozen or so leather-booted ranchers mounted their horses and lined up in the midday sun. Facing them were an equal number of American Indians, in the regalia of tribes from across the U.S. The two groups stood still, waiting for the signal."⁵⁸¹ But surprise surprise: "This was no showdown" but a protest against the XL pipeline, and the two groups were actually allies. This pattern of portraying the alliance as "unexpected" or "unlikely" is a recurring theme in the press coverage: Zoltán Grossman and Amy Goodman, respectively, point out the uniqueness of the coalition, Goodman calling the groups "adversaries," Grossman going for "archetypical enemies of the West."⁵⁸² The *Environment News Service* describes the alliance as "once deadly enemies."⁵⁸³ Writing for the *Washington Post*, Al Camen and Colby Itkowitz point out that Native Americans and farmers have a "tense, if not clichéd story line in American history" and continue to describe that for once, the groups are working together. What could be a good analysis of stereotypical frames then devolves into a somewhat stranger and disconnected mention of actress Daryl Hannah's 2001 movie *Cowboy Up*, which makes the actress (and the article) sound mildly sleazy. The protest is characterized with adequately Western descriptions of "Indians setting up camp" and camp[ing] out in five tepees and a covered wagon."⁵⁸⁴ On the *Washington Post* blog, author Itkowitz makes an already stereotype-laden article worse by including a link for the song "Colors of the Wind" from the 1995 Disney movie *Pocahontas*. Introducing the link with the comment that "now we can't get 'Colors of the Wind' out of our heads" clearly suggests that this author has no deeper association or more accurate information about Native American

history or current reality than a children's movie that grossly misrepresents history and, by some accounts, is deeply offensive to Native American heritage.⁵⁸⁵

In most of these examples, the authors do eventually accurately describe the CIA as a well-functioning coalition. However, the articles tend to emphasize the peaceful Native-white relationship as surprising even in this day and age. It seems that the tension between stereotypical conceptions of Native-white relations and the existence of the CIA can only be resolved by telling tales of "unlikeliness" and surprise. Audiences are led to focus on said unlikeliness or exoticness of the coalition, making the unexpectedness of the alliance the central tenet of the stories' newsworthiness. Rather than focusing readers' minds on the critiques of the Keystone pipeline, they are meant to marvel at the implausibility of white farmers and Native Americans working together. Similar to communicating Native identity through cultural props and markers of racial difference, the focus on unlikeliness also emphasizes the idea Otherness as newsworthy. Instead of grounding an "exceptional event" in "normal, every-day social life," the paradigm of newsworthiness dictates an emphasis on the frame of exceptionality.⁵⁸⁶

Focusing on the aspect of surprise over the alliance, thus, creates problems beyond the obvious inaccuracy. First, the protest is rendered secondary to the exoticness of the alliance. Once more, the press focuses on Native Americans not for motivations, concerns, issues, or political agendas, but for their alleged incompatibility with the American mainstream. They are articulated as objects of interest purely because of who they are perceived to be—racially and culturally different. Second, the focus on difference renders Native Americans invisible as actors in modern political and social life. After all, the articles portray as surprising that Native Americans are *not* about to kill

the “cowboys,” that they are *not* Bloodthirsty Savages. Even though the reports do end up describing the CIA as a functional coalition and just use the alleged contrariness as attention material, they rely on the formula of the Western and perpetuate the stereotype by representing any variation of the theme as “surprising” and newsworthy. The protest, its background, and the motivations of its Native participants are decentered and marginalized.

Overall, the press coverage of the CIA mirrored Indian stereotypes influenced by the Western genre. Reductive tropes of Indianness and the Cowboy/Indian dichotomy negated the complexity of modern Native identities and motivations. This reductive Indianness manifested itself mostly in the form of the Generic Indian, the Indian Warrior, and the Ecological/Spiritual Indian, which are tropes that made Native identities legible to broader publics through the conventionality of the images. What makes this Generic Indian truly harmful, as Jason Edward Black argues in his 2002 article on Indian mascots in sports, is that lumping all Native Americans together in one bland generic category separates Native Americans from their cultural heritage. This separation, in turn, allows dominant publics to hijack these identities for their own purposes.⁵⁸⁷ Indianness becomes what dominant publics want or need it to be, taking the power to self-represent away from Native Americans.

Furthermore, parts of the press used Western narratives surrounding the dichotomy of Cowboys/Indians to frame their accounts, insisting on portraying the alliances as “unlikely.” Combined, these frames ensured that the focus in the news coverage was on Native Otherness, finding newsworthiness not in the CIA’s cause but its existence. In many ways, therefore, the news coverage of the CIA illustrates the risks of

employing the Western as the basis for an image event and of performing Indianness to gain attention.

Importantly, evading any associations with violence meant that the CIA avoided associations with radical Militant Indians. In the absence of even “symbolic violence,” the Native CIA participants were portrayed as fascinating and exotic Others but not as Militant Indian renegades engaged in domestic terrorism rather than political action.⁵⁸⁸ While portrayals as generic and spiritual are harmful in their reductiveness, they do not preclude public sympathy. On the contrary, they might even invite it. After all, audiences are likely to sympathize with the pain that land loss and powerlessness bring with it. Whereas AIM “made it easier for others to attach a militant frame to itself by choosing to confront force with force,” the nonviolent tactics of the CIA seem to have created opportunities to rearticulate an Indianness apart both from the reductive and legible Generic Indian described above and from the militant frame often used to articulate Native protestors.⁵⁸⁹ This enabled coverage which, at least to some extent, rearticulated Indianness and disrupted Western narratives.

Interruptions of the Western Frame in the Press Coverage

The second part of the analysis focuses on these interventions and interrogates how the CIA as image event negated Western patterns and complicated the concept of generic Indianness. In the American public sphere, it is impossible to put a Native man in full headdress and buckskin clothes onto a horse next to a tipi without invoking Western themes of the last 150 years. The disadvantages of this dynamic have been outlined above. But there is a distinct advantage in this dynamic, too: If you put the same Native man with his headdress and horse on the National Mall, few professional or lay

photographers will be able to resist this photographic candy for the public eye. What the public makes of the images depends.

Reject and Protect as image event opened opportunities for the press to articulate the protest as political rather than a culturally exotic event. Recognizing the encampment as a political protest enabled the press to reframe Native participants as political actors beyond cultural stereotypes of generic Indianness, Indian Braves, and the Ecological/Spiritual Indian. Whereas some reporters recognized the protest as political spectacle explicitly, others used the picturesque images and narratives to contrast them with the historical and contemporary context of the CIA. This context draws attention to the long history and current vibrancy of Native political action and, thus, articulates Native folks as political agents. Lastly, the focus on Native people as political agents within Reject and Protect as an image event created opportunities to rearticulate the Generic Indian and the Cowboy/Indian dichotomy.

Reject and Protect as Spectacle

The fact that the CIA put on a show for the cameras was recognized by reporters and protestors alike. As rancher Tom Genung of the CIA expressed: “Sure, it was theater. But then that’s what a protest is. No matter what outfits are being worn, it’s an event to dramatize the connections between people that might not be evident otherwise. Our work was to be visible.”⁵⁹⁰ As outlined in the first part of this analysis, the CIA was rather successful at creating this visibility, even if the interpretations were not always the most desirable ones. The attention attained reinforced stereotypes or located the newsworthiness of the protest in the existence of the alliance rather than the major grievances expressed by the CIA. However, focusing on the performative aspect of the

protest allowed reporters to use a frame that recognizes the agency of the activists and the protest as political action.

A few reporters explicitly focused on the protest as spectacle. For example, one photograph appearing in Lenz and Moe's blog post for the *National Geographic* draws attention to the nature of the protest as spectacle. In the center of the photograph, Tom Genung—a middle-aged white guy with a scruffy but clean beard, a white Stetson, and a red shirt—is carrying a bucket of water. Over his left shoulder, a photographer and a camera man with a press lanyard have their lenses trailed on him. Over his right shoulder, another photographer is pointing a camera at him by the tripod it is attached to. Behind this row of photographers and press people, tribal banners move in the breeze. The caption does not specifically mention the performative aspect of this scene, but the image itself draws attention to the fact that the water ceremony was both a spiritual opening ritual performed for its participants *and* a visually spectacular moment performed for the camera lenses.

Most explicitly, Heather Smith, for *Grist*, compared the CIA tactics to the visual spectacles of civil rights era protests. She reports that when she saw photographs from the protest she thought: "Damn. That's a good-looking protest. The signs looked like they'd been made by someone with some serious experience in sign making. The people in the photographs looked comfortable, but they had clearly dressed for the occasion."⁵⁹¹ Smith also emphasizes the fact that organizing the horses for the rally from a farm in Virginia had been complex but worth it because the horseback ride was "the most spectacular photo op of the event."⁵⁹² Together with attention to these organizational details, Smith's appreciation of the visuals of the protest highlights the strategic decisions behind Reject

and Protect. She recognizes the participants' clothes as both cultural items and props for political means—and effective ones at that.

Both the photograph from the National Geographic blog and Smith's framework articulate the protest as staged performance. Even though both focus on the farmer/rancher-side of the protest more than on the Native participation, the attention to the deliberate creation of visual spectacles highlights this protest as political action of savvy political actors. Articulating the CIA participants as political agents recognizes that they wielded their own image for a specific purpose rather than portraying the protest as a spectacular cultural event created by exotic Others, who are both mysterious and obscure. The stereotype, thus, is articulated as a means to an end, not a cultural reality. Recognizing the stereotypes as a useful tool highlights both their constructedness and the proficient media knowledge on the part of the CIA.

Intervening into the Generic Indian: Sovereign Natives

Even when authors do not pay specific attention to the spectacular, they articulate Native Americans as political agents through connections between sovereignty and spirituality and/or environmentalism. While the first part of the analysis highlighted how motivations for the protest were often grounded in questions of generic and stereotypical assumptions about Indians as naturally spiritual, these motivations can be rearticulated as a manifestation of sovereignty. Grounding Native motivations in Native nationhood fundamentally challenges the stereotype of the hapless hippie shaman concerned for Mother Nature. Instead, preventing the pipeline becomes an act of asserting the right to self-determination and to territorial sovereignty in Native lands.

Many news sources use substantial verbatim statements to give Native people space to explain their motivations as they relate to sovereignty, and these quotations implicitly or explicitly point toward government-to-government relationships that Native nations have with the US government. For example, the *Christian Science Monitor* quotes Rosebud tribal president Cyril Scott, who emphasized his “...outrage...at the lack of intergovernmental cooperation” in the planning phase of the pipeline.⁵⁹³ Implicitly, this government-to-government relationship is invoked in the many mentions of treaty rights in the press coverage. In a video by Vincent Schilling (St. Regis Mohawk), LaDuke says that the goal of the protest is “to show Obama and the world that Native Nations will stand firm in asserting our human and constitutionally protected treaty rights.”⁵⁹⁴ *Indian Country Media Network* echoes this sentiment in a statement by Tessa McLean, an Anishinaabe activist of the Colorado chapter of AIM and Idle No More. The pipeline, she argues “goes through Indian country, and we don’t want anything going through our country without [our] consent.”⁵⁹⁵ *Environment News Service* uses the verbatim words of Crystal Lameman, a member of the Beaver Lake Cree nation: “We have come to a point where we have no choice left but lift up our inherent treaty rights—our birthrights.”⁵⁹⁶ Heather Milton-Lightening, from the Pasqua First Nation in Saskatchewan, helped organize the CIA protest in Washington, DC. Canadian CBC News chose one of her statements that clearly outlines how Native sovereignty can be used as a political tool for environmental movements: “Indigenous rights, whether that’s treaty rights, inherent rights or aboriginal title [rights] are the last line of defense in terms of protecting the environment.”⁵⁹⁷ These clear assertions of the unique legal status that Native nations occupy in the United States move the discussion into the realm of political

power and influence. Constructing Native populations as equal players in the political arena complicates the Generic Indian as exclusively spiritually- and environmentally-minded.

Recognizing treaty rights and sovereignty makes impossible the reductive frame of the Ecological/Spiritual Indian as a New Age-y, noble hippie. However, avoiding the stereotype does not mean that spirituality and environmentalism cannot be discussed as part of indigenous assertions of sovereignty. On the contrary, spirituality becomes an argument for sovereignty. In the web-based Minnesota news site *Mintpress News*, Tom Poor Bear (Oglala) connects the two concepts: “They did not consult with us. ...Coming across our sacred lands, our burial lands, they never had respect to consult with us. They avoid tribes.”⁵⁹⁸ Writing for *CounterPunch*, Grossman quotes Idle No More co-founder Sylvia McAdam (Canadian Cree): “Indigenous sovereignty is all about protecting the land, the water, the animals and all the environment we share.”⁵⁹⁹ When articles recognize these connections between political rights and spirituality, readers must complicate their notions of the noble Ecological/Spiritual Indian.

Instead of exotic Others with a simplistic or even primitive concept of nature, Native people emerge here as adept political agents for whom the land—their sovereign territory—is the base of their political organization. This focus on political agency recognizes that Native peoples have political leverage through their treaty rights, which makes tribal nations valuable allies in environmental protest movements: They can involve local, state, and federal agencies in court in ways that non-Native communities simply cannot.⁶⁰⁰ The mere insistence on sovereignty and treaty rights, as well as demands to protect Native culture, tradition, religion, and values are “‘subversive’ by

definition” because they challenge US dominance and hegemony.⁶⁰¹ Claiming land and treaty rights is therefore both an assertion of sovereignty and a powerful protest tool.

When reporters engage Natives as political actors within the image event, they validate Native perspectives on political action. Moe, describing the co-existence of spirituality and political activism in the CIA, concludes that it is “possible that the Cowboy Indian Alliance offers a glimpse into what a spiritually integrated environmental movement might look like, honoring diversity while resisting cooptation.”⁶⁰²

Furthermore, reporters critically establish context that is not pulled from stereotypical assumptions or Western narratives. Instead, they reject simplistic notions of Indianness as framed by the Western by seriously engaging Native activists’ motivations. In the end, engaging these motivations contributes to rearticulating what it means to “be” Indian. Instead of relegating Native motivations to the spiritual realm conventionally articulated in connection to the Ecological/Spiritual Indian, Native motivations are contextualized in questions of sovereignty and self-determination—an assertion both of a unique legal status and of that legal status as a tool for access to public discourse. Therefore, the CIA as image event opened opportunities for press coverage that focused on Native Americans as complex modern people and political actors in the American public sphere. Articulating these updated identities requires reporters to establish at least some historical or contemporary context.

Western Interrupted: Historical and Contemporary Context

The Reject and Protect protest as image event drew attention to Native Americans as political players in the public sphere. Many writers seem to have assumed that in order to make this rather unusual Indianness legible, they needed to articulate it in context. As

soon as historical or contemporary context grounds the concept, many of the simplicities of the Western genre—the stereotypes, the narratives, the dichotomy—are demasked as anachronistic, making the politically active and complex Indian more credible. In this way, contextualizing the Reject and Protect protest is not just historical legwork. Instead, embedding it in its context underlines the fact that Native political action has a long history and is currently vibrant, which emphasizes the articulation of Indianness as politically active.

Many of the news articles did not explicitly describe the protest as a spectacularly staged drama. However, the dynamic of contrasting the impressions or “images” of the protest with the “real” context or history seems to point toward the fact that reporters interpreted the presented Indianness and/or the Western Cowboy/Indian dichotomy as a performance rather than as a cultural reality. In this regard, historical or current context emerges as the most effective tool to interrupt various outgrowths of the Western narrative, most noticeably the idea of the “unlikely alliance” that originates in the Cowboy/Indian dichotomy so foundational to the Western.

The Cowboy/Indian dichotomy proved to be easily dismantled by even the shallowest hints at historical context. For example, several authors explicitly relegate the notion of Cowboys and Indians as enemies to the past after invoking Western landscapes and scenes with fervor. Moe and Lenz’s above-cited narrative of the pseudo-Western shoot-out, followed by a thorough history of the CIA and alliances like it, also falls into this category. Another example is Amy Goodman’s article, in which she writes that out “in the sandhills and great plains of the West, residents who in the nineteenth century were more likely than not to be adversaries have joined together to confront TransCanada

Crop's aggressive plan to force its pipeline through their land.”⁶⁰³ This brief description invokes sweeping Western landscapes—a great opener to keep readers interested—while decisively pointing out that the adversary trope is outdated and does not capture contemporary reality.

Instead of highlighting the inherent difference of Indians/Cowboys or portraying them as “enemies” still today, these reports highlight the superficiality of the stereotype by transparently pointing it out and fact-checking it with historical narratives or contrasting it with descriptions of the political protests. This use of Western stereotypes is a rather elegant strategy to have your cake and eat it, too: Authors get the benefit of the Western image as attention material without perpetuating its pitfalls. Contextualization, in other words, makes impossible the reductive Western image because contextualization disallows audiences to interpret the Western image and the resulting Cowboy/Indian dichotomy as social reality.

The improbability of the CIA as summarized by the trope of the “unlikely alliance” experienced a similar deconstruction as the Cowboy/Indian dichotomy. As outlined in the first part of the analysis, reporters enjoyed using the idea of the improbability of the CIA as attention material. If the opener focusing on unlikeliness is rejected through historical or contemporary context, it is not necessarily doomed to repeat reductionist patterns but can instead highlight the absurdity of the concept. In the end, the contextualizations prove that Native-white alliances are rare neither historically nor currently. Many news outlets gave relatively comprehensive overviews of these predecessors or contemporaries of the CIA.

The most common contextualization focuses on embedding the CIA into a history of similar alliances. Zoltán Grossman delivers the most in-depth account of historical Native-white alliances in his article for *CounterPunch*, in which he first writes that “it’s not every day you see cowboys helping to set up a tipi encampment” and that the alliance seems “unlikely” because the two groups are “archetypical enemies of the American West.”⁶⁰⁴ He then immediately contradicts the idea of unlikeliness by outlining that alliances, in fact, have existed since “at least” the 1970s and are “part of a long, proud tradition that has been conveniently covered up in American history.”⁶⁰⁵ In this context, the CIA is “only the latest incarnation of alliances that previously fought a coal railroad and stopped a Depleted Uranium munitions testing range” in South Dakota. South Dakota, it turns out, has a long history of Native-white alliances, some of which were in fact called “Cowboy and Indian Alliance” as well.⁶⁰⁶ Other authors echo this theme and offer similarly extended historical context. Moe, for *Waging Nonviolence*, relies heavily on Grossman and criticizes the idea of alliances as “unprecedented.”⁶⁰⁷ For the National Geographic blog, Moe and Lenz postulate that the CIA is not an “anomaly.”⁶⁰⁸ The historical context of Native-white alliances deconstructs effectively the idea of “unlikeliness” and instead articulates the CIA as characteristic of rural populations asserting political power beyond ethnic differences.

The emphasis on current coalitions in order to reject the label “unlikely” is again most effectively demonstrated by Grossman, who embeds the 2014 CIA in a long list of other currently occurring alliances. Among the five examples he gives, one is the coalition between the Lummi Tribe and local environmental groups in the Pacific Northwest, who are working together to protect sacred burial grounds and fish habitat

from a coal terminal.⁶⁰⁹ In this context, calling the CIA “unlikely” seems almost funny. Instead, Grossman says, the CIA “represents not only a common stance against an oil pipeline, but (like previous alliances) has become a way to build connections between land-based communities that last beyond the immediate threat of oil spills and climate change.”⁶¹⁰ Thus, the context proves that the CIA is not only historically typical, it is also not unique contemporarily.

Embedding the CIA in its historical and contemporaneous context rejects society’s conceptualizations of the Generic Indian and instead articulates Native people as historical and contemporary political agents within the US public sphere. Like the explicit recognition of the protest as a spectacle, contextualizing the event pushes readers to recognize Native agency. Furthermore, it troubles the foundational tension of the Western narrative: by acknowledging the complex modern realities reflected in the image event, the idea of Natives and non-Natives as natural and eternal enemies becomes impossible. Rejecting the dynamic of Native Americans as symbols of the past and white communities as stand-ins for progress makes necessary an identity construction for the CIA participants as similar rather than dissimilar to each other.

Intervening into the Generic Indian: A Shared Identity

The press coverage gained through the picturesque spectacle on the Mall allowed Native protestors and their allies to articulate their identities in ways that rejected both the idea of generic Indianness and the Western frame. In the press coverage, this required recognition that the “disparate” groups were very much a functioning coalition. Three steps seem to be formative for portraying Native and white participants of the CIA as a united group: First, reporters must portray the alliance as functioning. Second, they must

acknowledge the differences between the participating communities without portraying them as the entrenched antagonism of the Western. In this way, reporters reflect the CIA's foundational assumption that being different does not mean being enemies. In order to affirm this non-antagonistic portrayal, these articles furthermore need to go beyond simple affirmations of common goals. Rather, they need to emphasize narratives of mutual interest, education, and progress toward an understanding between the groups.

A working coalition

First, reporters had to establish that the farmers and ranchers and Native Americans were indeed working as a functioning alliance. Several articles did this effectively by interviewing Native and white participants at length, both together and separately.⁶¹¹ The *Environment News Service* impressively attests to the uniting will behind the coalition by extensively quoting farmer Bob Allpress on his learning curve in all things Native.⁶¹² Even more effective than quotations are photographs that center on the cooperative nature of the protest. The CIA included several moments in the Reject and Protect encampment that created opportunities for Native and non-Native to present themselves in photographable situations together besides just at the rally. Especially effective at projecting the coalition are images of the inaugural events. For example, Moe and Lenz include an image of Dr. Gabrielle Tayac, a representative of the local Piscataway (and NMAI curator), accepting a gift from Bob Allpress in the opening ceremony.⁶¹³ Furthermore, rancher Tom Genung participated in a water ceremony in front of a row of cameras, as a picture in the National Geographic blog post shows.⁶¹⁴

The CIA thus staged moments that created opportunities for press coverage focusing on the joined work of the two “disparate” ethnicities. The ritual opening

ceremonies as well as joint Christian and Native prayers offered from the stage before the rally communicated clearly that farmers and rancher and Native Americans were united to reach their goal of opposing the Keystone pipeline, and this dynamic was mirrored in some of the press coverage.

Acknowledging difference

Having thus established the coalition as functioning, reporters also acknowledged the communities' differences. Since the articles could still focus on the alliance's uniting goals, both writers and interviewed participants generally do not shy away from describing Natives and non-Natives as different. For the *New York Times*, Mitch Smith writes that a group of Nebraska farmers, ranchers, Native Americans, and "city-dwelling environmentalists" have pulled together.⁶¹⁵ Author Cole Stangler describes a "disparate coalition" of "a more inclusive, environmentally and politically progressive pack of ranchers and farmers [who] joined up with tribal communities and activist allies."⁶¹⁶ The authors neither gloss over the gaps to be bridged nor describe the different groups as incompatible or naturally antagonistic. Instead, there is recognition that "disparate" groups can work toward the same goal together.

Emphasizing the goals as uniting does not require glossing over tensions or difficulties. The gaps between the two communities are openly discussed in several articles and focus on questions of racism, land possession, and a lack of cultural knowledge about Native American concerns and traditions. Statements like these allow for a complexity that transcends the dichotomy of the Western antagonism and recognizes Native-white relationships as complex. For example, Stangler cites one indigenous participant emphasizing that "[T]here's still a lot of racism out there...in the

border towns of Nebraska and South Dakota.” But “we agree on one thing. What I liked is the non-Indians said, ‘You guys, now we know what you’re talking about. We’ve got to protect our water.’ I love that, oh my god.”⁶¹⁷ One of his fellow protestors, Franklin & Marshall College senior Spencer Johnson, helped found his school’s fossil fuel divestment chapter in Pennsylvania. Stangler quotes Johnson saying that “we’re all part of this ecosystem. ...There’s going to be decimation of sacred land... That’s why I’m out here. I’m here because these people are the ones worth fighting for. We want to help them fight their fight.”⁶¹⁸ These statements underline that Native and white communities have differences and neither the journalists nor those interviewed pretend these differences are non-existent. However, instead of telling a story about unbridgeable chasms of misunderstandings and cultural difference, they tell a story of mutual education and progress that brought the communities closer together. As Tom Genung, a non-Native Nebraskan farmer, recognizes: “At the Protect the Sacred gathering [in 2013], we started counting up the sameness rather than the differences” between the two communities.⁶¹⁹ Furthermore, the differences are not described along reductionist ideas of Otherness that focus on Native nations as primitive, superstitious Spiritual Indians who are culturally unknowable and backward. Instead, Native people are given room to talk for themselves and in the process they become equal participants in the protest and in the news. This equal participation allows for an Indianness that is unusually complex and political.

Spirituality and land as common ground

Interestingly, spirituality became an aspect of sameness rather than difference in the context of the Reject and Protect protest. As discussed previously, protestors

articulated spirituality and environmentalism as intertwined with political sovereignty. Beyond that, spirituality or quasi-spiritual practice was articulated also as the basis for attachment to the land as a parallel between the communities. As Grossman argues in his 2017 monograph on Native-white alliances, sacred sites have the potential to become strong grounds for kinship between Native Americans and non-Natives, even though around the world, religious sites are more often cause for ethnic tensions (see Jerusalem).⁶²⁰ In the case of the CIA and its predecessors, however, Native sacred sites such as the Black Hills, the Sweet Grass Hills, and the land potentially marred by the pipeline, became literal grounds for identification: local whites and Natives “discover[ed] they hold common notions of sacredness or cultural significance of natural features.” This does not mean, Grossman clarifies, that the two communities have the same value attachment. Many white folks do not regard the land as “sacred” but value it infinitely more than corporations or government agencies, which allows them to identify with Native values.⁶²¹ In other words, it is easier for white farmers and ranchers and Native people to find the similarities in their attitudes toward land than their differences.

Within the CIA and the resulting press coverage, talking about land became another opportunity to address sovereignty and Native history. Although centering on similar attitudes toward the soil allowed an articulation of the ethnic groups as similar, it also meant that very old and very real conflicts about territory had to be addressed. After all, not only the land that the pipeline crosses but also the land owned and worked by the farmers and ranchers of the CIA used to be Indian land. Moe summarizes this “elephant in the room” in a question: “What happens when a rancher speaks of ‘my land’ or ‘my private property’ to a room full of people who believe that the land was stolen and never

really belonged to them in the first place? How to begin to address the competing claims to land that is central to the identity and culture of both groups?”⁶²²

During the protest, the CIA projected a front united in their shared love for the land and the sentiment of stewardship for future generations. Behind closed doors at coalition meetings, however, Casey Camp-Horinek reports that the Native participants directly pointed out to the non-Native protestors “how the land that they live on now became land that they could buy and sell. It was our blood. ... It’s part of their history as well as ours. And it has to be brought out and spoken of, or else there isn’t an alliance.”⁶²³ Incorporating this statement in an article highlights that the land question gets to the heart of Native identity and history, and therefore, draws the readers’ attention to the legacy of colonialism as one of the central tensions within the coalition. The fact that mainstream news outlets addressed these questions is an achievement for the Native participants of the CIA, and the fact that the Native participants ultimately opted to push the reckoning with a colonial past to a later point in time in order to preserve the coalition does not diminish the accomplishment. Audiences were still informed about these issues.

Toward an understanding

Instead of centralizing the territorial conflict, Native participants emphasized the ongoing efforts of mutual understanding. Indigenous Canadian organizer Clayton Thomas-Muller emphasized that the alliance is an “important step towards reconciling” the violent history of colonialism but that an organized “framework that effectively addresses racism, oppression, misogyny, and colonialism” has not been established yet.⁶²⁴ Similarly, author Kristin Moe concludes that while “any real dialogue about colonialism has been set aside for the moment, it has by no means disappeared.” In 2014,

however, the attitude among indigenous participants often centered on the idea of stewardship of the land because this focus circumvents the question of ownership but maintains the idea of responsibility: “the land doesn’t belong to us—we’re just caretakers.”⁶²⁵

Momentarily setting aside the painful legacy of colonialism allowed the two communities to use land ownership as a uniting instead of a dividing factor. For both white farmers/ranchers and Native nations, the feeling toward their lands transcends property rights and “goes far deeper, down below the grass and soil to the very roots of their identities as either cowboys or Indians, to a sense that they are irrevocably tied to this land.”⁶²⁶ Both communities want to protect the land they own, individually or collectively, which unites them in their efforts to block the Keystone pipeline. Jacqueline Keeler, writing for *Indian Country Today*, summarized the sentiment by saying that “what made longtime enemies” was “their ties to the land. They were all the people of the land, and the Maka [Mother Earth] brought them together as relatives on it.”⁶²⁷ This sentiment of mutual understanding was brought into conversation with colonialism in a reconciliatory manner by Ponca Tribal Chairman Larry Wright in 2017, after President Trump reversed President Obama’s decision to stop the Keystone pipeline. “Knowing how painful it was to have that land taken away from us,” he said, “we can empathize with those famers that own that land today. We know what it’s like to be told somebody’s going to take your property away.”⁶²⁸

The CIA image event as a functioning coalition between white farmers and ranchers and Native Americans therefore created moments for mutual understanding that dislocate the narrative of righteous expansion. Indeed, the CIA seems typical for Native-

white alliances in the way that it created opportunities for empathy between the participating communities about painful histories of land loss. In the mid-1990s, Ho-Chunk people joined white farmers to oppose Air National Guard low-level flights and bombing ranges in Wisconsin. Grossman reports that Ho-Chunk Nation legislator Ona Garvin told white landowners that the Ho-Chunk could empathize with them because of the long history of government policies that meant land loss for tribal nations. “Now it’s the Department of Defense that’s taking your land. So we understand where you are,” Garvin continued. Evaluating the impact of that statement in an interview with Grossman he said: “That’s what really hit them [the white farmers]... That did a lot more for cultural understanding than if we had sat there and talked to them until we were blue in the face.”⁶²⁹ Similarly to Larry Wright in 2014, this emphasis on empathy works twofold. It acknowledges the pain of the white farming community about impending land loss while accentuating the premise for this understanding: Native communities have lived through this history of land loss for generations because of farming communities like the one they cooperated with for the CIA.

In the end, neither community stands much to gain from pretending that differences do not exist or are not painful. One of the subheadings in Moe’s article summarizes the motivations for the CIA’s formation in a pointed one-liner: “The nightmare that’s fostering kinship.”⁶³⁰ Without the joint cause to protest the pipeline, clearly the two communities would have little or no cause to come together or to negotiate their differences. In this context, talking about differences is not divisive but educational or maybe even uniting. In his study of Native-white alliances, Grossman comes to the conclusion that emphasizing “unity over diversity can actually be harmful to

building deep, lasting alliances between native and non-native communities. History shows the opposite is true: The stronger that native peoples assert their nationhood, the stronger their alliances with non-Indian neighbors.”⁶³¹ Or, as Mohawk poet and visual artist Alex Jacob summed it up in his 2015 article: “The Cowboy Indian Alliance remains an ‘Unlikely Alliance’ between once-rivals over the same land but has now become a way to build connections between these land-based communities.”⁶³² One of the protestors, Faith Spotted Eagle, concurred and emphasized that Native-white alliances can begin the process of decolonizing Native lands and of educating white people’s “hearts and minds.”⁶³³

And certainly, it seems that communication fostered a better understanding indeed. Moe offers a story about Bob and Nancy Allpress, fourth-generation white ranchers from Nebraska (on what used to be Lakota land), who joined Jane Kleeb’s organization to oppose TransCanada and the planned pipeline. Allpress describes himself as a “redneck Republican” with a military background and admits that he was a little out of his comfort zone, “standing there in cowboy boots and a hat next to people in peace necklaces and hemp shirts.”⁶³⁴ However, when Bold Nebraska began cooperating with South Dakotan tribes, he was convinced. The Allpresses went to tribal council meetings, rallies, public hearings, and wrote op-eds to Nebraska papers. “It’s been...a good experience,” Bob said. “We’ve enjoyed the hell out of it.”⁶³⁵ Allpress explicitly recognizes not only his learning process but also the presence of difference. The learning process prevents the differences between himself and the Native and activist communities from becoming a barrier to cooperation.

Nevertheless, understanding remains a continuous and sometimes contentious process. At the Saturday rally of the Reject and Protect protest in April 2014, speaker Wizipan Garriott (Rosebud) had to ask white protestors from the crowd (not CIA members) to please remove “war paint” from their faces because face paint is reserved for battle, not peaceful protests, and needs to be earned before being worn.⁶³⁶ I was standing behind a white couple with red paint on their faces at the time that he made his very kind and educational request from stage, and the two—and several others—proceeded to immediately do as asked to, with somewhat heated cheeks.

This episode highlights the complexity of the CIA as an image event. On the one hand, it clearly illustrates that even well-meaning non-Native allies can unwittingly buy into one of the stereotypical ideas promoted in Western movies: the face paint that has adorned representations of war-lusty savages for centuries. On the other hand, and to the defense of the non-Native allies, many aspects of the CIA’s protest did little to discourage that association. The name, the logo, and the way in which the CIA presented itself both during the encampment and the protest march in April 2014 were reminiscent of Western imagery by design beyond reasonable doubt.

Conclusion

Throughout the analysis it has become clear that Native American people who want to engage in political protest are in a tight spot. Where (many) other protest groups have avenues for political participation that do not require them to reduce themselves to their ethnicity, Native Americans have few other choices than playing into mainstream imaginations of Indianness in order to achieve attention for their grievances. This means that Native protestors always lose: Either they refuse to encourage stereotypical frames

and therefore do not receive coverage; or they encourage stereotypical frames to gain press attention and accept the negative associations. Even though the CIA deliberately staged its protest as an image event, the use of Indian images is both a conscious decision *and* a necessity. In the process, the press coverage reduced cultural expressions that are symbols of survivance to a shorthand image legible in the dominant publics.

The CIA as image event, thus, lead to press coverage that encouraged the Western frame and tropes of generic Indianness to make sense of Native American protest *and* opened opportunities for interrupting the Western frame and renegotiating Native identities as modern, political, and complex. The press focused on visual and narrative tropes that perpetuated and affirmed the Western frames of the Generic Indian, Indian Warrior, and Ecological/Spiritual Indian. The nonviolent nature of the protest made impossible the Militant Indian frame often used for Native protestors, which meant that the CIA image event opened spaces for rearticulations of Native identities as political and sovereign.

The CIA as image event also drew attention to the fact that key to avoiding reductive, legible Indianness lies neither in purging from the articles all things conventionally perceived to be Indian nor in expecting Native Americans to abstain from cultural expression that could be interpreted as stereotypes by the press or public. Instead, the key lies in the unsurprising but very effective strategy of representing a variety of Native identity expressions. Native men with black braids, feather bonnets, beaded shirts, and chokers on horseback do not have to be avoided at all costs. Reporters, photographers, and editors merely need to represent Indianness as more than conventional stereotypes, which some of the highlighted articles did very successfully

through various strategies: by photographically portraying diverse crowds;⁶³⁷ by portraying Indianness without conventionally accepted markers of Indianness;⁶³⁸ and by focusing on functions and/or titles of specific people instead of identifying them as Generic Indians.⁶³⁹ These strategies renegotiate what it means to “look like an Indian” beyond the picturesque performances through which the CIA attracted press coverage in the first place. Covering a range of Native identities expressed at the march meant that the people on horses and with headdresses symbolized one way of being “authentically” Native American among many, not the only. Furthermore, those expressions of Native identity that could be read by reporters and the public as stereotypical created the press attention that ultimately led to a renegotiation of Native identities as decisively modern, decisively complex, and decisively political.

In many ways, it is not surprising that not all news outlets or reporters managed to grapple with these complex issues enough to avoid Western frames, reductive Indianness, and the Cowboy/Indian dichotomy. Interestingly enough, the two iterations—the image event as either supportive or disruptive of the Western genre—cannot be easily attributed to news outlets with specific leanings *or* to single articles. Instead both dynamics exist within the same articles, across all types of news coverage. Mainstream and “alternative” news outlets, and even national and local news outlets, cover Native issues in similar ways. Thus, there are no easy differentiations between the dominant press; a more leftish, liberal, environmentally-inclined press; or local news outlets, which sometimes treat local Native Americans as part of their own community.⁶⁴⁰ As Mary Ann Weston observed, there seems to be a relationship between employing reductive images and “the distance of a publication from the story.”⁶⁴¹ However, this does not hold up in regards to the CIA. In

general, the only category of news articles that did noticeably better than the rest was Native American news, unsurprisingly. Considering that Native Americans have largely been excluded from mainstream news coverage, their own outlets actively and consciously push back against exclusion and bias.⁶⁴² But otherwise, the analysis clearly shows that reports contained both reductive, harmful, stereotypical depictions of Native Americans and complex representations of modern motivations and identities—often within one article!

In general, this mixture is a positive sign: Most news outlets, authors, and editors recognized some aspects of complexity. In many ways, therefore, the Native participants' self-portrayal that toyed with Western imagery and stereotypical tropes was advantageous to the CIA in at least two respects. First, the CIA achieved to make themselves newsworthy. In the vein of DeLuca's image event, the CIA played into press conventions and achieved press coverage for their organization, the camp and rally in DC, and the concert in Nebraska. Second, within this coverage, Native American protestors managed to create spaces to explain the complex connections between spirituality, land, environmentalism, and sovereignty in their own words—issues which are otherwise rarely explained in the public sphere and of central importance to Native American identities today.

Yet, the question of newsworthiness highlights the fine line that Native American protestors need to walk in the public sphere. As outlined in connection to both AIM and the CIA, the press tends to engage in reductive stereotypes in order to achieve “newsworthy” Indian images: racial and cultural Otherness, exoticism, and the Cowboy/Indian dichotomy all do not enhance knowledge of Native issues in non-Native

audiences.⁶⁴³ Because of the visual reduction to Western tropes, press coverage generally located the newsworthiness in the alliance between Natives and non-Natives rather than their arguments against the Keystone XL pipeline. The image event eclipsed the issue, as DeLuca says often happens with staged performances of radical groups because symbolic action “places the focus on the image events themselves instead of the underlying issues that prompted the groups to protest in the first place.”⁶⁴⁴

Sadly, this dynamic seems to be currently unavoidable for Native American groups in the American public sphere, as the 2016 NoDAPL protests also show. Because the goals of radical groups run counter to the economic interests of corporations, they are mostly framed negatively.⁶⁴⁵ Interestingly, the CIA mostly escaped if not reductive stereotypes then at least the framing as militant antagonists, which usually renders the cause as fraught. Instead, the CIA’s cause emerges from the news coverage as a legitimate concern within discourses about rural communities, Native sovereignty, the influence of big corporations, and environmental concerns. In many ways, this acceptance sets the CIA apart from other recent Native protests, such as the NoDAPL protests in 2016, where press coverage swiftly turned against the Native protestors. I want to briefly explore several implications of this difference here.

Negative frames dominated the press coverage of the 2016 protests in North Dakota on the Standing Rock reservation. When the media began covering the protest after roughly six months, the peaceful Native protestors were often portrayed as “violent warriors” standing in the way of progress.⁶⁴⁶ Much of the non-Native press reports covered the months-long protests through the lens of exoticism and militant activism, focusing on colorful displays of cultural heritage and violent clashes with state police and

marshals.⁶⁴⁷ How did NoDAPL end up being framed in similar ways as AIM at Wounded Knee in 1973 while the CIA protests seemingly hit a sweet spot?

I want to outline three points that likely let the CIA avoid the militant frame. First, the CIA articulated themselves as citizens partaking in public discourse by the very notion of place. Whereas NoDAPL and AIM protestors chose to occupy the contentious sites in question, the CIA inserted itself into the symbolic space of the National Mall. Americans are used to seeing competing narratives vying for attention on that specific stretch of grass.⁶⁴⁸ Second, the removal from the pipeline construction site also meant that there were no violent clashes between law enforcement and protestors that the press could have focused on. This made the Militant Indian frame even more farfetched.

Lastly, and most importantly, the alliance with white farmers and ranchers made framing the Native protestors as militant radicals even less likely. Native Americans, as Coward argues, are usually defined in their relationship to white people within the news.⁶⁴⁹ In this case, the Native protestors are allied with an essential symbol of American identity, bringing them closer to the center of American society. The “cowboys” represent an agrarian ideal that mellowed both the Otherness of the participating Indians and the radicalness of their demands. After all, farmers and ranchers are Us and the CIA successfully renegotiated the Cowboy/Indian dichotomy as an alliance, not an antagonism.

This rearticulation broadens concepts of Native identity. Coward argues that normally, when the press defines Native Americans in terms of their relationship to white Americans, that relationship is often centered on “suspicion, violence, and fear.”⁶⁵⁰ However, in this case, the relationship to white Americans—“cowboys”—was decisively

positive. The cowboys legitimized the Indians. Together with the decisively peaceful execution of their protest, the farmers' presence precluded the fateful frame of the Militant Warrior, the enemy of the United States—a frame that the NoDAPL protestors did not avoid. Instead, the CIA projected “positive” Indianness without inviting purely regressive and reductive press reports. This focus on “positive” Indianness highlights two things. First, the question of nobility and ignobility, of Good and Bad Indians, continues to be relevant for Native protestors. Because of ingrained frames of Noble and Ignoble Indians, Native protestors have to tread carefully to avoid associations with ignobility in order to maintain public sympathy. Second, the fact that Natives need non-Native allies in order to avoid radical frames and associations with ignobility highlights a fundamental problem concerning non-white protest action in the United States. Ethnic minorities' protests are respected and covered as legitimate only as long as the protest format corresponds to forms of protest acceptable to dominant culture. If people of color step outside the conventions of what the mainstream deems “nonviolent,” they are publicly castigated regardless of who they are, what they are protesting, and whether they caused or didn't cause material damages. Even nonviolent strategies can be framed as transgressions and acts of militancy. Even Colin Kaepernick's nonviolent protest of taking a knee during the national anthem before NFL football games, or Bree Newsome's nonviolent take-down of the confederate flag on South Carolina State House grounds were often covered through that frame.

This dynamic indicates that the CIA achieved “positive” news coverage because they carefully projected their own image in frames already sufficiently contained to fit the expectations of the mainstream for Noble Indians. These frames echoed generic

Indianness in that they focused on the visuals of the Indian Warrior or the nobility of the Ecological/Spiritual Indian. The updated version of the Western frame is, thus, truly a double-edged sword. It allows Native Americans to project rearticulated notions of Indianness—but only those that are already acceptable in the mainstream.

CHAPTER 3: NATIVE IDENTITIES AT THE NMAI

When the NMAI opened its door to the public in 2014, it was anticipated as a “museum different”—a museum that would highlight decolonizing practices and re-envision and remake museum paradigms; a museum that would be indigenous; a museum that would fill a gap in American public discourse. In many ways that is exactly what the museum does today. Visiting the NMAI on its prominent space on the National Mall, it becomes clear only a few steps into the entrance rotunda that this museum looks and feels different, and that it engages visitors in a different way. The very existence of the NMAI is a triumph for Native American people across the United States and the continent. Its founding in 1989 and opening in 2004 acknowledged and enhanced the increasing influence of Native Americans in the public sphere.⁶⁵¹ For indigenous nations, the NMAI continues to be a chance to take back control over their cultural heritage and their political rights.⁶⁵² In its display and engagement of modern Native peoples, it is a “testament to Indians’ ability to adapt and change yet remain true to the core values of their tribal nations regardless of change.”⁶⁵³ For audiences, it is a site that successfully challenges conventional assumptions about Native cultures and history, and leads visitors to interrogate their own biases.⁶⁵⁴ Despite criticism and suggestions for improvement in the first year of its opening, Chickasaw scholar Amanda Cobb wrote that “Native Americans have ingeniously turned what has historically been an instrument of colonization and dispossession—a national museum—into an instrument of self-definition and cultural continuance.”⁶⁵⁵ Higher praise is hard to imagine.

Clearly, for a museum of this scale and prominence, expectations remain high. Fifteen years after its opening, scholars still contest what educational responsibility the

NMAI has in the context of widespread misconceptions about Native Americans in the American public. The museum sees itself as a corrective to popular conceptions of Native Americans. In a promotional letter of the inception stage, the NMAI proposed that its mission was

to change forever the way Americans view the Native peoples of this Hemisphere. To correct misconceptions. To demonstrate how Indian cultures are enriching the world. ... And to promote a new dialogue between Indians and non-Indians. ... In fact, the Museum will create a bridge between historical objects and more modern material so that both are made more powerful and relevant.⁶⁵⁶

The overwhelming majority of NMAI critics concurs that the museum's purpose is educational in this way. For example, Tracy Teslow says that NMAI is "designed to challenge visitors' stereotypes and misconceptions about Native Americans, stressing diversity, resilience, and survivance among the multitude of American indigenous peoples."⁶⁵⁷ Susan Berry calls it a "place where contemporary Native voices introduce visitors to new ways of thinking about Native American history and cultures and where exhibits challenge popular stereotypes of a 'generic Native American'."⁶⁵⁸ Myla Carpio (Jicarilla Apache/Laguna/Isleta) outlines NMAI's task as educating "a largely ignorant public" in order to contradict what the American public has been taught.⁶⁵⁹ Miranda Brady postulates that the NMAI "sees itself as response to the many years of the iconographic American Indian embedded in popular consciousness" and media.⁶⁶⁰ Joanne Barker (Delaware) and Clayton Dumont (Klamath) claim that the NMAI clearly wants to disarticulate stereotypical Indianness.⁶⁶¹ Jolene Rickard (Tuscarora) emphasizes that the NMAI "want[s] to further complicate and undermine the ongoing stereotyping of Native

peoples.⁶⁶² Clearly, critics have high expectations of the NMAI's attempt to change public images of Native Americans.

All NMAI exhibits exist in this highly scrutinized context of the first national museum presenting indigenous perspectives. Audiences who know the NMAI as a “museum different” and assume that it should disrupt traditional museal paradigms and project new ways of looking at Native identities might expect individual exhibits to fulfill these same expectations. Indeed, in the case of *Americans*, the focus of this chapter, the exhibit promises to “highlight... the ways in which American Indians have been part of the nation's identity since before the country began.”⁶⁶³

In some contradiction to my own first impression, the press reviews for the exhibit endorsed *Americans* as a valuable addition to the NMAI and praised it for its take on Native American images in the American public. Art critic Peter Schjeldahl for the *New Yorker* applauds the object choice, display, and texts.⁶⁶⁴ Edward Rothstein, critic at large for the *Wall Street Journal*, enthusiastically describes *Americans* as “open-ended” and a “breakthrough for this museum.”⁶⁶⁵ In the *Washington Post*, Philip Kennicott congratulates NMAI for tackling a difficult topic without being “tendentious or bland.”⁶⁶⁶ For some critics—Carolina Miranda from the *Los Angeles Times*, Schjeldahl, and Kennicott—*Americans* created discomfort and dissonance that they argue disrupted stereotypical and simplistic Indian images.⁶⁶⁷ Rothstein saw the exhibit's success in the way it offers a reconciliatory message: He articulates as “progress” the first person plural pronouns to refer to “all American, including Indians,” congratulating the curators for not dismissing but examining “a complex relationship” between Native and non-Native Americans and moving away from the “identity museum” that produced Indianness as a

“formulaic cartoon.”⁶⁶⁸ Thus, these well-informed (as far as I can tell non-Native) cultural critics walked away with some very good insights—including Rothstein’s implicit understanding of survivance.

These take-aways from *Americans* matter. The NMAI is the most visible official voice in US public discourses about Native Americans. For two reasons, it is vital to look at how the NMAI articulates identities and histories. First, the NMAI is the only museum nation-wide that attempts to represent Native Americans to the American public and it is well-known for its efforts to do so from a Native perspective. This status creates opportunities to analyze how Native peoples choose to tell their stories on a national stage.⁶⁶⁹ Second, as part of the Smithsonian, the NMAI has a wider reach than most museums in terms of audience sizes and types.⁶⁷⁰ Beyond international tourists, the NMAI’s audience are “voting citizens of our country” who, through their political participation, influence Native issues from land and water rights to gambling regulations. They are also “schoolboard members who approve curricula,” “senators, judges, and governmental leaders,” and, most importantly Native kids from urban areas and reservations.⁶⁷¹ Thus, the NMAI is one of the most visible educational and research tool available for Native American peoples in the United States. Taken together, these two dynamics lend the NMAI a certain authority within public discourse. Because the NMAI claims to represent Native peoples from their own perspective and in their own voices, “many...look to the exhibits of the NMAI as the authority on Native people, replacing...existing interpretations with those offered in NMAI.”⁶⁷² This position within public discourse makes the NMAI almost impossible to sidestep when it comes to Native representations in the public sphere.

Despite its Native-centric approach, the NMAI does not exist outside public discourse, and public discourse is still heavily influenced by stereotypical Indian images grounded in the popular Western. This chapter therefore seeks to interrogate how the NMAI situates itself within discourses surrounding Indianness both in its function as a national institution and as a museum focusing on Native practices and perspectives. Interest in these tensions guides my research questions for this chapter: How does the NMAI as a national museum negotiate Native American identities in *Americans*? How does *Americans* reject or confirm stereotypical Indian images from the Western genre?

Even after careful interrogation of my own expectations of museums in general and the NMAI/*Americans* in particular, I have to argue that *Americans* affirms rather than interrupts images and narratives prevalent in the mainstream.⁶⁷³ Importantly, these images and narratives do not result from individual curatorial decisions but from the NMAI's constraints as a national museum. In order to argue this, I establish the framework for this chapter by showing that the NMAI acts as a national museum despite its connections to Native communities. Because of this position, the NMAI cannot meaningfully disrupt national self-concepts and founding myths but instead must fit itself, however uncomfortably, into master narratives that downplay the effects of expansionism on Native populations. The first consequence of the national frame, I argue, is an articulation of Americanness that subsumes Indianness. This incorporation of Indianness into Americanness enables a reconciliatory rather than disruptive perspective on Native-white relationships, American history, and dominant self-concepts. Furthermore, the national frame encourages an articulation of a cultural identity for Native Americans that overlaps significantly with Western stereotypes. The second

consequence, I argue, is that the national framework requires the exhibit to avoid any in-depth discussion of colonialism as the defining aspect of Native-white relationships historically and contemporaneously. Instead, *Americans* must render colonialism invisible and therefore absolves the American public of colonial responsibility. However, colonialism forms part of the defining context for the Indian images on display. Its absence in *Americans* enables an interpretive openness that allows audiences to walk away with the assumption that, ultimately, stereotypical Indian images are entertaining and not harmful.

I focus exclusively on the exhibit *Americans* because exhibits are strategically planned utterances of museums.⁶⁷⁴ The most visible part of museums, exhibits form the heart of the museums they constitute both for visitors and curators.⁶⁷⁵ As Bruce Ferguson points out in his article “Exhibition Rhetorics,” exhibitions are the “speech acts” of museums.⁶⁷⁶ For a comprehensive analysis, I will position the exhibition in its institutional context. But especially in the absence of an overarching narrative for the NMAI, focusing on one exhibit allows me to analyze a unit strategically planned and executed by curators.⁶⁷⁷ Furthermore, the topic and scope of *Americans* fits well with this dissertation’s topic. Centering on how “Americans” look at Native Americans and articulate and rearticulate Indianness in specific ways at specific times, the exhibition illustrates how Indianness is constituted in the American public sphere.

Framing the NMAI

Despite the innovative attempt to create a Native voice through community curation, the NMAI functions more as a national museum than as an indigenous museum. In order to make this dynamic visible, I situate the NMAI in the context of forming part

of the Smithsonian Institution and balance this with a discussion of curatorial practices meant to create a Native voice.

There are different ways in which museums can be “national.”⁶⁷⁸ As Elizabeth Weiser argues in her 2017 monograph *Museum Rhetorics*, audiences often perceive museums as national when they have the word “national” in the titles; museum officials perceive museums as national when they are state-funded.⁶⁷⁹ Regardless of who deems museums national, national museums represent the nation to itself and others: They negotiate what the “nation was, is, and ought to be.”⁶⁸⁰ As such, a national museum is a “knowledge-based socio-political institution, with corresponding collections and displays that ultimately claim, articulate and represent dominant national values and myths.”⁶⁸¹ As Weiser argues, this process of articulation and renegotiation makes museums fundamentally rhetorical: National museums are “those places that both reflect and promote a national identity with which some significant portion of the nation agrees.” In this sense, “national museums are national because they say they are and their citizens agree.”⁶⁸²

National museums can therefore speak to their constituents—“the nation”—from a powerful platform. They participate in public meaning-making processes as influential players. In contrast to community or indigenous museums, the platform from which national museums speak is state-sanctioned, accepted by the public, and amplified because of the space they occupy in the public sphere. Speaking with this amplified voice, national museums participate in the construction of national identities and narratives. At the nexus of official and vernacular memory, national museums take part in the political discussion about the most fundamental questions in the existence of

societies: identity formation, organization and power structure of a society, the meaning of the past and the present.⁶⁸³ With the authority and power of “official ‘carriers’ of historical narratives,” national museums can articulate and reinforce ideas about the national character.⁶⁸⁴ At the same time, national museums must also reflect current national ideas about the collective self.

This power and responsibility to speak to the national narratives has consequences for which stories get told. Far from being objective representations of history or anthropology, museums speak from subject positions. In fundamental ways, the perspectives presented in museums are contingent on the beliefs of “those who fund, create, authorize the exhibitions,” and therefore it matters whether museums are funded and organized locally, regionally, or nationally.⁶⁸⁵ Because of their socio-economic situation, national museums speak from the center to the center and/or periphery. Therefore, they tend to affirm the privilege of the ruling classes to the detriment of minorities and other under-represented populations.⁶⁸⁶ Because national museum can affirm master narratives by reflecting preferred readings of historical and cultural information, they are powerful tools for colonial readings.⁶⁸⁷ Offering “officially sanctioned narratives of history and culture,” national museums like the Smithsonian “shape the cultural memory of U.S. citizens” and “act in and promote the best interest of the nation-state.”⁶⁸⁸

In the United States, the foundational narratives that are central to national identities, histories, and myth construct the arc of US history as inevitable, benevolent, and progress-oriented. The idea of the frontier and the myth of Manifest Destiny place indigenous conquest, and therefore Native peoples, at the heart of the master narrative; at

the same time, they portray expansionism as an element of nation-building rather than colonialism or imperialism.⁶⁸⁹ Within these discourses, national museums emerge as perfect carriers for colonial narratives. Like all national stories, these colonial master narratives and myths adapt to their times. However, stories of the frontier, the clash between cultures, the forging of an American identity, and the expansion process as Manifest Destiny still hold sway today.

The NMAI as an Indigenous Institution

Clearly, national myths such as these are unlikely to be on display in indigenous museums. Indigenous museums are most often tribal museums and as such are locally organized, locally funded, and run by groups that are unlikely to embrace American history as a continuous and benevolent march toward progress. Instead, indigenous memories and narratives can constitute what Thomas Dunn calls “counter-memories” or counter-narratives.⁶⁹⁰ Corresponding to their indigenous constituencies and audiences, the narratives within these museums pertain closely to the group in questions and reflect “specific Native values and knowledge systems.⁶⁹¹ While the NMAI is beholden to Native ways of knowledge, the museum clearly does not represent a single tribe. Instead, it is a multi-tribal and therefore multi-vocal museum.⁶⁹² Ira Jacknis calls the NMAI a “kind of national tribal museum,” and Tracy Teslow agrees, saying that the “NMAI tries to do on a national scale what tribal museums try on a local level.”⁶⁹³

The NMAI is, thus, an indigenous museum only in some respects. For example, in terms of personnel, the museum follows the lead of tribal museums. The establishing legislation called for half of the museum’s trustees to be Native American, meaning that a significant portion of guiding positions are in Native hands.⁶⁹⁴ The same is true for

general staff: The board and senior administration are largely made up of Native Americans; non-Native scholars and museum practitioners have joined the staff and consulted.⁶⁹⁵ Furthermore, the NMAI is clearly indigenous in the sense that it strives to speak about Native issues in a “Native voice,” as founding director W. Richard West (Cheyenne and Arapaho) outlined in 2000.⁶⁹⁶

The most convincing argument for the NMAI as an indigenous museum is the practice of community collaboration. Like questions of hiring Native people, the idea of collaborative curation was established in the foundational Congressional Act, which mandated that the NMAI should be a “living memorial to Native Americans and their traditions.”⁶⁹⁷ This has most effectively been realized through community curation, which was initialized by West, who insisted on community consultations and established community involvement and service programs to integrate Native knowledge into NMAI.⁶⁹⁸ Importantly, collaborative curation reflects the diversity of Native cultures by stressing a multi-vocal approach that captures multiple perspectives.⁶⁹⁹ The NMAI was much praised for the realization of community curation as an innovative practice even though not all its results were uniformly appreciated.⁷⁰⁰

What ultimately weakens the status of the NMAI as a museum speaking with an indigenous voice is the fact that the community-curation process is used only for a part of the exhibits. Despite publicity efforts to portray the NMAI as a community-curated museum, it seems more accurate to point to specific community-curated exhibits. In fact, UCSC professor Amy Lonetree (Ho-Chunk) points out, “curators had control over a significant portion of the [opening] galleries” and it is “more accurate to say that in many sections of the museum the content reflects what the NMAI curators and not the

communities wanted to convey.”⁷⁰¹ In her in-depth study of curational practices at the NMAI, Jennifer A. Shannon points out that the Curational Department, which was mostly responsible for community-curation processes, was abolished in 2006.⁷⁰² Only one of the community-curated opening exhibits, *Our Universes*, remains open at this time. The other exhibits are attributed to single curators or unlikely to be community-curated because of scope and topic.⁷⁰³

These practices raise serious doubts about whether community curation is the dominant curational practice at the NMAI, which ultimately puts a big question mark behind the assertion that the NMAI is representative of indigenous voices. Clearly, the curators are majority Native American, but they are also museum professionals and, as individuals, not representative of “Native” or “tribal voices.” These limitations do not mean that the NMAI has no claim to a Native perspective. However, it means that the exhibits seem more dominated by traditional museum paradigms than the NMAI’s promotional discourses otherwise suggest. These curtailed practices of community curation therefore limit the NMAI’s Native character such that its Native voice is compromised.

The NMAI as a National Museum

The strongest argument for the NMAI as a national institution is its embeddedness into the Smithsonian Institution. The NMAI’s founding law, Public Law 101-185, integrated the NMAI into the Smithsonian Institution and identified the George Gustav Heye collection as its foundational collection. It also demanded that the NMAI raise one third of its building costs from private sources (roughly \$36 million).⁷⁰⁴ The remainder was funded by Congress.⁷⁰⁵ This plan created a funding situation in which the museum is

both beholden to the state and to private stake holders, such as Ted Turner or Orion Pictures, who are in their own ways both responsible for disseminating exactly those stereotypes that the NMAI purports to address: Orion Pictures distributed *Dances with Wolves* while the museum was in its founding stage; Ted Turner owned the Atlanta Braves from the mid-1970s to the mid-2000s.⁷⁰⁶ Whereas Donald Fixico called the congressional funding “inexcusably overdue,” the funding situation makes the NMAI unquestionably dependent and answerable to the very state and institutions that are responsible for the long history of oppression of Native Americans.⁷⁰⁷ While there is debate about the meaning of “national” in the museum’s name, there can be no doubt, that the NMAI is a state institution both in terms of its funding and its public perception.⁷⁰⁸

In recognition of the indigenous aspects of the NMAI, the museum is most adequately described as a mix of museum types and modes. However, the Smithsonian creates an overpowering national framework for the museum which constraints the things the NMAI can say. This framework does not preclude efforts of the NMAI to participate in the decolonization of museums. After all, national museums can participate in the new museal paradigms. The decolonization effort charges museums with confronting their own institutional histories as well as the history and legacy of colonialism, and ultimately shifts thinking about politics of representation, identity, and knowledge toward creating more reflexive museologies.⁷⁰⁹ In its entirety, the Native-dominated workforce at the NMAI inserts into the US museum scene a visible decolonization effort.⁷¹⁰ Regardless, the Smithsonian framework limits the way that the NMAI can portray American and Native identities.

The national framework implicates the NMAI in several ways. First, it tasks the NMAI with trying to bring down the master's house with the master's tools. On the one hand, the NMAI as a national museum must engage in the epideictic rhetoric Weiser argues is characteristic for national institutions.⁷¹¹ On the other hand, the NMAI must recognize the colonial legacies of museums. These legacies highlight a contentious relationship between indigenous people and these institutions. European and American museums appeared at the same time and in connection to colonialism in the nineteenth century, and took part in and legitimized the cultural, spiritual, and material dispossession of Native Americans.⁷¹² Native-themed exhibitions were often housed in natural history museums, associating Native peoples with fossils and taxidermized animals. This association affirmed the racist notion that Native Americans are part of the “natural” rather than the human world.⁷¹³ Fortifying ideas of racial hierarchies within which Natives ranked at the very bottom, museums were in a constant mutual reinforcement process with governmental assimilation plans, racist justification strategies, and the idea of salvage anthropology—the idea that Native cultures and objects had to be preserved before they went extinct.⁷¹⁴

Because of this official character of museums, and especially national museums, indigenous peoples have a complicated history with museums that translates to the NMAI. Ho-Chunk and Chickasaw scholars Lonetree and Cobb call the relationship “painful” and “tortured” respectively.⁷¹⁵ The nature of this relationship means that contemporary Native voices have until very recently been completely excluded from the museal mainstream. Instead, Native Americans have been central figures in museums as people of the past, stunted by a lack of progress, and unfit to be counted among the

“nation-building peoples” of the contemporary world. Thus, the representation of Native Americans in museums did not differ much from representations in pop cultural sources. In this way, museums have participated in the dehumanizing narratives that justify American colonialism.⁷¹⁶ By virtue of being a national museum with an indigenous voice, the NMAI represents both a genre of institutions that has long played a part in the colonial oppression of indigenous people and a genre of institutions that wants to bring exactly that colonial dynamic to an end.

A second way in which the national framework exerts influence concerns audiences and constituents. In the end, the NMAI is a national museum with a Native constituency but non-Native audiences, and this tension defines the narratives and identity concepts on display in the museum.⁷¹⁷ Like all Smithsonian museums, the NMAI is an attraction not only for international tourists visiting DC but also for US citizens. Like all museums, Smithsonian or not, the average museum-goers are statistically more likely to be a minority within the US population: more likely to be of Euro-American ancestry, more likely to have a higher than average income, and more likely to be college educated than the average US American.⁷¹⁸ This profile means that a museum with a Native constituency is serving a mostly non-Native, most probably educated audience.⁷¹⁹ This population profile is ideologically heterogenous. There might be visitors who come with a sense of white, colonial guilt and are specifically receptive to decolonization methods. However, it is also likely that parts of the visitors are disinclined to question the existing power relations because they profit from them, making them potentially less receptive to decolonizing narratives.

Ultimately, these two points contribute to the fact that the NMAI is a possible “site for co-optation, silencing of alternative knowledge structures, and homogenization of diversity among tribes.”⁷²⁰ Because the Smithsonian is a “highly charged symbolic national space,” the NMAI must support narratives and identities constitutive of the national character.⁷²¹ It might be a “reluctant symbolic manifestation of the nation,” but still a symbolic manifestation of the nation.⁷²² This makes it precarious for the museum to speak in the “Native voice” that West outlined, and which still echoes through the mission statements. State institutions, after all, are interested first and foremost in the advance of narratives that benefit the state.

This emphasis on national master narratives raises the question whether it is even possible to negotiate Native self-representation within a federally funded national museum.⁷²³ The dynamic of a federally-funded institution negotiating indigenous recognition is precisely the tension this chapter interrogates. How does a museum that by necessity speaks the language of American master narratives meaningfully talk about Native-white relations and identities?

Indian Images in *Americans*

I argue that *Americans* does not meaningfully interrupt images of Native Americans or American master narratives due to the national framework within which the NMAI uneasily exists. As a national museum, the NMAI must maintain the master narrative and the ideal of American benevolence. In order to do this, *Americans*, first, articulates an Indianness that does not interrupt these self-concepts or understandings of history. Instead, it articulates an American identity that subsumes Indianness through the concept of First Americans. Furthermore, the exhibit articulates a cultural identity for

Native Americans that shares traits with the Generic Indian, which affirms conventions of American national stories retelling how the West was won. Native identities and colonial history are therefore negotiated such that American self-concepts and myths remain stable. Second, *Americans* maintains national self-concepts by colonialism by absolving Americans from historical and contemporary responsibility. The externalization of colonial responsibilities detaches Indian images from their colonial contexts both in the historical-topical galleries and the main hall and constructs an Indianness ready for guilt-free consumption.

Background and Description

Americans has been on show at the NMAI since January 19th, 2018, and will stay open through 2022. Trying to identify the curatorial team for the exhibit illustrates the lack of information concerning curational practices as they relate to different parts of the museum. Many visitors, who might be ill equipped to distinguish between single curator exhibits or community curations, are left to guess.⁷²⁴ After visiting the exhibit, I assessed that it was not community-curated, which some research proved correct. Neither the NMAI website nor the “about” section of *Americans* mention who the curators are, but a panel discussion taped in January 2018 with NMAI director Kevin Gover (Pawnee), curator Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche), and co-curator Cécile Ganteaume confirmed my impression that *Americans* was curated by a curational team consisting of professional curators rather than of community curators.⁷²⁵ Indeed, the exhibit was conceived and realized under the directorship of Gover. Smith and co-curator Ganteaume led a curatorial team of Gabrielle Tayac (Piscataway) and Kathy Nash Bilby (Navajo).

The *Americans* exhibition consists of one main entrance hall, three topical galleries, and two multimedia rooms. To highlight the omnipresence of Indian images, the main or entrance hall assembles an impressive array of Indian-themed objects and images from mainstream every-day American life on high walls to the left and right of visitors as they enter.⁷²⁶ Until up above eye level, framed photos of objects and actual artifacts in glass cases are displayed on the high walls. The lighting is dim in the center of the room, allowing viewers to focus their attention on the artifacts themselves. Accompanying plaques are brief, centering the experience on the visual more than on the informational aspects of the exhibit. If visitors are inclined to, they can supplement the plaques with information available through several massive touch screen tables at the center of the hall.

Visitors can access five exhibition rooms from this main hall. From left to right in a U shape, the galleries are: “The Indians Win” (the Battle of Little Bighorn), “The Removal Act” (Cherokee removal), “*Americans* explained,” “Queen of America” (Pocahontas), and “The Invention of Thanksgiving.”⁷²⁷ Three of these rooms are historical-topical galleries that cover a historical event or era each: the Battle of Little Bighorn, Cherokee removal, and the life of Pocahontas.⁷²⁸

These historical-topical galleries share a structure and have two components each. First, visitors learn about the history of the event. They are greeted by an introductory text panel which leads into a historical section giving an overview over the event or era. For example, in the Removal gallery, visitors walk through a representation of the pre-removal political debate, the act itself, and its aftermath. Texts, historical objects, and sources on display both on the walls and in centered display cases illustrate the events

and their times. In the second part of the historical-topical galleries, timelines illustrate how the American public has negotiated images of the historical event in question from the times of its origin until today. For example, the Removal gallery shows how Cherokee removal has been discussed and reflected in US popular culture and politics from the 1830s until today. The timelines are eye-level displays that span an entire wall from left to right each and ask visitors to move along as they read. In a linear manner and with informative blips inserted, the timelines showcase events, utterances, movies, consumer goods, and sometimes objects reflective of the historical events in question.

The two rooms that do not deal with a historical event are the Thanksgiving room and the “*Americans explained*” room, which do not contain any artifacts, narrative panels, or other displays. In the Thanksgiving room, visitors can watch a four-minute video showing animated drawings and illustrations to the voice-over of an unidentified Native male explaining what Thanksgiving means to him.⁷²⁹ The last room, “*Americans explained*,” seems to offer a framework for the exhibit. The room contains a twenty-five-minute video installation in which a random selection of Americans talks about different ways that Native American names or images show up in their lives and how they feel about it. They cover a range of topic areas, from boy scout rituals to mascots and street names. This room is the most interactive. Questions displayed on the wall ask visitors to reflect on their own experience with Indian images. Furthermore, visitors are asked to “join the conversation” and “think about your own connection to th[e] phenomenon” that Indians are everywhere by writing postcards, which are collected and displayed after review.

This last room offers visitors guidelines to situate themselves in relation to the exhibit's topic. It prominently displays open-ended questions like "What objects or images in the gallery are most familiar? Where do you see Indian imagery? Have you played or cheered for a sports team with an Indian name or mascot? Did you play any childhood games or with toys related to Indians?" These questions ask visitors to contemplate the prevalence of Indian images in their own lives, which is a good starting point for critical investigation. However, "*Americans explained*" is located furthest from the entrance and is not an intuitive entrance point for the exhibit. Therefore, it is safe to assume that many visitors (myself included) will not start with this room even though it offers the only framework to understand the exhibit.⁷³⁰

Native Identity Construction

The analysis first considers how Native identities are articulated in *Americans*. I argue that the exhibit articulates Native Americans both as quintessentially American *and* as Other. What could be a welcome complication of Native identity within the construction of national identity as both sovereign nations *and* part of a larger American community ultimately seems opportunistic. On the one hand, historical accuracy demands at least a limited recognition of Native sovereignty. On the other hand, subsuming Indianness into Americanness diffuses responsibility for colonial atrocities and potentially legitimizes expansionism by representing indigenous nations as First Americans. Furthermore, the types of Indianness articulated in *Americans* are reminiscent of Western stereotypes that justify conquest. The both rearticulations of Native legal status and of Native identity construct Indianness as cultural rather than political.

Indians are Us

That *Americans* articulates Native Americans as both “us” and “them” reflects a contradiction in American national identity that stems from a history of internal colonialism. The fact that American expansion happened domestically casts Natives as the colonized who are both the Other and peoples who ultimately became part of the national imaginary and, after 1924, citizens.⁷³¹ American narratives of identity, therefore, tell stories that both “deny and assert the presence and significance of the internal” Other—sometimes simultaneously.⁷³² This dynamic is visible in *Americans*.

There are several ways in which the exhibit articulates Native Americans as Other. One of the first indicators is that on the text panels, Native Americans are consistently referred to as “they.” In places where the first person plural is used, it seems inclusive of Native Americans, although sometimes, readers are left to their own interpretive devices. In some instances, it is not clear whether “we” refers to non-Native or Native Americans, for example in constructs such as “One reason we are so entangled with Indians...” or “We Americans can surround ourselves with [Indian referents] because we know Indians are in the country’s DNA.” Combined with the third person plural “they,” Indianness seems to be distanced from “Americanness.”

This distance is also noticeable in the way that the exhibit articulates a Native identity that depends on Native sovereignty and, therefore, distinctness from the United States. The presentation of the removal debate includes the voices of John Ross, principal chief of the Cherokee Nation at the time, and Opothle Yoholo, a Muscogee Creek leader. Including Native leaders’ voices illustrates that their political organization rendered Native peoples different from other ethnic minorities. A contextual panel underlines

Native agency by explaining that “Native nations took their fight against removal to the halls of Congress and the Supreme Court. They sent delegations, petitioned government agencies, and published accounts in public forums. They actively participated in the national debate over the Indian Removal Act.” This emphasis on Native participation in political debates is refreshing considering that it is not necessarily a central tenet of this exhibit otherwise.⁷³³ Most visibly, Native Americans appear as sovereign in the way that the central argument against removal is portrayed: The most eloquently articulated anti-removal argument centers on the idea that the inherent right to sovereignty of Native Nations forbade removal. The term “nation” used to describe Native communities and the referral to their participation in the public, democratic process of politics communicates tribal sovereignty. Thus, the anti-removal argument does not only bolster the idea of distinctness, it also bolsters the concept of survivance because it emphasizes Native agency and resistance against American colonialism.

The concept of Native peoples as different and distinct from the United States is also supported by the concept of Native identity as quintessentially American. *Americans* constructs this integration of Indianness into Americanness through the concept of prior occupancy, which recognizes that indigenous peoples have lived on the continent much longer than non-Native settlers. Prior occupancy can be a strong argument for independence from the United States even today. Often, Native communities use the argument of prior occupancy to stress their right to political and cultural sovereignty and to protect land, water, and resource rights in their ancestral territories.⁷³⁴ However, *Americans* manages to use indigenous anteriority to extend US American political genealogy to pre-Columbian times. A text panel in “*Americans explained*” points out that

“Once upon a time Indians were the Americans” and that Europeans first distinguished the original inhabitants as “Americans. Not American Indians. Not Native Americans. Just Americans.” Therefore “this exhibition is titled *Americans* because the very name first meant the people who lived here” first. The panel thus make an argument that Indians are by their very definition American, instead of an emphasizing that if Native Americans lived here first, they can fundamentally not be US American.⁷³⁵ However, the fairytal-esque “once upon a time” insinuates that the time of indigenous sovereignty is long in the ahistorical past, and overall, the assertion of anteriority seems to support an articulation of Native peoples as First Americans rather than as sovereign nations.

The concept of First Americans seamlessly sutures indigenous history to the history of the United States, turning indigenous sovereigns into proto-American people. Their prior sovereignty in this reading does not emphasize a colonial process of material and political dispossession. Instead, the concept allows the United States to extend its historical genealogy beyond “discovery” and thus allows US Americans to appropriate Native American history as their own to transfer Native identities into the national fold. This is reminiscent of what Pauline Wakeham calls a “performance of reconciliation”: a “kind of historical closure on colonial violence” that obscures “the continued power asymmetries and systemic racism that effect Indigenous peoples and their struggles for social justice today.”⁷³⁶ This museal reconciliation between national institutions and Native peoples equivocates the symbolic reconciliation with the absence of political conflict in the present and, thus, obscures continued colonial power relations.

The highly problematic narrative of Native Americans as First Americans was visible already in the inaugural proceedings of the NMAI.⁷³⁷ In *Americans*, the concept is

visible in the articulations of Pocahontas as a founder of the country. Entering the Pocahontas gallery, the visitors are greeted with the claim that “Pocahontas didn’t save John Smith. She saved America.” The next panel informs readers that in 1607 “America begins” and that Pocahontas “played a central role in turning a failing English colony into an economic powerhouse.” Ultimately, the text panels argue, Pocahontas was a “Founder of America: Every colonist and every generation of Americans thereafter have associated Pocahontas with Jamestown, and by extension, with the founding of the United States.” This narrative co-opts the historical figure Pocahontas as an Indian Helper and integrates her into a narrative of purpose that legitimizes conquest in similar ways that the Disney movie does: Her marriage to Rolfe and her conversion to Christianity are articulated as expressions of support for Jamestown.⁷³⁸ Ironically, a video in the gallery shows eight minutes of non-Native people associating Pocahontas with the Disney movie and John Smith. Nobody mentions the word “founder” or similar concepts. The gallery, thus, seems to disprove its own argument. All the while, the idea of Pocahontas as a proto-American instead of as a Tsenacommacah citizen underlines the idea of temporal succession between Native sovereign nations and the United States—the idea of Native nations as First Americans.

The idea of Native peoples as First Americans is also reflected in the way that *Americans* uses DNA as a metaphor for pre-Columbian indigeneity as proto-Americaness. In this narrative, DNA symbolizes the connectedness of Native Americans and non-Native Americans. For example, the Gallery Discussion Guide asks people to “explore why Indians are in America’s DNA.” Similarly, one of the introductory text panels in the entrance hall claims that “in the 21st century, we Americans can surround

ourselves with dream catchers and describe football games as a trail of tears because we know that Indians are in the country's DNA and have shaped it from the beginning." This idea of Indianness in American DNA stresses the idea of historical succession and conceptualizes indigenous people as antecedent to the United States. In "*Americans explained*" this concept is extended to claim that "one reason we are so entangled with Indians is that Indians seem to represent all that is most authentically American." Questions of unfitting metaphors and conceptualizations of authenticity should be raised here, but the most obvious issue with this narrative is that Indianness is reduced to one of the essential DNA-ingredients that constitute Americanness: Indianness has been subsumed into Americanness rather than standing on its own.

In the end, this kind of integrational narrative allows *Americans* to perpetuate the idea narratives of the nation as a multicultural ideal. National museums such as the NMAI, which try to represent indigenous populations within the national imaginary, need to articulate indigeneity as a cultural group within the multicultural ideal of the imagined American community rather than as indigenous nations who are politically sovereign entities.⁷³⁹ Seamlessly integrating Native nations into Americanness constructs them as merely one more among many cultural minorities who are part of the nation as hyphenated Americans: a multicultural ideal. However, Native people want to be restored "to the American story, not as ingredients in the melting pot..., but as sovereignties who have suffered at the hands of European conquerors" but have survived.⁷⁴⁰ This articulation of Indianness remains impossible because as an institution of the nation-state, the NMAI can only present "officially sanctioned narratives of history and culture."⁷⁴¹ In 2019, those sanctioned narratives are still centered around *E Pluribus Unum*. Thus, the

NMAI—and *Americans* is indicative of this—tells a story about how Indians are Americans, or have become Americans, rather than a history of violent subjugation of sovereign nations who are *still* sovereign. This articulation means that Native Americans emerge as culturally but not politically different from non-Native Americans. These cultural identities rest largely on Western stereotypes.

Indian stereotypes

Stereotypical Indians mirroring Western tropes emerge in various forms within both the images in the historical-topical galleries and in entrance hall. First, the exhibit insistently displays the Plains Indian Warrior stereotype of the befeathered nineteenth-century rider as representative of Indianness. Second, the exhibit echoes some traits of the Noble Indian in the way that it rearticulates the Helper figure and the Indian Warrior. Lastly, *Americans* articulates a generic pan-Indian identity that brushes off differences within Indian country and obscures modern identities. Together, these dynamics echo generic Indianness that locates Native identities, individualism, and agency in the past and mirrors reductive stereotypes.

Clearly, *Americans* does not set out to reaffirm stereotypes. On the contrary, *Americans* explicitly outlines the Native identities that it hopes visitors take away from each historical-topical gallery. In “*Americans explained*,” a panel summarizes the “new way[s] of understanding” the three familiar historical moments that the exhibit highlights:

Pocahontas was a rich, powerful woman and a key figure in the country’s founding. The Trail of Tears was a vast national project that reshaped the entire country. The Battle of Little Bighorn was when, after killing more than 200 American soldiers, Plains Indians became the country’s unofficial mascots.

However, while the historical information in the corresponding historical-topical galleries is indeed pertinent and corrective, the dominating presence of the Generic Indian and associated stereotypes drowns out the desired reinterpretations of the historical moments as well as the rearticulations of Native identities.

First, the overwhelming visual representation available to audiences is the Indian Warrior type. While the Little Bighorn gallery contains a significant number of these representations on its Buffalo Bill posters, the entrance hall offers the most impressive collection of images that represent the generic, stereotypical visuals to which the American public is accustomed: Indian Chiefs in profile on consumer products targeted toward men, from tobacco to motor cycles to football jerseys; Indian maidens on consumer products for the household, from baking powder to butter; white men—Albert Einstein, Elvis Presley, and various other, less known twentieth-century figures—in headdresses; Wild West and movie posters with Indian Braves on horseback in full gallop, feathers flying.

In light of the exhibition's topic, these images are well-chosen and in his review for the *New Yorker*, Peter Schjedahl describes the gallery as “parading crudely exaggerated understanding of Native Americans, ossified in kitsch, to awaken a reactive sense of complicated, deep, living truths.”⁷⁴² Schjedahl's review does not account for the interpretive difficulties that exaggeration and irony present in the museum setting; they require audiences to understand that something is not to be taken at face value. As David Penney pointed out in 2000, Native American do often reflect on Native-white relations in terms of irony while non-Natives often consider Native-white history through the lenses either of comedy or tragedy.⁷⁴³ Taken together with anecdotal evidence for the fact

that this nation can still not decide whether *The Searchers* is an incredibly racist film or a great meta-discourse on the pitfalls of racism, exaggeration in context with Native issues seems risky.

The Warrior image might have been relativized if alternative modes of presentation were visible. However, the galleries offer barely any. In the Little Bighorn gallery, two depictions of the battle portray Native viewpoints: Minneconjou Lakota Red Horse and Sihasapa Lakota Strike the Kettle created striking visual eyewitness accounts. Portraits of John Ross, Opothle Yoholo, and Pocahontas contradict conventional visuals of the Generic Indians. However, just like the Warrior image, they relegate three-dimensional Indianness to the past. This emphasis on the past is extended through the objects on display. In the Little Bighorn Gallery, four men's shirts and a headdress offer the conventional visuals of Plains Warrior. The absence of authorship on the respective plaques prioritizes the cultural entity of the tribe over the notion of individuality.⁷⁴⁴ Reminiscent of traditional anthropological displays in this sense, the object display does not meaningfully pull into the present our understanding of Indianness as it originated in the historical moment.⁷⁴⁵ Instead, display objects became products of a faceless "they" moored to the past.⁷⁴⁶ In the absence of contextualization or interpretive aids, these objects can be as easily used to deny ongoing Native presences and to affirm the stereotype of the Plains Indian Warrior as to interrogate its origins.⁷⁴⁷ Furthermore, the presence of the shirts as evidence of the past asserts that this specific version of the past really happened.⁷⁴⁸ This use of objects as evidence focuses audience attention on Plains Indians at a specific time rather than on alternative expressions of Indianness.

The Indian Warrior stereotype is even affirmed in the Little Bighorn gallery, which in many ways at least tries to dismantle the trope. While *Americans* does not outright negate that the Indian Warrior is a stereotype, the exhibit seems to affirm the idea that highlighting Indian prowess and using it for mascot and military naming purposes are practices that honor Natives. The affirmation of these stereotypes in galleries that claim to advance alternative interpretations of history and Indian identity advance the interpretation that maybe the Indian Warrior stereotype is indeed a valid characterization of Indianness.

This reduction seems surprising considering that the emergence of the Plains Warrior type is accurately discussed in the Little Bighorn gallery with reference to Wild West shows and a definition of stereotypes. The interpretation of how Native warrior identities have been negotiated in the constant reinterpretation of the Battle of Little Bighorn is nonetheless puzzling. The exhibit's evaluation that Plains Indians became a symbol in the decades after the battle need not be contested. However, the interpretation of what that symbol stood for tries too hard to fit Indianness into American identity in order to suggest that this integration was a good thing to happen.

In order to do this, *Americans* affirms the stereotype and evaluates it as harmless. For example, the timeline declares that the "U.S. Army uses Native American names to "suggest an aggressive spirit, and confidence." This reading is corroborated in the Removal gallery's timeline, where the 1974 American Motor Company's jeep Cherokee Chief's name is explained as suggesting "a vehicle that is unstoppable in any terrain or weather, and one that is never lost in the wilderness." This characterization of the car's/Cherokee Chief's name does not only echo the stereotype of the Indian Warrior, it

also perpetuates the stereotype of the inherent interconnectedness of Native Americans and nature. Like the comment about military terms, this text suggests in its tone that the naming of the car honors Native Americans. This idea of honoring is also reflected in the panel accompanying the Tomahawk flight-test missile from 1976 on display in the entrance hall. A 1969 Pentagon directive, visitors are informed, mandated that “names should appeal to the imagination without sacrifice of dignity, and should suggest an aggressive spirit and confidence.” In the absence of a problematization of current naming practices, the intent to honor Native cultures is taken as fact rather than a suggestion.

Only one panel in the Bighorn gallery draws attention to the nature of stereotypes. However, in the end, it affirms the idea that maybe these stereotypes are actually representative of Indianness. “As printing technology advanced,” the panel informs the visitor,

images of Indians representing valor, freedom, and skilled combat appeared everywhere in American life. Advertising took off, and the images were used to sell all manner of product. Indians were a constant line in movies and later television. Used as mascots and military insignia, they represented fighting prowess. The Plains Indian headdress became famous around the world.

Nothing in this text suggests that there are potential issues with the Indian Warrior image. In the end, unless visitors arrive primed for oppositional readings, the panel seems to justify the use of reductive images as a way of honoring Native cultures.

A second way in which the exhibit reiterates Indian stereotypes concerns the articulation of nobility of both the Indian Warrior and the Indian Helper in *Americans*. As outlined in the Introduction, one distinction between Noble and Ignoble Indians in the

Western rests on evaluating Native loyalty to white culture. Noble Indians, as Berkhofer outlines, are “friends to Whites.”⁷⁴⁹ Characteristic for this idea of nobility is the Indian Helper, who recognizes white society’s superiority and accepts its control.⁷⁵⁰ Within *Americans*, Pocahontas emerges as the clearest example of this noble Indian Helper. As an example of what Marubbio calls the Celluloid Princess and Leslie Fiedler terms the “pure maiden,” *Americans* articulates Pocahontas as an ally to the white colonizers as a helper and/or lover by describing her as a savior of both John Smith and Jamestown.⁷⁵¹ Pocahontas as articulated by *Americans* fulfills major key characteristics of this figure: Her “innocence and purity” as well as her “exotic culture and beauty” are reflected in the portraits and the story of her conversion; her “attraction to the white hero” and her tragic death are reiterated in the story and interpretation of her life.⁷⁵² As a Noble Indian, *Americans*’ Pocahontas signifies Native acquiescence to colonization.

This embrace of American values and history is, to some extent, mirrored in the Indian Warrior image of the Bighorn gallery. Since articulating Custer’s Native opponents as Helper figures of white society would be somewhat contradictory, the gallery instead embraces the martial prowess of the Native resistance in the positive terms of American heroism. *Americans* does this, for example, by highlighting Sitting Bull’s hero status and by emphasizing the idea of Indian Warriors as emblematic of the nation. This integration of the Indian Warrior into the American self and his articulation as an American hero is reminiscent of the Noble Savage. As Philip Deloria argues in his monograph *Playing Indian*, “savagery, coded as martial prowess, could be a positive value when attached to an American Self.”⁷⁵³ The nobility of both Pocahontas and the Indian Warrior invoke the stereotypes of the Vanishing Indian and the Helper figure. If

Indianness is incorporated into American identity, there is no need to recognize Indians as a distinct political group.⁷⁵⁴ Instead, Indians become helpers to white progress through their active cooperation with white society, as protectors, entertainers, or founders.⁷⁵⁵

The third and last way in which *Americans* mirrors Western tropes lies in the pan-Indian identity visible in the exhibit in several ways. *Americans* uses the labels “American Indian” or “Indians,” which both suggest cohesiveness of identity, cohesiveness of historical experience, and cohesiveness of opinion. A pan-Indian perspective is certainly a valid approach to representing contemporary Indianness, especially in a museum that strives to represent indigenous peoples of the entire continent. Indeed, the NMAI in general speaks with a relatively unified pan-Indian voice, in which differences and conflicts within Native identities are more likely to be omitted than addressed.⁷⁵⁶ However, usually pan-Indianism rests on acknowledging that a (more or less) unified social and political Native voice has been forged in the fires of a long and painful history of colonial struggle against the United States. Therefore, only this struggle leads to the fundamental similarity and unity of all indigenous groups as Indians.⁷⁵⁷ However, *Americans* fails to point out that the very notion of Indianness is a colonial concept.⁷⁵⁸ Without explaining or problematizing the concept, the impression emerges that Native Americans are indeed a homogenous group, not a multicultural and diverse group united mostly by a shared history of social and political suffering.

In general, thus, the images on display in *Americans* are more likely to confirm cultural stereotypes than to disrupt, dismantle, or at least ridicule them. Partially, this reduction stems from the choice of historical moments as the basis for the exhibit. On the one hand, the historical events in *Americans* are aptly chosen for their bearing on

American discourse on Native history. On the other hand, precisely the significance of the three moments for understanding Native-white relations becomes a hindrance because the moments relegate Indianness to the past. Furthermore, the narratives of the three events can be related to three understandings of Indianness that contribute significantly to mis-interpretations of Indianness in the American mainstream. First, the Pocahontas gallery mirrors stereotypes of the Indian Princess and Helper; second, the Removal gallery invites interpretations of the Indianness as vanishing; and lastly, the Little Bighorn gallery echoes the Indian Warrior/Brave or Indian Chief. Although *Americans* seeks to dismantle these interpretations of Pocahontas's life, the removal era, and the Battle of Little Bighorn, it affirms conventional stereotypes. Generic Indians in these stereotypical forms thus become the most salient Indian identities in *Americans*.

Displaying this type of generic Indianness without efficient contextualization and without adding available, alternative, modern images means that non-Native audiences are not encouraged to interrogate their concepts of Indianness in meaningful ways. The concentration of stereotypical images does not necessarily make it impossible for visitors to interrogate colonialism and cultural stereotypes, but it is unlikely that audiences will do so unless they arrive *already prepared to do so*. And while interpretive openness is both necessary and unavoidable to some degree, *Americans* seems to offer more opportunities for affirming stereotypes than for disrupting or replacing them. In terms of Indian identities, the exhibition indeed stops at the proof that "Indians are everywhere," as if it were possible to simply recirculate these images without perpetuating the stereotypical reduction of Native American identity to palatable abbreviations that

confirm rather than disrupt American concepts of collective identity, of history, and of How the West Was Won.⁷⁵⁹

In combination with the articulation of Native Americans as First Americans, *Americans* promotes a vision of Indianness that ultimately allows non-Native Americans to claim Indianness as “us” or “them” depending on which concept is more convenient: As part of the country’s history and in order to prolong American genealogy on this continent, Indianness is useful. Addressing Native sovereignty in depth? Not so much. After all, any interrogation of sovereignty requires a discussion of historical and contemporary colonialism, and addressing this topic requires confronting the nation with unpleasant aspects of American nation formation that potentially contradict American self-understandings and national narratives. Therefore, sovereignty and colonialism can only be addressed in a shallow and distanced manner. Otherwise, the palatable and generic stereotypes of Indianness would be turned from useful concepts for American national narratives into a shameful reminder of the failures to live up to American ideals.

Consuming Indianness in Colonial Contexts

In this section, I argue that the national framework of the Smithsonian requires the NMAI to articulate colonialism as a force largely out of the American public’s control or influence. Because of the inability to interrogate colonialism meaningfully, the Indian images in *Americans* emerge as decontextualized and detached from social and political attitudes toward Native Americans. The disconnect disarticulates any relationship between Indian images and colonialism and instead renders Indian images palatable, consumable, and harmless. In this sense, national self-conceptions and narratives are

prioritized over indigenous realities, meaning that *Americans* ultimately affirms the American master narrative more than it disrupts it.

The way that the NMAI deals with questions of negotiating both colonialism and Native sovereignty has long been a contentious issue. Some critics see the museum itself as an exercise in sovereignty, Native self-determination, and self-expression. However, within this group, there are those critics that claim the NMAI falls short of the crucial task of disarticulating colonialism as the context for both Native history and Native survivance. The most common argument in support of this claim maintains that the NMAI lacks sufficient historical context for both artifacts and narratives.⁷⁶⁰ Without accurately contextualizing Native resistance in centuries of genocide and colonial oppression, the concept of survivance cannot be understood. Sonya Atalay (Anishinaabe-Ojibwe) goes so far as to argue that the idea of decolonization is entirely lacking from the NMAI.⁷⁶¹ Even more drastically, Myla Carpio calls the NMAI a testament to “internalized oppression.”⁷⁶² Without a doubt, in-depth discussions of colonialism are necessary to the NMAI’s mission to reeducate the American public at large.

Indeed, as pointed out in the chapter introduction, the interrogation and rearticulation of Indian images is one of the NMAI’s main goals. This goal puts informing the public about Native Americans at the center of the museum, and *Americans* seems to be born out of this desire. With its entrance hall and the three historical-topical galleries, the exhibit seems to attempt a “bridge between historical object and more modern material.”⁷⁶³ However, *Americans* seems to articulate a goal that addresses Indian images but stops at “demonstrating that Indians are everywhere” instead of taking a more decisive step toward dismantling stereotypes.

Thus, as I demonstrate, the bridge never materializes. Instead, the following analysis ultimately validates the above-mentioned criticism that the NMAI has not yet found a way to meaningfully discuss colonialism. *Americans* is an example of this inability to address colonial contexts in the way that it renders colonialism and sovereignty invisible both historically and currently. This invisibility prevents interrogations of images as a form of public discourse intertwined with attitudes about Native Americans that ultimately embrace (or disavow) colonialism in the United States historically and currently. Monika Siebert has a point when she argues that in national museums, American identity conceptualizations that rely on multiculturalism mandate that attention is diverted away from “historic and ongoing colonialism.”⁷⁶⁴

Indian images in the historical-topical galleries

Historically, *Americans* portrays Pocahontas’s life, Cherokee removal, and the Battle of Little Bighorn as moments that originated images rather than events that were also embedded in a history of images. The historical events are largely disconnected from public images circulating at the time—except as sources of images. This absence of visual culture as context masks the fact that in colonial societies stereotyping is not a harmless pastime but a tactic that creates economic and political advantages for dominant society.⁷⁶⁵ Situating images in their historical origins is important. However, treating events as if they are independent of their historical context—including visual cultures—perpetuates colonial discourses. The Bighorn gallery takes part in this perpetuation by rearticulating the Indian Warrior stereotype. The Removal gallery, as a second example, demonstrates how largely disconnecting the events from images circulating at the event’s

time whitewashes colonial history and absolves American society of its responsibility for Indian policy.

The organization of the historical-topical galleries suggest that in the beginning was the event, and that from this event, images emerged. These images can be traced through the following centuries in the offered timelines. This suggestion of causality and its display is neither inaccurate nor unengaging. The timelines offer an interesting mix of pop culture (Paul Revere and the Raiders' 1971 album *Indian Reservation: The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian*), consumer culture (in 2017, the fast-food chain Sonic aired an ad featuring "General Custard" and outrage ensued), political history (Congress approved the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail in 1987), and current events ("March 2018: In a single month, three world leaders are compared to Custer at Little Bighorn"). The timelines combine tidbits for a variety of interests with humor and illustrate effectively that phrases, names, and images originating in the battle are relevant today. The current relevance is also emphasized with tweets that include the hashtag #TrailOfTears in historical, ironic, and demeaning manners in the Removal gallery timeline. Indeed, these timelines say, Indians are everywhere, and we can find the three historical events from *Americans* mirrored in the way that Indians are everywhere.

However, both the lack of context for the circulation of certain images and their disconnect from historical events create the benign impression that Indian images have nothing to do with what happens to Native Americans. As outlined in the Introduction, Indian images are part of public discourse and function to legitimize or devalue narratives, attitudes, and ideas that ultimately shape socio-political landscapes. Suggesting that Indian images are harmless, funny, ironic, and at worst a little demeaning

does not do justice to the importance of Indian images in American society. It is possible to argue that out of the Battle at Little Bighorn emerged the image or stereotype of the Indian Warrior. However, the Indian Warrior as a “mascot” for the United States—as “*Americans explained*” claims—was surely connected to the fact that, first, Native Americans had been stand-ins for America since Columbian times; and, second, that in the 1880s and 1890s, several factors converted Native people from perceived dangerous threats to the United States into romantic stereotypes of the Vanishing Indian, perishing on reservations. One of these factors was the proclaimed end of the Indian Wars; another was that Wild West shows made exactly those Indians who had fought at Little Bighorn palatable through their integration into staged performances of the US master narrative, first among them Sitting Bull in Cody’s Wild West.

The Little Bighorn gallery claims that Indians Warriors as symbols of bravery and valor were esteemed in the American public. One narrative panel points out that Sitting Bull was giving autographs ten years after being deemed a villain, which makes it sound as if he was giving autographs in his function as a successful warrior against the United States (an identity which in all likelihood did indeed compound his fame). However, the *celebrity* Sitting Bull was created in no small part by William F. Cody, who knew how to capitalize on his own and Sitting Bull’s identities. Primarily portraying Sitting Bull as the star of Cody’s Wild West articulates the Lakota leader as a splendid and exotic Warrior who is, by the nature of his participation in a staged show, completely harmless: A Native man as Indian Chief safe for American consumption, awe-inspiring because of his bravery in the fight against the US Army—acts of war safely contained in the past by the time he became Cody’s star.

Off stage, Native Americans were indeed as safely contained as they could. Even the “celebrity” Sitting Bull was a prisoner of war on a reservation that did not feed his people or him. At the end of the decade that saw his rise as a warrior-type celebrity as *Americans* argues, Sitting Bull was brutally killed during a botched arrest attempt on Pine Ridge reservation. Two weeks later, the US army killed up to three hundred people in the last big massacre of Native Americans on American soil at Wounded Knee. And while Native men as Indian Braves were neatly contained in their shiny costumes by Wild West shows and later the silver screen, Native land holdings were gutted by the Dawes Act of 1894, which robbed tribal communities of land that had been guaranteed in treaties and left them without enough farm lands to live off in areas of the country that are still so disconnected economically today that unemployment hovers above 60% on many reservations. The Indian Warrior image was not single-handedly responsible for these events. However, the Little Bighorn gallery uses the image to obscure colonial history in a twofold way: first, by promoting an uncritical assumption that the public embrace of the Indian Warrior image indicated something benevolent about public perception; second, by failing to situate the images emerging from Little Bighorn in the ongoing colonial actions against Native Americans at the time.

Disconnecting larger historical trends from the images circulating at the time seems even more precarious in case of Cherokee removal in the 1830s. The Removal gallery elegantly and effectively illustrates how the fate of the Cherokee found its way into vernacular American English as the “Trail of Tears,” and traces how that figure of speech is used today. There is no doubt that *Americans* condemns removal. Removal was “a betrayal of American values” and the “human cost was enormous: catastrophe for

Indian nations and a population of enslaved labor that reached four million.”⁷⁶⁶ However, the contemporaneous attitudes toward Native Americans that legitimized the idea of removal are never framed as part of the Indian images that *Americans* aims to discuss. The exhibition refuses to contextualize removal in a history of colonialism that connects Indian policies to attitudes toward Native Americans—attitudes that survived the 1830s and led to renewed removal policies in the middle of the 20th century. Instead, the way that *Americans* frames the removal debate ultimately absolves historical and contemporary American citizens from responsibility for colonial actions.

The gallery absolves Americans by presenting a sanitized version of responsibility for anti-Indian attitudes and actions. Clearly, the exhibit does not suppress all discussion of colonialism. Instead, colonialism is sanitized by presenting it as a natural force, disconnected from individual agency or public opinion. The exhibition sanitizes colonialism by attributing actions taken to further colonial goals to acts, laws, policies, or “the United States” rather than connecting anti-Indian policies to anti-Indian attitudes in the general population. For example, the opening panel suggests that the Removal Act “imagined the United States without Indians.” Another panel suggests that it was the Removal Act that “cost millions of dollars and thousands of Indian lives.” This language allows visitors both to absolve contemporaneous US citizens of complicity and to distance themselves from the idea that public opinion might have supported removal, no matter how incomprehensible that thought is today.

The presentation of the removal debate supports this opportunity for personal distancing. Technically, this presentation constitutes the clearest attribution of responsibility with images and statements of eight participants. However, five of those

eight opinions are anti-removal and none of the pro-removal voices are average Americans. This can make visitors wonder why the act passed at all, considering that the numbers suggest that public opinion was against removal. One conclusion is that it must have been all Andrew Jackson's fault, with the help of one mean politician, Georgia Governor Wilson Lumpkin. The display enables an interpretation that portrays virulently racist anti-Indian attitudes as the moral shortcomings of few bad apples instead of as an ongoing structural justification of American colonialism. Furthermore, the showcased anti-removal arguments are not contextualized in racialized justifications palatable at the time. Only two of the eight primary quotations are illustrative of the racist discourse informing the pro-removal side. Governor Lumpkin's statement describes Native Americans as "unfortunate remnants of a once mighty race;" President Jackson's statement describes Native Americans as "wandering savages" without intelligence, economic ambitions, or morals. While the politicians' words are an indication that at least part of the discourse at the time was blatantly racist, the narrative panels suggest that "most [representatives in Congress] were persuaded that removal was in the best interest of American Indians." This emphasis gives prevalence to the interpretation that Americans were acting on humanitarian instincts when they forcefully removed the Cherokee from their ancestral lands and accepted the deaths of hundreds of people.

The text panels explaining pro-removal attitudes also enable revisionist interpretations of pro-removal motivations. Two panels promote the idea that motivations for removal were grounded in more opportunity for commerce (Thomas Jefferson) and interest in economic development of Georgia (Wilson Lumpkin). Since these ideas are never problematized as legitimation strategies for American expansionism, the panels

obscure the fact that any expansion—economical or territorial—had to encroach on Native territory and therefore willfully accepted economic hardship, land loss, and death for the Native populations in question. Leaving this facet of expansion unsaid directs readers to embrace the idea of American progress, American benevolence, and maybe even the idea of an empty, virgin continent. Since there are no ways to euphemistically describe Jackson’s racially despicable rhetoric, the corresponding text panel actually refrains from judgment and merely notes that “President Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act into law” in May 1830, that removal took approximately three decades, and that it spanned the succession of eight presidents. Even though Jackson is called “a cruel president” who “victimized” Native Americans, the overall impression is that removal happened merely because it was economically beneficial and because overall the American people assumed that it would be better for the Cherokee. At worst, Jackson-era Americans emerge from this articulation as gullible and shortsighted. This illusion is maintained because *Americans* censors the fact that in the 1830s, the settler society had centuries of experience with using racialized images of Indianness to justify anti-Indian policies.

For an exhibition that wants to interrogate Indian images in the public sphere, this one-sided portrayal is an astounding gap in the narrative. However, for an exhibition existing in the uneasy tension of a national museum with a Native constituency but a non-Native audience, colonialism and sovereignty emerge as topics that cannot be addressed adequately. In some regards, this spin on history might be a necessary self-censoring that allows the construction of a narrative palatable for the mainstream audiences and their conception of American identity. Addressing colonialism meaningfully would articulate

expansionism as a genocidal project rather than the unmitigated progress of Manifest Destiny. But in a national museum, it might be unwise to point out that at least two presidents, one of them an idealized founder, were on the wrong side of history.

Smartly, *Americans* does not completely exclude racism and colonialist attitudes but “merely” attributes them to depersonalized entities like acts, policies, or single politicians rather than Americans at large. Including vague discussions of colonialism allows the NMAI to maintain its relationship with its Native constituents and its claim to credibility, which would both be damaged if the topic was completely omitted. Audiences can interpret the offered narrative as both historically accurate *and* as congruent with the identity and master narratives that Americans believe about themselves because the formal recognition of historical colonialism does not interfere with articulations of multicultural American identities and benign narratives of expansion. Maintaining the master narrative, thus, emerges as a deterrent for drawing connections between Indian images and the key component of Native-white relations: colonialism as the historical and current state of things.

Indian images in the main hall

The decontextualization of historical events and the disconnect of Indian images from public opinion has its parallel in the way that everyday items and images on display in the entrance hall are disconnected from the rest of the exhibit.⁷⁶⁷ As pointed out above, the entrance hall is the main locus for Indianness as generic and consumable. Because of the lack of context, these images emerge as unproblematic. Presenting the images as unproblematic prevents opportunities to interrogate whether they could be considered an outgrowth of harmful assumptions and attitudes toward Native Americans that justify

historical and current iterations of colonialism. The generic Indianness on display for consumption in the entrance hall is rendered harmless in two different ways.

First, the idea of consumption and appropriation of Indian images for the benefit of non-Native Americans is mentioned but dismissed in the introductory panels. “Indians are everywhere in American life,” proclaims the first text panel greeting visitors in the main hall, with its many picture frames validating that claim. The first impression visitors get is indeed that Indians are everywhere. “Nearly all that can be named or sold has at some point been named or sold with an Indian word or image,” the panel informs readers, and asserts that these images are worth analyzing because they might be not “trivial” but “instead symbols of great power.” As such, they might “reveal a buried history” as well as “a country forever fascinated, conflicted and shaped by its relationship with American Indians.”

What is truly fascinating about this opening panel is that it gives visitors an idea of the ingredients of the toxic mix that are Native American images in the historical and contemporary colonial American public sphere: Indian images have something to do with national identity, which is connected to questions of power, readers are informed. Furthermore, there is a vague mention of the fact that these images are not used just for fun but in order to make cultural or economic profits. However, the panel understates and therefore dismisses the idea that putting Indian images on things that “can be named or sold” is a form of consumption or appropriation of Indian images that benefits white settler society at the expense of Native Americans. Brushing over socio-economic relations hides the fact that economic and social conditions today continue to replicate

Native-white relationships that are “highly unequal, superexploitative, and maintained through real or threatened violence.”⁷⁶⁸

Even when the introductory panels of *Americans* ask good question of the audience, the provided answers usually smooth over anything that could potentially disrupt the identities and narratives necessary to maintain American master narratives. For example, one panel asks: “How is it that Indians can be so present and so absent in American life?” The provided answer to this great question, however, fails to point toward a long history of colonial oppression and instead explains the absences by saying that Americans “are still trying to come to grips with centuries of wildly mixed feelings about Indians.” Reducing half a millennium of colonialism “mixed feelings” is a blatant omission that cannot be redeemed by the vague assertion that the “objects, images, and stories” in the exhibit are “insistent reminders of larger truths, an emphatic refusal to forget.” Without specifying what this “larger truth” could be and what it is that is remembered, these assertions remain empty.⁷⁶⁹

Second, the images in the entrance hall stand completely disconnected from the historical galleries. Therefore, the information on the historical moments is ineffective as historical context for the images, which in turn renders the images harmless. The exhibition’s mission statement and introductory texts in the main hall foreshadow this disconnect. The “about” section on *Americans’* website claims that the exhibit “highlights the ways in which American Indians have been part of the nation’s identity since before the country began.” Furthermore, the text claims that the exhibit “reveal[s] the deep connection between Americans and American Indians as well as how Indians have been embedded in unexpected ways in the history, pop culture, and identity of the

United States.”⁷⁷⁰ The focus is, thus, clearly on Native American images and American identity. Whereas the statement mentions the three historical moments, it does not explain how or why these three moments were chosen to discuss the interconnectedness of American Indian images and American identities, or how the historical events connect to Indian women on butter cartons or headdresses on cigarette packages.

This failure to link Indian images ready for economic or cultural consumption to historical and current power dynamics mired in colonialism is compounded by the absence of narrative panels that explicitly or implicitly connect the historical-topical galleries to the main hall. The choice to display the images in a gallery apart from the history sections is a curatorial decision that seems to encourage the disconnect: Visitors are not invited to associate the images with the historical objects and narratives.⁷⁷¹ With a little bit of imagination, creative visitors can draw a connection between the Indian Warrior image *Americans* argues emerged out of the Battle of Little Bighorn moment and the Pentagon directive on using Native terms for weapons quoted on the panel accompanying the Tomahawk and Zuni missiles. Both talk about prowess, honor, and valor, but there are no explicit cross-references. Largely, the images in the entrance hall have to stand for themselves, articulating a clichéd and unproblematized Indianness, which renders the images maybe grotesque but ultimately harmless in their consumer context and disconnect from public attitudes toward Native people.⁷⁷²

In their analysis of the Buffalo Bill Museum in Wyoming, Greg Dickson, Brian Ott, and Eric Aoki conclude that the number of images and posters that display Native-white conflict in a cartoonish or humorous style makes any “serious reflection on the actual violence that characterized westward expansion” impossible.⁷⁷³ Something similar

is happening in *Americans*. The overwhelming presence of images that stem from the advertising or film world and consumer products places Native-white relationships in the realm of entertainment; without historical context, this selection obscures that these images are fictional and manufactured. “By the time visitors reach the final exhibit” at the Buffalo Bill Museum, Dickinson and his co-authors conclude, “Buffalo Bill seems more real than William Cody.”⁷⁷⁴ Similarly, by the time that visitors exit *Americans*, it is entirely possible that the Generic Indian seems “more real” than contemporary Native American people. This emphasis on generic Indianness creates a euphemistic image of Native-white relations that renders colonialism and contentious current relationships absent. In the following paragraphs, I offer a few examples of how specific uncontextualized objects contribute to this glossy narrative.

A few brief examples include the Land O’Lakes butter “maiden,” who is presented as nothing more than the image of an Indian woman. Without a contextualization in narratives that have for centuries used indigenous women’s bodies to justify colonialism and Indian images as consumable, she can remain harmless.⁷⁷⁵ Or Iron Eye Cody, whose appropriation of a Native identity seems justified in the text on the plaque because “the PSA’s success and the single tear are landmarks in the history of environmental conservation.” Another example is the “Wild West Tribal Chief Lego Set” from 1997. Without explicit information about the circulation of stereotypes, the figurine—complete with war paint, headdress, horse, fringe shirt, and shield—is nothing but cute toy.

The portrayal of military naming practices might be the illustrative example of the disconnect between the images in the entrance hall and their historical and contemporary

embeddedness into public discourse. This uncritical evaluation seems shortsighted, considering that outrage ensued during the 2011 mission to kill Osama Bin Laden. The code name for the operation or even the man himself was “Geronimo,” using an Apache hero’s name to reference the most reviled terrorist of the 2000s.⁷⁷⁶ At the time, the NMAI released both a press review and their own statement on the issue.⁷⁷⁷ The opinion statement strongly condemned the choice of code name: Associate director for museum programs Tim Johnson (Mohawk) wrote that “one could hardly think of a more egregious insult than to be compared or linked to Osama Bin Laden,” and that the episode “demonstrates the void that exists and the harm that can be done when history is rendered incomplete.”⁷⁷⁸ This one sentence included next to the Tomahawk missile would have problematized both military naming practices and the simplistic assertion that these practices are honoring Native Americans. But just like pointing out that more than two presidents were on the wrong side of removal policies, criticizing the US military in an official exhibit is maybe beyond what a national museum can do.⁷⁷⁹

The few rays of hope in the texts available through the touch screen tables in the center of the gallery are not enough to counter this general expression of Indian images as entertaining, honoring, and harmless. First, it is impossible to know how many people actually access the additional information through the screens. Second, the screens invite visitors to “self-educate.” However, previous use of the technology at the NMAI incurred the criticism that it provided “little critical insight with which the mostly non-Native visitors will make meaning” and that it does not encourage intensive engagement.⁷⁸⁰ Indeed, the additional information does not drastically raise either the quantity or quality of the context. It is nice that the blurb of text for Big Chief Beverage bottles says that the

company “contributed to making Indians the most familiar but least understood peoples in the United States.” However, these moments of clarity are few and far between, and texts that support the consumption of generic Indianness as harmless and even amusing outweigh critical insight. Examples like this one abound: The exhibit’s evaluation of True American Straight Bourbon Whiskey and its Indian Chief logo claims that the “phrase *true American* here refers to the continent’s indigenous people, and to the corn used to make bourbon. Corn is also indigenous to the Americas. So what better image to represent an authentically American spirit?” The connection between one of the most stereotypical and reductive Indian images and the concept of American authenticity is cringeworthy. Third, Gwyneira Isaac argues that the idea of self-service recreates audiences as “participant consumers,” re-enforcing the idea of Indianness as a consumable good.⁷⁸¹

In summary, thus, whereas the overall framework of *Americans* as outlined in “*Americans explained*” seems to encourage visitors to interrogate their own conceptions of Indian images, the exhibit itself never arrives at that goal. Any interrogation of the connection between Indian images and ongoing power imbalances between colonizer and colonized remains impossible because the NMAI cannot transparently situate either the historical events or the images in their context of historical or contemporary colonialism. As I have demonstrated, this dynamic does not mean that the exhibit excludes any discussion of colonialism or Native sovereignty. However, the manner in which colonialism is negotiated allows audiences to distance both historical and contemporary Americans from the implications. This removal from responsibility leaves the American master narrative undisturbed and decontextualizes Indian images in such a way that they

emerge as mostly benign outgrowths of consumer capitalism or entertainment.

Ultimately, this presentation renders Indianness palatable and consumable, making powerful rearticulations of Indianness all but impossible.

Conclusion

Americans does not meaningfully rearticulate either modern Native identities or stereotypical images of Native Americans. On the contrary, to some extent the exhibit even affirms them. Articulating Native Americans as First Americans and as cultural rather than sovereign groups integrates Native American identities into the national imaginary in a way that benefits non-Natives and affirms master narratives: if Natives are Us, transparently talking about colonial pasts and presences and “telling hard truth” becomes less urgent.⁷⁸² After all, that would rattle unity. *Americans* circumvents colonialism as the backdrop for the historical events and images it addresses. Rather than affirming outdated notions of American expansionism in the tradition of Manifest Destiny as a moral or religious duty, the exhibit removes the process of colonialism from public agency and safely contains it in the political actions of individual politicians and the consequences of congressional acts. The hints toward expansion as economically motivated allow visitors to circumvent a confrontation with and responsibility for colonial violence by articulating a version of expansion that pretends that the process offered “both Native Americans and Euro-Americans an improved and more productive land and life.”⁷⁸³

Furthermore, the decontextualization of the images presented affirms Indian stereotypes from the Western and obscures contemporary Native identities. Stereotypes such as the Generic Indian, the Indian Warrior, the Indian Princess, or the Helper figure

articulate Native Americans as Vanishing and Noble Indians, who condone conquest and belong in the past. Visually most striking, *Americans* affirms the Generic Indian by disconnecting the visual omnipresence of the Plains Indian Warrior stereotype in context of the everyday objects from the historical events in the topical galleries. Absent their own historical context, the Indian images in the entrance hall are rendered harmless and entertaining.

In the end, therefore, *Americans* echoes central tenets of Manifest Destiny as a founding myth of the United States. Stereotypes that have dominated public images since the inception of the Western genre, and which have affirmed foundational myths, are repeated as if their repetition did not contribute to disseminating them further. These shortcomings are the result of necessary self-censorship and containment as the result of the NMAI's embeddedness in the Smithsonian as a national institution.⁷⁸⁴ While individual curatorial decisions have without a doubt shaped the execution of *Americans*, the national framework of the NMAI is more powerful than single decisions. The NMAI's decision to prioritize non-Native American needs and the American master narrative over the needs of its Native constituency is a nod toward the NMAI as a national museum and its non-Native audience. Within the constraints of both the institution and public discourse, the NMAI chose a palatable and non-confrontational feel-good mode that seems to placate non-Native audiences rather than expanding their horizons meaningfully. With at best weak interpretive guiding material, the NMAI relinquishes control over the interpretation of the presented material. The suggestions for interpretation remain thin and vacuous and ultimately enable non-confrontational readings of the material.⁷⁸⁵

The interpretive openness created by the absence of meaningful context creates reasonable doubts whether the exhibit fulfills the NMAI's mission statement to educate the non-Native public about stereotypes.⁷⁸⁶ As the analysis shows, it is entirely possible for visitors to walk away with an interpretation of historical and current presences of Native Americans as affirmative of American imaginations about the United States as a successful multicultural society. In this particular exhibition then, the NMAI acts more as an agent of western history—a trustworthy source and site for “constructing, disseminating, and maintaining” a national identity in order to remind the audience “what it means to be ‘American’.”⁷⁸⁷ As Myla Carpio already concluded in 2006, the absence or “deliberate exclusion of the ‘other’s’ history [at the NMAI] works to construct and reify the master narrative.”⁷⁸⁸

As outlined in the chapter introduction, the reviewers nevertheless had some constructive take-aways about Indian images in the American public sphere. However, several of the reviews affirm the concerns I have about interpretive openness. For example, Schjeldahl points out that he enjoys main curator Smith's approach “that lets identity and politics float a little free of each other,” which sounds like a judgement made from the privileged (and self-described) subject position of an “old white man.”⁷⁸⁹ After all, politics and identities are disconnected mostly for the benefit of those in power. Equally concerning, Rothstein walked away with the impression that “the Indian represents someone to be emulated, even envied.”⁷⁹⁰ Most alarmingly, Kennicott argues that the exhibit

demonstrates that not all forms of cultural appropriation are equally offensive and not all native images are caricatures. A 1950s bullet box for .32 Winchester

special ammunition carries an image of a native man in full headdress, along with the brand name: Savage. But the company was named for its founder, Arthur Savage, so it is slightly less offensive than it seems at first.

Furthermore, he continues, the idealization of “warlike” virtues in military naming practices “may be misplaced and crude, but it comes from a very different impulse than that which prompted the use of consistently humiliating caricatures of African-Americans by white commercial and popular culture.”⁷⁹¹ In other words, following Kennicott’s assessment of things he learned, *Americans* relativizes, equivocates, and maybe even condones racialized images of Native Americans. Obviously, it is impossible to figure out what personal meaning-making strategies and prior assumption about Indianness and Americanness informed his understanding of the exhibit.

However, Kennicott’s review clearly illustrates that *Americans*’ polysemous nature can lead to an interpretive openness that potentially allows visitors to walk away with simplistic notions of American identity and American history as well as Native American stereotypes unchallenged. That the critics proclaim their approval at the same time that they happily describe their partially offensive learning outcomes is not terribly surprising considering that the “the general public, by and large, does not expect its museums, particularly the national museums of the Smithsonian Institution, to challenge the central and comforting (for some) myths of national history and identity.”⁷⁹² The interpretive versatility of *Americans* can thus indeed work against the explicit goals of the NMAI to correct stereotypical conceptions of Native Americans and history.

This concern about scarce guiding material and the absence of context leading to confused or overwhelmed visitors is not a new criticism of the NMAI. Over the years,

many critics have pointed out how the general unfamiliarity of non-Native people with Native issues has caused confusion time and again.⁷⁹³ From the inception of the NMAI's inaugural exhibits, the museum has expected a lot of its visitors in the process of meaning making. High expectations, clearly, are not always misplaced.

On the one hand, high expectations of visitors are fair. As Elizabeth Archuleta (Yaqui/Chicana) pointed out, in an indigenous museum audiences can be expected to “set aside notions they previously held about museums and Indians,” and to practice understanding interpretations that are “unspoken” or “unarticulated.”⁷⁹⁴ The NMAI, this reasoning goes, requires audiences to “take responsibility for the familiarity that they bring to the exhibits.”⁷⁹⁵ I agree that visitors who expect a museum explicitly speaking from a Native perspective to engage exclusively in museological standards affirming longstanding Euro-American conventions are misguided.⁷⁹⁶ Expecting critical involvement of the visitors can be seen as an act of rhetorical sovereignty: a move to hold non-Native audiences accountable for the meaning they make; a rejection of the idea that the oppressed are responsible for educating their oppressor; an assertion of Native Americans as the main audience.

On the other hand, however, high expectations of visitor participation in the meaning making process can also lead to problems. In essence, the absence of contextual guiding material can overwhelm the audience because many non-Native people are inherently unfamiliar with the issues that the NMAI committed to address.⁷⁹⁷ Furthermore, many visitors are not only hindered by little prior knowledge, they are also hindered by actively wrong information.⁷⁹⁸ For visitors with little prior information about

Native people, the amount and the kind of information offered in the museum might be daunting and confusing.⁷⁹⁹

For non-Native audiences, therefore, orienting material is necessary to understand the NMAI and its exhibits. Overwhelming the audience is not a suitable strategy to achieve understanding of Native issues. There are no numbers out yet for *Americans* but at the opening time of the NMAI, one major criticism of the museum and its exhibits was that it seemed to confuse visitors. This confusion did not only stem from the new indigenous museum paradigms but also from the offered content. The “average museum visitors,” was one consensus, did not necessarily have the knowledge to grapple with the narratives that the NMAI presented.⁸⁰⁰ Cobb criticized that “few visitors are likely to understand the level of dialogic interaction that is expected of them.”⁸⁰¹ Lonetree asked why the new museology was not made explicit, and asked whether it was not “critical that we engage [Indian stereotypes] right away?” She concluded that “only curators or those from the academy engaged in postmodern theory” could readily appreciate the meaning of the opening exhibits.⁸⁰² Even NMAI curators agreed, as Gabrielle Tayac said in a 2012 round table discussion: at the time of the opening, “we felt like we didn’t want to do ‘Indian 101,’ we were too cool for that.” But after several years it became clear that, the average, non-Native visitor needed “Indians 101.”⁸⁰³

Despite that course change around 2012, *Americans* still falls into the same trap, leaving huge gaps in the context that would be necessary for meaningfully renegotiating Indian images. In their analysis of the Cody Firearms Museum in Wyoming, Ott, Aoki, and Dickinson argue that “conspicuous absences are made meaningful and felt powerfully,” and that what “goes unseen nearly always serves hegemony” either by

excluding alternative versions of events or by reaffirming the status quo.⁸⁰⁴ A similar dynamic is at work in *Americans*. Instead of an indicator of rhetorical sovereignty, the lack of context and interpretive guidance is a testament to how much the NMAI curtails the narrative of colonialism. Glossing over the historical context suggests that the NMAI and *Americans* would rather that people have a pleasant experience than potentially making them uncomfortable.⁸⁰⁵

For national museums such as the NMAI, an urgent question that arises out of considering their audiences thus is the question of narrative and voice: Whose narrative is told in whose voice? National museums must tell stories supportive of founding narratives that ultimately support a collective national identity by making sense of national history for audiences.⁸⁰⁶ Yet, such a framework does not preclude all criticism of single individuals, events, or the nation-building process, and alternative national museums renegotiate pluralistic and polyphonic perspectives on national history. One example within the Smithsonian institution is the National Holocaust Memorial Museum, which opened the exhibit *Americans and the Holocaust* in March 2018. The exhibit “dispels myths... such as the misperception that Americans lacked access to information about the persecution of Jews as it was happening” and “examines why their rescue never became a priority.”⁸⁰⁷ In general, reviewers did not struggle with acknowledging these unpleasant conclusions of this exhibit, and instead, used the exhibit to learn and understand.⁸⁰⁸ As Weiser argues, it is feasible for national museums to appeal to the nation by emphasizing “differences and upholding [the antithetical voices of those who would otherwise be... overlooked or ignored in a world clinging to unity].”⁸⁰⁹

However, it seems that the NMAI struggles to tell the truly difficult stories related to its Native constituency. Instead of recognizing that neutrality is impossible because the larger conversation about colonialism and Native identity is not neutral either, the NMAI strives hard for a palatable approach to atrocity. Therefore, *Americans* falls into the vein of reconciliation narratives, which merge national narratives with Native narratives in a way that ultimately benefits the interest of the nation-state. This merging of narratives requires that histories of colonialism are safely contained in the past and that colonialism is externalized, making it impossible for the exhibit (and the larger museum) to address how systemic racism as the legacy of colonialism shapes American society today.⁸¹⁰ The reconciliatory imperative of the nation-state co-opts the indigenous voice into expressions of sovereignty that do not disrupt the multicultural conceptualization of American identity or the American master narrative of the benevolent progress of Manifest Destiny. Rather than strengthening claims to indigenous self-determination, the NMAI is co-opted into weakening arguments in favor of indigenous land rights, rights to natural resources, or rights to compensation.⁸¹¹

Clearly, this co-optation happens within the national institution of the Smithsonian, which houses not only the NMAI and the Holocaust Memorial museum but also the (problematically named) National Museum of American History. This balance between mainstream and alternative museums illustrates how national institutions must to fit themselves into a “larger context of national symbol systems” that work to convince individual visitors that they share an identity with millions of other citizens. Within these restrictions, even resistive identities exist within and not outside the national framework.⁸¹² However, no recognition of national imperatives or of audience identity

can mask the fact that the decision to prioritize non-Native needs over Native needs ultimately reflects an inherently colonial dynamic in that it recreates power relations that value American identities over Native identities. In the end, this dynamic is maybe the saddest aspect of the NMAI's co-optation: that the visiting public is able to walk away with their "colonizing perspective" on American Indians undisturbed because *Americans* fails to trouble those perspectives.⁸¹³

Still, the endeavor of a national museum representing Native Americans to the larger American public is not a failure. On the contrary, the NMAI is an important contributor to Native visibility which has inserted into the public consciousness alternative interpretations of Native contributions to American society and diverse, modern, and life-affirming images of Native American identities. Most importantly, it constitutes Native Americans as modern participants in social and political processes. In Teslow's words, it is a long-awaited institutional antidote to the white man's Indian."⁸¹⁴ However, *Americans* relies on the rest of the museum doing that work and contributes little on its own.

CONCLUSION

Engaging with each of these three texts—Aaron Huey’s photography, the CIA protest, and NMAI’s *Americans*—has challenged me as a critic to identify and interrogate my own assumptions and biases. Of the three, *Americans* posed the toughest challenge because it is located in my favorite Smithsonian museum, which required me to engage in a conscious distancing process that speaks to how the critic’s own expectations need to be interrogated in the process of interpretation.

After my first visit I walked out of *Americans* fundamentally disappointed. My familiarity with the *National Geographic* and conventional press coverage of Indian affairs had prevented a similar disappointment with the other two case studies: I had expected the CIA press coverage and Huey’s images to be problematic or at best mixed and thus was proven wrong in a positive manner. But I had expected the NMAI to present unproblematic images of Indianness and was disappointed to realize it does not. In the Reject and Protect protest and Huey cases, any challenge to stereotypical Indian images was refreshing precisely because non-Native people so often represent Native people in inaccurate, stereotypical, and hostile ways. Conversely, as it was sponsored by the NMAI, *Americans* inspired high expectations for Native-directed self-representations—but failed to deliver on those expectations.

Clearly, critics need to interrogate their own expectations and biases. In order to achieve distance from the museum text, I considered three insights from museum scholars. First, in her 1997 essay, Susan Crane proposes that museum visitors learn even when disgruntled or put out.⁸¹⁵ Disappointment or even anger, thus, do not have to be ignored or discounted but interrogated. After all, a careful analysis has shown that

disappointment seems to be a justified reaction to *Americans*' articulations of Indianness. Second, Chickasaw scholar and University of Oklahoma professor Amanda Cobb criticized early (negative) reviews of the NMAI by claiming that critics misunderstood the museum because of their expectation that "museums consist of exhibitions and that exhibitions must meet the standards of discrete disciplines and must teach crisp, cleanly labeled lessons."⁸¹⁶ This perspective allowed me both to put *Americans* in conversation with the NMAI as its frame and to reaffirm that the exhibit's mixed-methods approach to its topic shouldn't be judged by standards of historical "accuracy." Lastly, Janet Berlo and Aldona Jonaitis rightfully pointed out that critics should evaluate the museum they find, not "bemoan...the museum they wanted to attend."⁸¹⁷ Like the previous statement, this reality check puts emphasis on the fact that critics cannot ignore the contexts within which museums articulate positions. Of course, I would have been happier with a more resistive interpretation of Indian images and their connection to oppressive Indian policies and continued discrimination. However, as chapter 3 demonstrates, even—or especially—Smithsonian museums cannot just do as they please.

The NMAI case study, thus, was critically eye opening. I had chosen *Americans* for the very fact that the NMAI speaks from an indigenous perspective in a national framework; yet, I did not expect the dominating strength of that very framework. Institutional frameworks, however, proved to be a boost for Western frames in all three case studies.

Huey's images, which are much more complicated and critically engaging outside the *National Geographic* than inside it, proved to echo the Western split between the Noble and the Ignoble Indian partially due to the magazine's history of portraying the

culturally exotic Other. By articulating contemporary Indianness as either a combination of traditionalism and uplift or a combination of civilization and degradedness, the Ecological/Spiritual Indian and the Drunk or Degraded Indian become the central focus of Huey's photos to the detriment of more complex articulations of contemporary Oglala Lakota identity. In response to these limiting images, Oglala Lakota tribal members rejected these Western legacies in the Storytelling Project, which exists outside the traditional platform of the *National Geographic*. They did this by replacing Huey's abject images of Pine Ridge with vibrant tributes to Oglala survivance, replacing the limited identity constructions with complex modern ones, and by articulating modern Oglala Lakota identities as "just like you and me."

As a framework for the CIA press coverage, conventional media frames influenced the new outlets' tone. These frames were invited by the event as a staged political protest in the vein of DeLuca's image event. The protest's visuality both successfully garnered press attention and also catered to stereotypical press frames related to the Western genre: the Generic Indian, the Indian Warrior, the Ecological/Spiritual Indian. While much of the press coverage did use these media frames unabashedly, the image event also created a space in which both Native participants of the protest and their non-Native allies could articulate alternative identities for the Native participants. These alternative constructions of Native identity focused on Native Americans as sovereign nations, whose motivations to protest the Keystone XL pipeline are as much political as spiritual.

The split between cultural and political identity articulations was also visible in the NMAI case study, which was the clearest illustration of the constraints overarching

institutional frameworks can place on texts. The NMAI functions primarily as a national museum, albeit with an indigenous perspective and voice. In *Americans*, this dual function created an abbreviated interrogation of Indian images in the American public sphere. The exhibit ultimately proposed Native identity constructions that subsumed Indianness as part of Americanness, which curtails the idea of sovereignty. *Americans* echoed Western patterns by articulating Indianness as generic and as belonging in the past. Furthermore, the exhibit affirmed specific Western stereotypes, namely the Indian Warrior, the Indian Princess, and the Helper figure as a Noble Indian. Overall, the national context of the NMAI constrains a clear articulation of colonialism as a context to Native history and Indian images. *Americans* portrayed reductive and stereotypical Indian images as harmless by detaching them from their historical context and by portraying colonialism as a force outside of the influence of both historical or contemporary American people. Ultimately, *Americans* as part of a national museum therefore affirms the master narrative of benign and beneficial expansion, which can leave visitors' stereotypes as well as concepts of American history and identity undisturbed.

The institutional frameworks, thus, played a role in all three case studies. Considering that the choice of texts all deliberately reflect mainstream American discourse, this finding is not altogether surprising. A national museum, a magazine with national reach, and mainstream press coverage are likely to represent popular imaginations that reflect the history of these presentations within the national mainstream. However, these dominant mainstream texts are not the only sources about Indianness available to American citizens: historical sites, signage, restaurants, local museums, public art, blogs, school books, podcasts, and even tourist traps communicate

alternative generic Indianness, often with local flavors. Especially in regions with significant numbers of Native American citizens, these particular Indian stereotypes might hold less sway. Yet, the influence of the dominant mainstream images with decisively Western traces is maintained through circulations beyond regional difference.

In this conclusion, I discuss the implications of these Western legacies in American mainstream articulations of Indianness. First, I put the case studies into conversation in an evaluation of the Western's continued impact on articulations of Native American identities. Second, I reflect on the tensions between insider- and outsider-representation and its implications for rhetorical criticism. A third theme considers the power of institutional frames. Throughout the discussion of these themes, I consider and highlight methodological implications for rhetorical critical work.

Evaluating Western Legacies

The three case studies leave no doubt that the Western genre continues to circulate in public discourse and shapes popular notions of Indianness. Whether it's the *National Geographic* simplistic take on the Noble Indian, the press's attention to the narrative trope of the Cowboy/Indian antagonism, or the NMAI's focus on the Indian Warrior: Public ideas about Indianness reflect narrative and visual tropes from the Western genre. At the same time, there is also no doubt that Western tropes have adapted to contemporary sensitivities to some extent, and that some traits of the Western have receded or changed significantly.

Western legacies today are visible in three specific ways. First, visually, the Generic Indian and the Indian Warrior continue to dominate Indian images. Second, narratively, the stories that recur continue to allow readings of American history as

benign expansionism a la Manifest Destiny. Lastly, the Noble and Ignoble Savage still exist, mostly in revisionist versions.

Visually, the generic conceptions of Indianness are still predominately connected to the Plains Indian Warrior. Both in *Americans* and in the CIA press coverage, images of Native men with headdresses or single feathers and leather-fringed clothes on horseback are omnipresent. This stereotype has remained virtually unchanged since it transitioned from Wild West shows into Wild West movies—and out of the Western into other, non-Western popular texts. The consumer goods, movie and show posters, and movie excerpts that *Americans* displays highlight the consistency of the image over the last one hundred fifty years. In this context, while the exhibit does not completely exclude alternative visuals of Indianness, the Indian Warrior overpowers other articulations. Similarly, the press preferred images of Native men who conformed to the Indian Warrior over alternative expressions of modern Native identities. As a result, both texts heavily reflect the most recognizable Western stereotype: a generic Plains warrior from the nineteenth century. Complemented by cultural items as stand-ins for Indianness, both the NMAI and the CIA press coverage reaffirm the reductive notion that there is only one kind of “authentic” Indianness.

Huey’s images reflect these recognizable Western visuals in a somewhat different way, highlighting that Indian stock characters from the Western can be circulated in updated forms. While Huey does depict a stereotypical Indian Chief in one picture and Native youths on horseback in another, his images don’t recreate the Indian Warrior with the same simplicity that the other case studies do. Instead, he creates updated versions of the Noble and Ignoble Indian that rely on assumptions of traditionalism as good and

modernity as corruptive—an echo of the uncorrupted Noble Savage from pre-Western times. Huey’s Noble Indian takes the form of the modern Ecological/Spiritual Indian, which is visually communicated through the engagement in traditional or spiritual activities. Not quite a reiteration of the Medicine Man, the images romanticize collective ritual practice. Conversely, the Ignoble Indian is a reiteration of the Drunk or Degraded Indian. Visually, the depicted people are connected to drug abuse, alcoholism, and poverty—a twenty-first-century version of the Degraded Indian drunk on “fire-water” in classic Westerns.

All three case studies, thus, pay visual homage to the Western genre by rendering Indianness visually familiar for the audiences. Similarly, all three texts also reflect traces of Western narratives. Mostly, these echoes of Western narratives are revisionist in nature in that they don’t portray Native Americans as obstacles to overcome in the settlement of the West but as victims in the process of state-formation of the United States. In Huey’s project, this is visible in the association of nobility with cultural traditionalism and ignobility is associated with corruption through civilization, progress, and modernity. This articulation of Native spirituality and traditionalism as a resistive identity mirrors the construction of Indianness as an oppositional identity to the “establishment” or the “system” in countercultural Westerns from the 1960s onward. The CIA coverage highlights the similarities to revisionist attitudes in the way that Native motivations to protest the Keystone XL pipeline are connected largely to spiritual motifs. Furthermore, the CIA press coverage articulates Indians decisively as the “good guys,” meaning that the “bad guys” in this case are the corporations and/or the US government. This location

of acceptable morality reflects revisionist Westerns that criticized expansion and portrayed the government or eastern corporations as the antagonists.

Although these narratives might allow for some moral ambivalence, they rely on reductive articulations of Indianness that reiterate expansion as fate: hapless, helpless Indians who have no agency in the face of overwhelming Western superiority. This flipside is visible in Huey's images of abject identities and in the way that the CIA press coverage relies on cultural stereotypes of spirituality. Both the images in the *National Geographic* and the CIA press coverage seem to suggest that the survival of Native cultures depends on an orientation toward the past and traditionalism. In the way that both texts barely acknowledge Native sovereignty and political agency there is a whiff of the Vanishing Indian and the reductive essentialization of Native presences.

The absence of politically sovereign identities for tribal nations is reflected in *Americans* as well. In contrast to the revisionist articulations of aspects of the Western narrative in the *National Geographic* and the press coverage of the CIA protests, the NMAI harkens back to a more classic form. Within *Americans*, the violent history of American nation-building is at best glossed over, at worst completely absent. Both in the way that the exhibit articulates Native Americans as First Americans and in the way that it portrays Pocahontas as an essential Helper figure, *Americans* legitimizes American expansionism, conquest, and genocide. Even more, it affirms rather than rejects Western narratives and the foundational American myth of Manifest Destiny. Walking out of the exhibit, viewers can see Native Americans as trail blazers for American identities and the US American nation-state.

Native identities arise out of all three case studies as adapted versions of Western identities. The most noticeable change from the classic or revisionist Western narrative is that the dichotomy of nobility/ignobility is rearticulated without references to violence. Indian images that rest on antagonism to white culture, such as the Bloodthirsty or Militant Indian, by definition are less useful in narratives without the central conflict between Native Americans and white settler society. Clearly, the three case studies fall outside the Western genre and are not centered around this conflict. Where previously Noble Indians and Ignoble Indians were often defined by their attitude toward white society, this is at best a muted point in the case studies. On the one hand, the absence of violence affirms narrative structures that casually mute the fact that colonial violence is central to Native-white histories. On the other hand, the absence of violence means that the Bloodthirsty Indian specifically and the Ignoble Savage more generally are thankfully absent. Instead, rearticulations of Indianness favor revisionist themes that rely on questions of purity and closeness to nature in Huey's images and the CIA coverage.

The absence of violence thus changes but does not make impossible rearticulations of nobility and ignobility. Huey's images and the press coverage clearly reflect images of nature-bound nobility and spiritual purity. Whereas the CIA press coverage articulates the Noble Indian without the flipside of the coin, Huey articulates the Ignoble Indian as the modern version of the Drunk and Degraded Indian who, in effect, is not much different from previous centuries of Drunk and Degraded Indians. For both case studies, the proximity to white culture is indicative of nobility/ignobility in the revisionist style: Opposition to the "system" or US American society is indicative of nobility rather

than ignobility. Huey's elevation of traditionalism and protest and the CIA press coverage's identification with Indian causes demonstrate this.

In the NMAI, the question of nobility and ignobility is both more hidden and more complex. Even though there are, strictly, no Good or Bad Indians in *Americans*, certain images are elevated over others. The insistent presence of the Indian Warrior, for one, constructs nobility around concepts of bravery and valor, which is emphasized throughout the Little Bighorn gallery and in the display of military weaponry with Native names. Furthermore, *Americans*' articulation of Native warriors such as Sitting Bull as American heroes and of Pocahontas as an Indian Helper echo the convention of determining Native moral goodness and nobility by their usefulness to white society. The Plains warriors as symbols of American bravery and Pocahontas as a "founder" of the nation make for good Noble Indians. After all, *Americans* claims, their lives legitimized the nation-building process and thus helped create US American culture.

The three texts thus demonstrate that in the end, those elements of the Western that support essential elements of American foundational myths seem relatively undisturbed. The historical narrative of American expansion and its impact on Native societies is muted, decontextualized, and brushed aside, articulating Native Americans mostly as Helpers in the nation-building project of the United States. The particular iterations of nobility or ignobility are contingent on their context and show up in updated forms.

The absence of the most stereotypical and racist images of savagery is not the only aspect of the Western that has fallen by the wayside: In all three case studies, the white Western hero is noticeably changed or absent as well. This change or absence

fundamentally impacts the way that non-Native (white) audiences can position themselves toward the narrative and Native American people today. Clearly, the Western hero as the protagonist of the genre is a narrative device that does not easily transfer into museums, press coverage, or even photographs. Thus, by the very nature of the NMAI, the white Western hero figure does not make an appearance at all. In the *National Geographic* images and the press coverage of the CIA, the Western hero is fundamentally changed and truly subtle.

Chapter 1 outlines how Huey constructs his own identity in the TED talk, his lecture, the short movie, his website, and his book. In the vein of the Western hero going Native, he articulates himself as an effective speaker for the Oglala Lakota nation because of his proximity to the tribe. Rather than the classic Western hero who protects white settlers from Indians, this revisionist Western hero recognizes that the real problem lies within settler society and therefore he switches sides and becomes Indian. Huey becomes an example of what Sam Pack argues is the Indianized white hero getting the “best of both worlds”: The white hero who went Native—Dunbar in *Dances with Wolves*, Val Kilmer in *Thunderheart*—appropriates the desirable traits of Indianness but can remove themselves from the consequences of being Native in the United States.⁸¹⁸ Huey gets to play at being Oglala Lakota on his visits to the reservation and even names his son “Hawkeye,” he gets to take the photographs with which he earns a living—and then he gets to return to Seattle, far away from the gang violence, poverty, and suicide rates on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

In the select images for the *National Geographic*, Huey’s absence removes this revisionist hero and his activist stance. This absence is both a win and a loss for the

complexity of the project because it eliminates both the paternalistic narrative and the activist push to improve the living conditions on the Pine Ridge reservation. In the end, Huey's absence transfers the status of hero to the (white) reader. The abject poverty in the images allows viewers to interpret themselves in the role of the white savior, which is a role that the *National Geographic* has long reserved for its mainstream readership.

Interestingly, both the *National Geographic* and the CIA press coverage thus articulate white people as potential allies—an identity that is not generally present in the Western genre, in which white and Native folks are usually in conflict with each other. Both Huey's project and the CIA protests show Native and white folks as allies with white people being allies to the Native people in question rather than the other way around. Absent Indians or white settlers as the "bad guys," the Western conflict between good and evil is maintained by a subtle attribution of moral depravity to segments of white dominant society other than the settlers/farmers/ranchers. Just like in the revisionist Westerns, in which eastern oil companies are a favorite stand-in for Euro-American immorality, oil companies and the US government are the "bad guys" in the CIA press coverage. In Huey's images, the antagonist identity is muted at best but can be assumed to be the US government or local white people.⁸¹⁹ Mainstream society and the "progress" of "civilization" emerge as the corrupting, negative force in both projects, reflecting the revisionist Western narratives of the 1960s and later decades. Ultimately, however, the vagueness of the criticism evades any in-depth discussion of responsibilities for colonial atrocities.

The absence of the white cowboy hero helps ease the most obvious racial tensions of the Western genre. If audiences no longer have to account for the Lone Ranger's

treatment of Tonto, they don't have to account for racial articulations of identity. If racial difference is not visualized within the images, audiences do not have to confront racial ideas or constructs much at all. Furthermore, the absence of the white hero allows white audiences to interpret white settler identity as underdogs instead of the perpetrators of colonial violence. This dynamic is most visible in the CIA press coverage, which articulated farmers and ranchers as victims of corporate greed as much as Native Americans. Echoing the revisionist split of white Western characters into "bad guys" (corporation, government) and "good guys" (settlers) allows audiences to maintain the myth of Manifest Destiny and benevolent expansion because this articulates white settlers as underdogs who are, like their Indian allies, also "just" victims.

While all three case studies clearly mirror narrative and visual tropes that reflect elements of the Western genre, they also clearly demonstrate that the Western paradigms can be successfully disrupted or sometimes even employed for the gain of Native Americans. In terms of successful interruptions, the case studies point toward two important strategies: First, articulating diverse, modern, and tribally-specific identities replaces the stock characters of the Western and disrupts notions that only specific cultural expressions or visual presentations are "authentically" Native American. The Community Storytelling Project demonstrates this most clearly. Huey's photos, the CIA press coverage, and the NMAI all chose to articulate identities that are more closely related to the past than to the present, which meant that Western identity articulations remained mostly untroubled. Second, all three projects show that contemporary Native American issues can only be meaningfully discussed when they are thoroughly contextualized in the history of colonialism and Native-white relations. Those articles

that contextualized the CIA in these histories demonstrated that historicization opens a space for transcending stereotypes and constructing alternative Native identities.

Americans and Huey's images demonstrate how the absence of contextualization perpetuates and trivializes reductive Indian images. Discussing colonial contexts is central to shifting conversations away from victim-blaming and from assumptions that modern conditions on the reservations are Native-made.

Evaluating Self- and Other-Representation

Another commonality to all three case studies shows that self-representation in its various forms impacts representation. However, clear conclusions about whether self-representation leads to improved representation remain complicated. Ironically, the most satisfyingly complex representation of modern Indianness—the Oglala Lakota Community Storytelling Project—was published in connection with the least progressive framework described in this dissertation: the *National Geographic*. However, the Storytelling Project seems to indicate that self-representation must be an essential element of negating Western stereotypes and its chaotic complexity is a vibrant testament to the vitality of Oglala Lakota identities. In the CIA press coverage, however, the self-directed incorporation of the Indian Warrior as a press frame clearly had mixed results. *Americans* raised the question where the line between insider- and outsider-representation can even be located.

In the end, this last point seems to be decisive for analyzing self- and other-representation. While sometimes, the differentiation between self- and other-representation is relatively easy—Huey's images and the Community Storytelling Project are the clearest case—mostly it is not. The analyses of *Americans* and the press coverage

of the CIA show that insider- and outsider-representation often exist within one text, making clear distinctions complicated. Thus, what troubles the simplicity of the assumption that insider-representation is usually better than outsider-representation is not a clear quality or content difference between the products but the complexity of telling apart self- and other-representations in the first place. After all, the CIA press coverage included media frames that focused on the Indian Warrior and generic Indianness *and* those stereotypical frames were invited by the CIA; and the NMAI functions as a national museum that speaks in a Native voice. The projects are, therefore, not only multimedia texts, they are also multi-vocal in terms of insider- and outsider-representation.

Because of the way that public discourse has changed with the introduction of social media and increasing public feedback opportunities to public texts, it is likely that mixed texts representing insider and outsider input are going to become more prevalent. As Nancy Morrison and Andrew L. Mendelson demonstrate, representation of insiders by outsiders is increasingly subject to public evaluation by those represented because more than ever, people have access to their representations by other.⁸²⁰ Like in Huey's case, the increased opportunities for criticism challenge the authority of the journalist and the authority of the mass media.⁸²¹ As a result, the conventional power structures within public discourse change. Whereas traditionally, Native Americans had no or very little influence on their own representation, there is now ever more space for speaking back to power.

Increased agency for self-representation and influence on other-representation are not automatic cures for centuries-old misrepresentations. Both the CIA press coverage and the NMAI exhibit demonstrate this in the way that interpretive openness allows

audiences to reaffirm their own preconceived notions even in the face of Native-directed imagery. As Todd Gitlin points out: Even if people put certain images out there deliberately, they have little control over what the media or the media's audiences do with these images.⁸²² For the CIA, the press coverage that resulted from the orchestrated image event was a mixed bag that ultimately highlighted that engaging Western imagery creates great attention material but also activates long-standing public misconceptions. While Native protestors successfully articulated modern sovereign identities and political motivations for their protest, the press coverage was ambiguous enough for audiences to reaffirm visual stereotypes of the Indian Warrior and the Generic Indian. Similarly, within the *Americans* exhibit, the lack of context created opportunities for visitors to affirm notions of Indian images as mostly harmless and entertaining in their inconsequentiality.

Regardless of whether the CIA put the Indian/Cowboy dichotomy out there to gain attention, and regardless of whether the *Americans* curators meant to create different or more complex Native identities, audiences will interpret texts along their personal range of experiences. Even more starkly, it does not seem to be important whether images are self- or other-representation. In his studies of Navajo representation, anthropologist Sam Pack convincingly argued that representations “of Navajos by both outsiders and insiders are mutually reinforcing and perpetuating because audiences inscribe meanings to native-authored texts that have been inculcated through initial familiarity with popular texts.”⁸²³ Regardless of authorial or producer intent, audiences interpret Indian images through what they know—and this is where the Western looms large. After all, the Western genre remains a valid interpretive frame for many Americans. In some sense,

then, Native (self-)representation for non-Native audiences seems to be a struggle against windmills because of the audience's preconceived ideas and the absence of meaningful contextual knowledge.⁸²⁴ As this dissertation attests to, the fact that there might be no meaningful differences between other- and self-representation does not in general bode well for Native people engaging in projects of self-representation, especially not Native folks employing Western imagery.

For critics, difficulties differentiating between insider- and outsider-representations creates several implications. First, the fact that Native American identities can be defined by legal, cultural, and social definitions turns the question into dangerous territory. After all, it is preposterous to decide who "counts" as Native and who doesn't, especially if the critic herself is decisively not Native (like me). In order to make a coherent case for what kind of text is in front of the critic, easy assumptions about self- and other-representation must be troubled and rejected. Sometimes it might make sense not to insist on characterizing a text as either self- or other-representation but as a mixture. In the end, it seems almost always more important to analyze the text for possible interpretations in terms of its audiences than for interpretations resting on the author's race or ethnicity. Second, in order to account for the complexities of differentiating insiders and outsiders, the social, historical, and institutional background of the texts in questions are foundational to any interpretation. It is impossible to discuss identity articulations of any group without taking into considering the national histories and national myths that inform the way these identities are articulated in public and the way that they are constrained by the institutions that frame them.

Regardless of these methodological issues with self- and other-representations, there is still a strong case for cheering on unequivocally Native texts. It seems like self-representation—albeit not always “better” than outsider-representation—should be considered not so much for its quality but because of its situation within American public discourse. Self-representation is a part of visual and narrative sovereignty that Native Americans have never had but that they are owed. It also matters that representatives of marginalized populations get to articulate their own identities and it matters that white allies like Huey react to criticism when they receive it. It matters that the *National Geographic* chose Kiowa and Bannock-Shoshone authors to write the two articles concerning Native Americans in their series on race and diversity—especially in light of the representational constraints that originate in powerful institutions like the *National Geographic*.

Evaluating the Power of Institutions

This brings me to the last theme, the power of institutions. The case studies show that institutional frames can severely limit the rearticulations of Indianness and reinforce conventional Indian images from the Western. Limitations stemmed from different frames in all three case studies: For the CIA press coverage, it was conventional press frames for covering Native Americans. For Huey, limitations derived from the conventions of the *National Geographic*. Lastly, *Americans* could not detach itself from the framework of the NMAI as a national museum. While these frames are different in nature, they worked similarly in several ways.

First, the institutional frameworks seem to reaffirm conventional Western visual and narrative tropes that overpower alternative iterations of identity and myth, as

demonstrated by both *Americans* and Huey's images in the *National Geographic*. Both the NMAI as a national museum and the *National Geographic* constrain their texts to affirm the Otherness of Native Americans and, ultimately, to corroborate myths of American expansion as inevitable and/or beneficial to all Americans. While the NMAI jubilantly acclaims Pocahontas as a founder of the nation, Huey's images take a more critical stance by clearly outlining the precarious situation of the Oglala Lakota today. However, neither text manages to escape the framework within which it functions. Huey's images ultimately reiterate the cultural exotic Other and the NMAI undercuts any critical discussion of colonialism by reflecting reductive tropes of Indian warriors and maidens. The frames, thus, maintain both visual and narrative tropes, and thus neither text produces portrayals that differ meaningfully from mainstream conceptualizations of Native identities. Once again, audiences are allowed to look at Indian images as nothing but aesthetic renditions of Indianness rather than encouraging them to question the conditions of the people depicted.

As indicated in the Huey chapter, the *National Geographic* is making efforts to transparently own up to and question its own institutional power by interrogating its approach to visual and narrative representation of the cultural Other. The magazine's Diversity series in 2018 included two articles written by a Shoshone-Bannock and a Kiowa author respectively.⁸²⁵ However, the December 2018 issue that includes those two articles also includes a photo series on the Inupiat nation that affirms every last stereotype that the *National Geographic* has peddled about the cultural Other, and specifically Native Americans, over the last century: men and women in traditional clothes, in nature, involved in traditional activities (in this case, whaling). The problem is not that this is an

inaccurate portrayal. By all accounts the Inupiat do wear traditional clothes, do practice whaling, and because of the nature of this activity do so mostly outside. The problem is the same as with Huey's images, or the press coverage of the CIA: the limitation to a frame that is well-known, stereotypical, and reductive in its essentializing rendition of indigenous identities.

The reiteration of Indian stereotypes in the same issue that tries to take down and criticize those very stereotypes indicates a second way in which institutional frames have a limiting impact on alternative representations. Single instances of improved and more complex representation do not change much in the grand scheme of things. The articles by Ahtone and Trahan are remarkable additions and much welcome changes in the *National Geographic's* frames for indigenous peoples. However, in terms of quantity, they barely make a scratch. As long as the magazine continues to cover indigenous people from all over the world predominately through the lens of the exotic, sexualized, cultural Other, a few articles—or even Storytelling Projects—are easily drowned out. Similar conclusions are true for the press coverage and the NMAI exhibits. This evaluation does not at all mean that the alternative articulations of Indianness achieved in single instances are not valuable contributions. However, the burden of representation that exists for under-represented marginalized communities can seemingly only be lifted by substantial numbers of alternative representations. This substantial threshold seems hitherto unreached.

A third and last way in which the three case studies indicate the way that institutional frameworks function connects to the question of credibility and authority within the public sphere. As disheartening as the second point, it seems that frameworks

like the *National Geographic*, a national museum, or even “just” the printed and published word increase rather than limit the credibility of stereotypical and reductive images. Because *Americans*, sanctioned by the NMAI, pushes the Indian Warrior on the audience, and because Huey and the *National Geographic* throw their weight behind the Ecological/Spiritual Indian, these images are given salience, validity, and authenticity. This, these texts say, is really how Indians are, believe us. And if the National Museum of the American Indian says this is how Indians are, who are we to doubt that? Especially the *National Geographic*, with its pseudo-scientific and educational authority, renders the reductive Indian images salient and acceptable even though, clearly, neither science nor journalism should deal in stereotypes.⁸²⁶

These aspects of institutional frames require critics to interrogate the institutional contexts of their sources for the type of rhetorical exclusion or misleading outlined above. Furthermore, these institutional traits contradict simple assumptions about the quality of sources based on “mainstream,” “alternative,” local, or Native representations. As the CIA press coverage demonstrates, meaningful distinctions between the coverage of Native American issues in the mainstream or alternative press were impossible. Whereas Native news outlets such as *Indian Country Today* seemed to do better, all other press publications belied easy categorization because they contained Western imagery as well as interruptions of Western tropes often not only within one publication but within one article.

In summary, the Western genre continues to exert power over visual and narrative tropes that communicate Indianness in public. In general, Western stock characters have made way for rearticulations of Indianness that at least nod toward the contemporaneity

of indigenous Americans. However, questions of reductive visual types and evaluations of Native identities as noble or ignoble prevail. In the end, these modern reflections of Western simplicities enable audiences to continue propping up US American master narratives that focus on expansion and colonialism as nation-building rather than recognizing historical accounts of expansion as land theft, conquest, and genocide. As a result of these rearticulations of Indianness, Native Americans emerge as groups that are defined as cultural rather than sovereign others. Glimpses of sovereignty and agency are visible in all three case studies—the political agency in the CIA coverage, the historical agency in the NMAI, the survivance of Huey’s Oglala Lakota subjects. However, the lasting impression of all three case studies is an articulation of Indianness that relies on cultural definitions of Indianness rather than legal or political ones.

Especially *Americans* demonstrates how Native American identity cannot be articulated as politically sovereign without creating frictions with overarching conceptualizations of Americanness. Within the tension created by race, ethnicity, culture, and political sovereignty as markers of identity, Otherness is reiterated as racially, ethnically, and culturally bound. Both the *National Geographic* and the CIA coverage insist on the culturally exotic Other who is engaged in performing spiritual rituals and/or performs a certain type of visual Indianness. Even though the CIA press coverage includes some references of political sovereignty as both a motivation and a legitimation of the anti-Keystone pipeline protest, most available constructions of Indianness rely little on the concept of sovereignty. Instead, Huey and the CIA coverage reiterate variations of the Noble Indian, the Indian Warrior, and the Ecological/Spiritual Indian. Framing Native motivations for political dissent as exclusively spiritual, however,

robs Native people of political agency and articulates them as cultural rather than political minorities. In the NMAI, his negation of sovereignty is echoed in the subordination of Indianness into Americanness.

Articulating Indianness as cultural/ethnic/racial rather than as politically sovereign matters within American public discourse on Native Americans. Stripping Indianness of its political sovereignty enables social and legal discourses that are of potentially major consequences for Native Americans. For example, a current challenge to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) argues that Native Americans are a racial, not a political group, and as such should not be treated differently before the law than any other group.⁸²⁷ Opponents of the challenge argue that the stipulation of the ICWA that gives preference to Native people adopting Native children over white people adopting Native children is lawful because Native American nations are sovereign. As sovereigns, they have a right to keep their citizens with their own. If the ICWA were successfully challenged on grounds that Native Americans are a racial or cultural group, and that divergence from equal protection under the law is unconstitutional, this could cement an articulation of Indianness as cultural/ethnic/racial into law.

Imagine the domino effect that this redefinition could potentially have. If ICWA were successfully challenged and Native Americans were articulated as a racial or cultural group instead of as sovereign nations, the very basis of Indian law could be contested: the assumption that Native Americans tribal groups are nations—albeit domestic dependent nations. Defining these nations as cultural or racial groups in effect negates what US American law has reaffirmed since the 1830s: that Native Americans are sovereign nations, with a limited right to self-government in their own territories. If

this sovereignty can be challenged, so can their territory, and reservations and tribal lands could be subsumed into state territories. The recognition of special status for tribal nations that affords Native Americans protections under the law could be revoked and the very legal recognition of tribal nations could come to an end.

Luckily, a complete revocation of the special legal status that Native Americans currently hold sounds rather unlikely. However, any time that the *National Geographic*, the NMAI, or respected media outlets articulate Indianness as anything less than politically sovereign, they contribute to building a case that Indianness is nothing more than just another hyphenated American identity. And in the end that notion of Indianness perpetuates the project that the Western genre has been engaged in for a century and a half: Justifying American expansion in the eyes of the American public.

NOTES

Introduction

¹ I am aware of the problematic terminology when talking about the original populations of the USA and Canada. I generally use “Native American” and “Indian” instead of “American Indian” or “First Nation” when referring to US and Canadian tribal nations. Native American seems an acceptable term to talk about the pan-tribal population of indigenous peoples in the United States but the term is not often used as a term of self-identification. In respect to film history, “Indian” carries a complex and sometimes negative connotation. However, in respect to self-identification “Indian” is a salient and positive term. There is, thus, no good or easy or easy choice. For more information on terminology, see Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities*, 16; Krech III, *The Ecological Indian*, 17.

² Moe and Lenz, “Cowboys and Indian Stand Together.”

³ Fryberg et al., “Of Warrior Chiefs and Indian Princesses,” 208.

⁴ Baudino, “A Place of Memory and Possibility,” 60.

⁵ Baudino, 60.

⁶ Steele and Aronson, “Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans,” 797–98.

⁷ When the tribal affiliation of Native American authors is indicated in their or other’s publications, I specify this for the first mention of the author in each chapter.

However, information on tribal affiliation is not always readily available or easily accessible, and I am sure that I have missed the one or other affiliation. I want to clarify that I am not indicating tribal affiliations to override other affiliations, especially professional ones. Many of the cited Native American authors are scholars or practitioners, especially in the context of the NMAI in chapter 3. A tribal identification in brackets should not be interpreted as an indication that the person in questions is not also a scholar or museum practitioner.

⁸ Mithlo, "History Is Dangerous," 57.

⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

¹⁰ Despite advancements since the 1900s, the economic and social situation of Native people today is atrocious. In terms of income and life expectancy, Native Americans routinely rank lowest among all ethnicities or racial groups in the United States. Unemployment is rampant, especially on reservations. The rates of obesity, alcoholism, drug addiction, depression, suicide are terrifying. Educational levels are low. Teenage pregnancy rates are high (McGreal, "Obama's Indian Problem"; American Indian Relief Council, "Living Conditions - American Indian Relief Council Is Now Northern Plains Reservation Aid"). For a history of reservations see *e.g.* Deloria and Wilkins, *Tribes, Treaties, and Constitutional Tribulations*.

¹¹ Trebay, "An Uneasy Exchange Between Fashion and Navajo Culture"; Landry, "Navajo Nation"; Keene, "But Why Can't I Wear a Hipster Headdress?"; Lynskey, "This Means War."

- ¹² Fuller and Huey, “In the Shadow of Wounded Knee.”
- ¹³ Gallagher and Zagacki, “Epiphanies and Transformations,” 131.
- ¹⁴ Finnegan, “Review Essay: Visual Studies and Visual Rhetoric,” 244–55.
- ¹⁵ Finnegan, 244.
- ¹⁶ Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, 5.
- ¹⁷ Birdsell and Groarke, “Toward a Theory of Visual Argument,” 6.
- ¹⁸ Cloud, “Afghan Women.”
- ¹⁹ Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty*, xv.
- ²⁰ Jay, “Scopic Regimes of Modernity.”
- ²¹ Kaszynski, “Look, a [Picture]!,” 66.
- ²² Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 9.
- ²³ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 143.
- ²⁴ Birdsell and Groarke, “Toward a Theory of Visual Argument,” 7.
- ²⁵ Kaszynski, “Look, a [Picture]!,” 63.
- ²⁶ Gallagher and Zagacki, “Epiphanies and Transformations,” 131.
- ²⁷ Gallagher and Zagacki, “Power of Visual Images,” 182; Finnegan, “The Naturalistic Enthymeme.”

²⁸ Kaszynski, “Look, a [Picture]!,” 73.

²⁹ Kaszynski, 65.

³⁰ The idea of photography of suffering as “porn” has existed for a while. Allan Sekula posited photographing poverty was pornographic because of the “ ‘direct’ representation of misery” (Sekula, *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973-1983*, 62). Frederic Jameson thought that photography’s end of “rapt, mindless fascination” was pornographic (Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible*, 1). Susan Sontag asserted that “[a]ll images that display the violation of an attractive body are, to a certain degree, pornographic” (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 95).

³¹ Boo, “Staring Down Stereotypes,” 51–52.

³² Boo, 52.

³³ Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 44.

³⁴ Linfield, 41–42.

³⁵ Linfield, 41–42.

³⁶ Elkins, *Visual Studies*, 66–67.

³⁷ Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 45.

³⁸ Azoulay, *Civil Contract*, 118–19.

³⁹ Gallagher and Zagacki, “Power of Visual Images,” 118.

⁴⁰ Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 97.

⁴¹ Azoulay, *Civil Contract*, 18.

⁴² Azoulay, 342–45, 355–56.

⁴³ Azoulay, 18.

⁴⁴ Azoulay, 13–14.

⁴⁵ Azoulay, 131.

⁴⁶ Azoulay, 131.

⁴⁷ Azoulay, 118, 121. Azoulay does not use “citizen” and “noncitizen” to refer to legal concepts but to differentiate between those who can exercise full citizenship rights and those whose citizenship rights are “flawed.”

⁴⁸ Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 97.

⁴⁹ Azoulay, *Civil Contract*, 14.

⁵⁰ Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 33.

⁵¹ Hariman and Lucaites, “Public Identity and Collective Memory,” 179.

⁵² Hariman and Lucaites, 177.

⁵³ Delicath and DeLuca, “Image Events,” 317–18.

⁵⁴ Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 29.

⁵⁵ Delicath and DeLuca, "Image Events," 317. See also Delicath and DeLuca, "Image Events"; DeLuca and Peebles, "From Public Sphere to Public Screen"; Harold and DeLuca, "Behold the Corpse."

⁵⁶ Barth, "Preface 1998," 6; Yanow, *Constructing "Race" and "Ethnicity,"* 108; Nagel and Snipp, "Ethnic Reorganization," 105.

⁵⁷ Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity*, 10.

⁵⁸ Smoak, 6; Yanow, *Constructing "Race" and "Ethnicity,"* 208.

⁵⁹ Yanow, *Constructing "Race" and "Ethnicity,"* viii.

⁶⁰ Yanow, 209.

⁶¹ Yanow, 185.

⁶² Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity*, 10.

⁶³ Smoak, 193.

⁶⁴ Moore, "Racism, Ethnogenesis, and American Politics," 73.

⁶⁵ Nagel and Snipp, "Ethnic Reorganization," 212, 220.

⁶⁶ Nagel and Snipp, 223.

⁶⁷ Regarding terminology, claiming an "Indian" identity might be more powerful than a "Native American" identity. Dvora Yanow argues that the idea of hyphenated Americans (Italian-Americans, German-Americans, African-Americans, Native-

Americans) creates at best a superficial layer of ethnic identity: In essence, the terminology puts Americanness over a “highly aggregated” ethnic identity at the “continental level”—the cultural meaning of ethnic identity is sacrificed to the American “we” (Yanow, *Constructing “Race” and “Ethnicity,”* 185). “Indian,” albeit a colonial term, seems to be a more salient description of the emerged/emerging identity conglomerate encompassing Native American tribal nations within the United States. It is both a rejection of a similarity to US Americans on the happenstance of politics, history, and geography; and it refuses to play a role in the normalization of white Anglo-Saxon (Protestant) Americans as “just Americans.” Lastly, since the term “Indian” embraces both the colonial past and present, it seems a better protest term than “Native American.” If this sounds like an embrace of the term “Indian”—it is. Being Indian is a salient and specific albeit broad category. However, the term has also been used to describe the screen images of Native Americans, where it has a connotation of not-realness. There is no easy way out of this terminology conundrum. I use both “Indian” and “Native American” without any special connotation.

⁶⁸ Nagel and Snipp, “Ethnic Reorganization,” 206.

⁶⁹ Vizenor, “Fugitive Poses”; Vizenor, “Aesthetics of Survivance”; Kroeber, “Why It’s a Good Thing Gerald Vizenor Is Not an Indian.”

⁷⁰ Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity*, 192.

⁷¹ Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, xii.

⁷² Hariman and Lucaites, “Public Identity and Collective Memory,” 176.

⁷³ Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 2002, 65–124.

⁷⁴ Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” 2002, 74–76.

⁷⁵ Hariman and Lucaites, “Performing Civic Identity,” 365.

⁷⁶ Hariman and Lucaites, 66.

⁷⁷ German, “Portrayals of American Indians in Early Radio,” 11; Jarding, “Native American and Non-Indian Newspaper Coverage of Land and Resource Issues in the Self-Determination Era,” 559.

⁷⁸ Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*.

⁷⁹ Vigneras, *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*, 194–200; Honour, *The New Golden Land*, 6. Columbus’s letters were printed in sixteen editions.

⁸⁰ Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 7.

⁸¹ Honour, *The New Golden Land*, 120; Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 74.

⁸² Brennan, “Visual Images of America in the Sixteenth Century,” 1029. One of the first depictions was a Native man in a canoe, published in Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdes *La Historia General de las Indias* (1535). De Bry’s engravings were published in fourteen volumes between 1590 and 1634 and inspired other artists to copy them. Keazor, “Theodore De Bry’s Images for America,” 131.

⁸³ Gaudio, *Engraving the Savage*, xiii; Keazor, “Theodore De Bry’s Images for America,” 134.

⁸⁴ Coward, *Indians Illustrated*.

⁸⁵ Flavin, “The Adventurer-Artists of the Nineteenth Century and the Image of the American Indian,” 2–3; Hauptman and Hamell, “George Catlin,” 129; Morgan, “The Indian Paintings of George de Forest Brush.” Catlin (1796-1872) spent time among the tribes of the Upper Missouri and the southern Plains; Bodmer visited the tribes in Indiana and South Dakota between 1832 and 1834.

⁸⁶ Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians*; Catlin, *Life Amongst the Indians*.

⁸⁷ Flavin, “The Adventurer-Artists of the Nineteenth Century and the Image of the American Indian,” 8–9.

⁸⁸ Some compilations of captivity narratives: Derounian-Stodola, *Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives*; Derounian-Stodola, *The War in Words*; Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captive Histories*; Vaughan and Clark, *Puritans Among the Indians*. These accounts were rarely formalized or published in colonial times since the captivity experience was relatively common (Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captive Histories*, 11–13).

⁸⁹ Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*.

⁹⁰ Rollins and O’Connor, “The Study of Hollywood’s Indian. Still on a Scholarly Frontier?,” 11.

⁹¹ Curtin, “From Pity to Necessity: How National Events Shaped Coverage of the Plains Indian War,” 8–9.

⁹² Coward, “The Princess and the Squaw.”

⁹³ McNenly, “Foe, Friend, or Critic,” 143.

⁹⁴ Sagala, *Buffalo Bill on the Silver Screen*; McNenly, “Foe, Friend, or Critic,” 143.

⁹⁵ Sagala, *Buffalo Bill on the Silver Screen*, 10–11; Huhndorf, *Going Native*; Rinehart, “To Hell with the Wigs! Native American Representation and Resistance at the World’s Columbian Exposition”; Dillon, “Indians and ‘Indianicity.’”

⁹⁶ McNenly, “Foe, Friend, or Critic,” 148.

⁹⁷ Malmshemer, “Imitation White Men: Images of Transformation at the Carlisle Indian School.”

⁹⁸ Egan, “‘Yet in a Primitive Condition.’ Edward S. Curtis’s North American Indian,” 60.

⁹⁹ Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology*, 92; Egan, “‘Yet in a Primitive Condition.’ Edward S. Curtis’s North American Indian,” 64–67.

¹⁰⁰ Edgerton, *Westerns*, 124–25.

¹⁰¹ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 28.

¹⁰² Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formula, Filmmaking, and the Studio System*, 46–47.

¹⁰³ Allen, “Sight in the Sound,” 117.

¹⁰⁴ FitzGerald, *Native Americans on Network TV*, xiv.

¹⁰⁵ Lacroix, “High Stakes Stereotypes,” 5.

¹⁰⁶ Larson, “Rhetoric and American Indians”; Scotch, “The Vanishing Villains of Television”; FitzGerald, *Native Americans on Network TV*.

¹⁰⁷ Baylor, “Media Framing,” 243–44, 249. Local news generally did a better job at covering Native issues, both in print media and on television (Larson, *Media & Minorities*, 180).

¹⁰⁸ Weston, *Native Americans in the News*, 163.

¹⁰⁹ George and Sanders, “Reconstructing Tonto: Cultural Formations and American Indians in 1990s Television Fiction”; Hersey, “Word-Healers and Code-Talkers: Native Americans in The X-Files.”

¹¹⁰ Cobb, “The National Museum of the American Indian as Cultural Sovereignty”; Lonetree and Cobb, “Introduction”; Isaac, “What Are Our Expectations Telling Us?”

¹¹¹ Black, “The ‘Mascotting’ of Native America”; Hoffman, “Whose Home on the Range?”

¹¹² Elliott, “‘Cowboy Indian Alliance’ Will Ride To ‘Reject and Protect’ Keystone XL Protest”; Moe and Lenz, “Cowboys and Indian Stand Together”; ICTMN Staff, “Dakota Access.”

¹¹³ Henry and Costo, *Textbooks and the American Indian*, 11.

¹¹⁴ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*; Sanchez, “The Depiction of Native Americans in Recent (1991–2004) Secondary American History Textbooks”; Stanton, “The Curricular Indian Agent”; Hirschfelder, “The Treatment of Iroquois Indians in Selected American History Textbooks.”

¹¹⁵ Edgerton and Marsden, “Introduction,” 1.

¹¹⁶ Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 98.

¹¹⁷ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 9–15; Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 98–101.

¹¹⁸ Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 102–3.

¹¹⁹ O’Connor, “The White Man’s Indian: An Institutional Approach,” 32.

¹²⁰ Edgerton and Marsden, “Introduction,” 1.

¹²¹ Kitses, “The Western: Ideology and Archetype,” 69.

¹²² Edgerton and Marsden, “Introduction,” 1–2; Weiser, *Museum Rhetoric*, 58.

¹²³ Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860*.

¹²⁴ Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formula, Filmmaking, and the Studio System*, 47–48.

¹²⁵ Hada, “The Cost of the Code: Ethical Consequences in High Noon and the Ox-Bow Incident,” 188. John Cawelti characterizes this central conflict between nature and civilization as the “epic moment” that made the genre so effective in film and TV (Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel*, 49).

¹²⁶ Isenberg and Richards, “Alternative Wests,” 6–8.

¹²⁷ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, “Memory and Myth,” 102–3.

¹²⁸ Gann, “Cowboys, Six-Guns, and Horses,” 230.

¹²⁹ Gann, 224.

¹³⁰ Coffee, “Cultural Inclusion,” 265.

¹³¹ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, “Memory and Myth,” 85.

¹³² Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, 103.

¹³³ Edgerton and Marsden, “Introduction,” 2.

¹³⁴ Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel*, 121–23.

¹³⁵ Heba and Murphy, “Go West, Young Woman! Hegel’s Dialectic and Women’s Identities in Western Film,” 326.

¹³⁶ Heba and Murphy, 309; Knight and McKnight, “The Northwestern: McCabe and Mrs. Miller,” 244.

¹³⁷ Devlin, “No Country for Old Men: The Decline of Ethics and the West(ern).” Devlin argues that the genre conventions can be turned on their head without disqualifying narratives from counting as a form of Western.

¹³⁸ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 57; Knight and McKnight, “The Northwestern: McCabe and Mrs. Miller,” 244.

¹³⁹ Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 97.

¹⁴⁰ Money, “Broken Arrows: Images of Native Americans in the Popular Western,” 364; FitzGerald, *Native Americans on Network TV*, xiv. Westerns can be set in other landscapes and regions. Important is the setting “on or near a frontier” (Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel*, 20).

¹⁴¹ Cawelti, “Savagery, Civilization and the Western Hero,” 58–59; Knight and McKnight, “The Northwestern: McCabe and Mrs. Miller,” 241, 245; Devlin, “No Country for Old Men: The Decline of Ethics and the West(ern),” 227. Devlin convincingly argues that these dynamics can be transported into modernity without interrupting foundational dynamics of the genre.

¹⁴² Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 97.

¹⁴³ Berkhofer, 55.

¹⁴⁴ Berkhofer, 97; Cawelti, "Savagery, Civilization and the Western Hero," 59, 62.

¹⁴⁵ Heba and Murphy, "Go West, Young Woman! Hegel's Dialectic and Women's Identities in Western Film," 309.

¹⁴⁶ Devlin, "No Country for Old Men: The Decline of Ethics and the West(ern)," 221.

¹⁴⁷ Devlin, 226.

¹⁴⁸ Cawelti, "Savagery, Civilization and the Western Hero," 63.

¹⁴⁹ Many Western movies in from the 1930s to the 1950s did not include Indian characters (Bird, "Gendered Construction of the American Indian in Popular Media," 74).

¹⁵⁰ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 28.

¹⁵¹ Riley, "Trapped in the History of Film. Racial Conflict and Allure in The Vanishing American," 62.

¹⁵² Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*, 4.

¹⁵³ Pack, "Constructing 'The Navajo,'" 99.

¹⁵⁴ Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 98.

¹⁵⁵ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 11–12.

¹⁵⁶ Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 98.

¹⁵⁷ Geertz, "Contemporary Problems in the Study of Native North American Religions with Special Reference to the Hopis," 393.

¹⁵⁸ Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 73.

¹⁵⁹ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 4.

¹⁶⁰ Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, 42–43.

¹⁶¹ Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 76.

¹⁶² Valdez Moses, "Savage Nations: Native Americans and the Western," 267.

¹⁶³ Kitses, "The Western: Ideology and Archetype," 65–66. The nature/civilization dichotomy also works in Westerns without Indians, where the conflict is between the upright "Wild West" and either the corrupt East or other ethnic minorities, such as Mexicans.

¹⁶⁴ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 21–22.

¹⁶⁵ Deloria, 104.

¹⁶⁶ Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 89.

¹⁶⁷ Berkhofer, 91.

¹⁶⁸ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*.

- ¹⁷⁰ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 4.
- ¹⁷¹ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 3; Barbour, *From Daniel Boone to Captain America*, 179.
- ¹⁷² O'Connor, "The White Man's Indian: An Institutional Approach," 33.
- ¹⁷³ E.g. in Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*; Deloria, *Playing Indian*.
- ¹⁷⁴ Riley, "Trapped in the History of Film. Racial Conflict and Allure in The Vanishing American," 70.
- ¹⁷⁵ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, xvii–xviii.
- ¹⁷⁶ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 36.
- ¹⁷⁷ Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 98.
- ¹⁷⁸ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 161.
- ¹⁷⁹ FitzGerald, *Native Americans on Network TV*, xiii.
- ¹⁸⁰ FitzGerald, viii; Larson, *Media & Minorities*, 47.
- ¹⁸¹ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 58.
- ¹⁸² Marubbio, 36.
- ¹⁸³ Marubbio, 4.
- ¹⁸⁴ FitzGerald, *Native Americans on Network TV*, 183.

¹⁸⁵ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 3.

¹⁸⁶ Marubbio, 3.

¹⁸⁷ Riley, “Trapped in the History of Film. Racial Conflict and Allure in The Vanishing American,” 70.

¹⁸⁸ Valdez Moses, “Savage Nations: Native Americans and the Western,” 267.

¹⁸⁹ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 3–4.

¹⁹⁰ Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 28.

¹⁹¹ Hilger, *From Savage to Nobleman*, 1–16.

¹⁹² Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 28.

¹⁹³ Kasdan and Tavernetti, “Native Americans,” 122.

¹⁹⁴ Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 28.

¹⁹⁵ O’Connor, “The White Man’s Indian: An Institutional Approach,” 34.

¹⁹⁶ Baird, ““Going Indian’: Dances with Wolves (1990),” 159.

¹⁹⁷ O’Connor, “The White Man’s Indian: An Institutional Approach,” 34.

Compare: Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 105.

¹⁹⁸ Kasdan and Tavernetti, “Native Americans,” 124.

¹⁹⁹ Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 28; Kasdan and Tavernetti, "Native Americans," 124.

²⁰⁰ Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 28; Kasdan and Tavernetti, "Native Americans," 124, 130.

²⁰¹ Hilger, *From Savage to Nobleman*, 1–16.

²⁰² Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 27.

²⁰³ Kasdan and Tavernetti, "Native Americans"; Jojola, "On Revision and Revisionism."

²⁰⁴ Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 103.

²⁰⁵ Valdez Moses, "Savage Nations: Native Americans and the Western," 271.

²⁰⁶ E.g. Valdez Moses, 276–77; FitzGerald, *Native Americans on Network TV*, xxxi; Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*; Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 178–79.

²⁰⁷ O'Connor, "The White Man's Indian: An Institutional Approach," 37; Kasdan and Tavernetti, "Native Americans," 124–25.

²⁰⁸ Valdez Moses, "Savage Nations: Native Americans and the Western," 274.

²⁰⁹ Valdez Moses, 274.

²¹⁰ Larson, *Media & Minorities*, 52–53.

²¹¹ Throughout the dissertation, I use masculine pronouns to describe the Generic Indian and other Indian stereotypes because in popular culture, Native Americans are generally conflated with maleness. I use feminine pronouns only when referring to specific women.

²¹² Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 27, 50.

²¹³ Cobb, “The National Museum of the American Indian as Cultural Sovereignty,” 215–16; Kasdan and Tavernetti, “Native Americans,” 124.

²¹⁴ Bird, “Gendered Construction of the American Indian in Popular Media,” 74.

²¹⁵ Riley, “Trapped in the History of Film. Racial Conflict and Allure in The Vanishing American,” 66; Kasdan and Tavernetti, “Native Americans,” 124.

²¹⁶ Kasdan and Tavernetti, “Native Americans,” 124.

²¹⁷ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 30, 46.

²¹⁸ Kilpatrick, 202.

²¹⁹ Kilpatrick, 89.

²²⁰ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 5.

²²¹ Marubbio, 4–5; Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American*, 64–70.

²²² Knight and McKnight, “The Northwestern: McCabe and Mrs. Miller,” 244–45.

²²³ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 6.

- ²²⁴ Marubbio, 7.
- ²²⁵ Marubbio, 7.
- ²²⁶ Anderson, “Driving the Red Road,” 143; Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 161.
- ²²⁷ Cobb, “This Is What It Means to Say ‘Smoke Signals,’” 218.
- ²²⁸ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 4.
- ²²⁹ Cobb, “This Is What It Means to Say ‘Smoke Signals,’” 215, 219.
- ²³⁰ Coward, *Indians Illustrated*, 4.
- ²³¹ Barbour, *From Daniel Boone to Captain America*, 5.
- ²³² Coward, *Indians Illustrated*, 70.
- ²³³ Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, 231.
- ²³⁴ Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, 11.
- ²³⁵ Pack, “The Best of Both Worlds,” 99.
- ²³⁶ Burgoyne, *Film Nation*, 40.
- ²³⁷ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 5, 20, 83.
- ²³⁸ Barbour, *From Daniel Boone to Captain America*, 131.
- ²³⁹ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 20.

²⁴⁰ Riley, “Trapped in the History of Film. Racial Conflict and Allure in The Vanishing American,” 63; Honour, *The New Golden Land*, 56, 119.

²⁴¹ Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, x.

²⁴² Chester Lake’s character also kills man in cold blood (even if that man was a sex offender), mirroring darker assumptions about Native American violence.

²⁴³ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 105–6.

²⁴⁴ Kasdan and Tavernetti, “Native Americans,” 122–23.

²⁴⁵ Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities*, 9–10; Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 51; George and Sanders, “Reconstructing Tonto: Cultural Formations and American Indians in 1990s Television Fiction,” 433.

²⁴⁶ Lacroix, “High Stakes Stereotypes,” 10; Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities*, 9–10.

²⁴⁷ Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities*, 13.

²⁴⁸ George and Sanders, “Reconstructing Tonto: Cultural Formations and American Indians in 1990s Television Fiction,” 444–46. 1990s science fiction series such as *Star Trek*, *Quantum Leap*, or *The X-Files* seem to have portrayed a somewhat more diverse image of Indians as well as pointing toward a continued Indian presence in the present and future (Adare, *Indian Stereotypes*, 102–3; Hersey, “Word-Healers and Code-Talkers: Native Americans in The X-Files”).

²⁴⁹ Slocum, “Cinema and the Civilizing Process,” 35–63.

²⁵⁰ Riseman, “Regardless of History?,” 59.

²⁵¹ Baylor, “Modern Warriors,” 244; Weston, *Native Americans in the News*, 148.

²⁵² Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 71.

²⁵³ Weston, *Native Americans in the News*, 137.

²⁵⁴ Weston, 148; Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 96–97.

²⁵⁵ Langston, “American Indian Women’s Activism in the 1960s and 1970s,” 128.

Controversial aspects of the Wounded Knee occupation, such as in-fighting among the leaders or the sexism of AIM men, are excluded from the story line to achieve an exclusively positive image.

²⁵⁶ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, xvii–xviii.

²⁵⁷ Krech III, *The Ecological Indian*, 16–22.

²⁵⁸ Krech III, 22.

²⁵⁹ Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities*, 13–14; Stromberg, “Out of the Cupboard,” 37–38; Buescher and Ono, “Civilized Colonialism.”

²⁶⁰ Jojola, “Absurd Reality II,” 14.

²⁶¹ Krech III, *The Ecological Indian*, 16.

²⁶² Lacroix, “High Stakes Stereotypes,” 5. In some instances, poverty (never drug addiction) is reinterpreted as a form of simplicity that can be noble in its “innocence” (Boo, “Staring Down Stereotypes,” 52).

²⁶³ Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 101.

²⁶⁴ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 177.

²⁶⁵ Spilde, “Creating a Political Space,” 77. See also Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities*, 90–91.

²⁶⁶ Lacroix, “High Stakes Stereotypes,” 11–17.

²⁶⁷ Cobb, “This Is What It Means to Say ‘Smoke Signals,’” 216.

²⁶⁸ Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities*, 13.

²⁶⁹ Cobb, “This Is What It Means to Say ‘Smoke Signals,’” 215; Gilroy, “Another Fine Example,” 35.

²⁷⁰ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 97; Larson, *Media & Minorities*, 179; Reed, “Old Cowboys, New Indians,” 76; Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, vii, 215.

²⁷¹ Coward, *Indians Illustrated*, 34–39.

²⁷² Cobb, “This Is What It Means to Say ‘Smoke Signals,’” 210–11; Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 223–24. Marubbio argues that *Smoke Signals* does well with Irene Bedard’s character. However, the actress’ appearance and roles in previous movies aesthetically frame her as the stereotypical Celluloid Maiden.

²⁷³ Bird, “Gendered Construction of the American Indian in Popular Media,” 78.

²⁷⁴ Bird, 75.

²⁷⁵ Bird, 75.

²⁷⁶ Pack, “Constructing ‘The Navajo,’” 137.

²⁷⁷ Bird, “Gendered Construction of the American Indian in Popular Media,” 77.

²⁷⁸ Anderson, “Driving the Red Road,” 145–46.

²⁷⁹ Bird, “Gendered Construction of the American Indian in Popular Media,” 78.

²⁸⁰ Cobb, “This Is What It Means to Say ‘Smoke Signals,’” 206. Similar Stromberg, “Out of the Cupboard,” 34.

²⁸¹ Lacroix, “High Stakes Stereotypes,” 4.

²⁸² His images were accompanied by an article by Alexandra Fuller. However, the photos and the article seem largely disconnected despite their joint publication.

²⁸³ Aaron Huey, “Pine Ridge Community Storytelling Project: About the Project,” *National Geographic*, August 2012, accessed November 2014.
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/pine-ridge/community-project-intro>.

The website registered 257 contributions, most of them from 2012. Aaron Huey, “Pine Ridge Community Storytelling Project: About the Project,” *National Geographic*, August 2012, accessed November 2014.
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/pine-ridge/community-project-intro>. The site

also features a map entitled the “The Lost Land” that tracks the loss of reservation land since 1851 and foreshadows the activist position Huey takes toward the recuperation of the Black Hills.

²⁸⁴ Huey also promoted his project with a TED talk in 2010 and in the short movie *Honor the Treaties* (2012), in which he outlines a poster and mural project growing out of his photos.

Chapter 1

²⁸⁵ The movie states that he had been working on Pine Ridge for seven years when the movie was made, which puts the date at around 2005. His website offers no more specific details.

²⁸⁶ On the tribal website, the names Oglala Lakota and Oglala Sioux are both used: <https://oglalalakotanation.info/>

²⁸⁷ Becker, *Honor the Treaties*.

²⁸⁸ Huey, “America’s Native Prisoners of War”; Huey, *Mitakuye Oyasin*; Becker, *Honor the Treaties*; Huey, “Seven Years on Pine Ridge.”

²⁸⁹ Fuller and Huey, “In the Shadow of Wounded Knee.”

²⁹⁰ There is also a podcast (“Behind the Words”) and a short video called “Cover Potential,” in which Huey photographs members of the Lakota community with the characteristic yellow frame of the *National Geographic* cover in order to give them a moment on the cover.

²⁹¹ Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others.”

²⁹² Huey, “Seven Years on Pine Ridge.” Any transcriptions of lectures or videos in this dissertation are my own.

²⁹³ Flavin, “The Adventurer-Artists of the Nineteenth Century and the Image of the American Indian,” 19.

²⁹⁴ Coward, *Indians Illustrated*.

²⁹⁵ Coward, “The Princess and the Squaw,” 74.

²⁹⁶ Green, “Gertrude Käsebier’s ‘Indian’ Photographs,” 59.

²⁹⁷ Kaszynski, “Look, a [Picture]!,” 63, 66.

²⁹⁸ Finnegan, “The Naturalistic Enthymeme,” 148.

²⁹⁹ Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 21–22.

³⁰⁰ Because of the increasing individual ability to manipulate digital images, the idea of truth in photography might slowly fade out of popular audience conceptions (Pfister and Woods, “The Unnaturalistic Enthymeme”).

³⁰¹ Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 6.

³⁰² Trachtenberg, 165.

³⁰³ Trachtenberg, 6.

³⁰⁴ Malsheimer, “Imitation White Men: Images of Transformation at the Carlisle Indian School,” 54, 73.

³⁰⁵ Marr, “Taken Pictures,” 59.

³⁰⁶ Scherer, *A Danish Photographer of Idaho Indians*, 1–2.

³⁰⁷ Egan, “‘Yet in a Primitive Condition.’ Edward S. Curtis’s North American Indian,” 67–69.

³⁰⁸ Faris, *Navajo and Photography*, 120; Faris, “Laura Gilpin and the ‘Endearing’ Navajo,” 62.

³⁰⁹ George and Sanders, “Reconstructing Tonto: Cultural Formations and American Indians in 1990s Television Fiction,” 427–28; Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology*, 92. Zamir et al. contend that not enough attention has been paid to Native agency in the making of Curtis’s images (Zamir, Upshaw, and Curtis, “Native Agency and the Making of ‘The North American Indian’”).

³¹⁰ Coward, *Indians Illustrated*, 3.

³¹¹ Nelson, *Before They Pass Away*, 2013.

³¹² Nelson, “Before They Pass Away,” 2018. Nelson’s use of the term “tribe” is a testament to his concept of the peoples he is documenting more than an accurate description: he includes several groups that are not tribes at all, such as Argentinian Gauchos and “the Maori.”

³¹³ Nelson.

³¹⁴ Washuta, Elissa. “The Wrongheaded Obsession with ‘vanishing’ Indigenous Peoples.” *SALON*, November 24, 2013.
http://www.salon.com/2013/11/24/americas_wrongheaded_obsession_with_vanishing_in_digenous_peoples/.

³¹⁵ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 143.

³¹⁶ Faris, *Navajo and Photography*, 120.

³¹⁷ Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, 84–85.

³¹⁸ Rothenberg, *Presenting America’s World*, 1; Lutz and Collins, “The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes,” 134.

³¹⁹ Jansson, “American National Identity and the Progress of the New South in *National Geographic Magazine*,” 354.

³²⁰ Farhi, “National Geographic.” Due to the general decline in print media and the resulting loss in income from advertising, the National Geographic Society effectively sold the magazine to a for-profit partnership headed by 21st Century Fox, in which the latter holds 73 percent. The balance is held by the National Geographic Society.

³²¹ National Geographic, “National Geographic Shows 30.9 Million Worldwide Audience via Consolidated Media Report.”

³²² Rothenberg, *Presenting America’s World*, 89.

³²³ Bloom, *Gender on Ice*, 60.

³²⁴ National Geographic Society, “About Us. Working for a Planet in Balance.” It seems claiming to be a nonprofit organization is both accurate and misleading considering that the National Geographic Society is a nonprofit organization but holds only about a third of the share of the National Geographic Partners, which actually own the magazine.

³²⁵ National Geographic Society.

³²⁶ Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, 5.

³²⁷ Bloom, *Gender on Ice*, 66.

³²⁸ Jansson, “American National Identity and the Progress of the New South in *National Geographic Magazine*,” 354.

³²⁹ Bloom, *Gender on Ice*, 57–58.

³³⁰ Bloom, 66.

³³¹ Rothenberg, *Presenting America’s World*, 73.

³³² Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, 89.

³³³ Goldberg, *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives*.

³³⁴ Beaudreau, “Changing Faces of Canada,” 537.

³³⁵ Hervik, “The Mysterious Maya of *National Geographic*,” 172.

³³⁶ Radhika, “Local Culture,” 312.

³³⁷ Rothenberg, *Presenting America's World*, 14–15.

³³⁸ Rothenberg, 5.

³³⁹ Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, 46.

³⁴⁰ Rothenberg, *Presenting America's World*, 9.

³⁴¹ National Geographic Society, “The Race Issue.”

³⁴² Ahtone and Zalcman, “Reclaiming Our Stories”; Trahant and Zalcman, “Our World, but Not Our Worldview.” The accompanying photos for both articles are by non-Native photographer Daniella Zalcman.

³⁴³ Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, 90.

³⁴⁴ Lutz and Collins, 111.

³⁴⁵ Hervik, “The Mysterious Maya of *National Geographic*,” 180.

³⁴⁶ Rothenberg, *Presenting America's World*, 94.

³⁴⁷ Hervik, “The Mysterious Maya of *National Geographic*,” 182.

³⁴⁸ Rothenberg, *Presenting America's World*, 77, 80.

³⁴⁹ Raygorodetsky and Arbugaeva, “Life on the Edge”; Ager and Sinclair, “The Perils of Pale.”

³⁵⁰ Wheelersburg, “*National Geographic Magazine*,” 35.

- ³⁵¹ Schwartz-DuPre, “Portraying the Political,” 341.
- ³⁵² Rothenberg, *Presenting America’s World*, 5.
- ³⁵³ Rothenberg, 9.
- ³⁵⁴ Bloom, *Gender on Ice*, 66.
- ³⁵⁵ Lutz and Collins, “The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes,” 136.
- ³⁵⁶ Becker, *Honor the Treaties*; Huey, “America’s Native Prisoners of War”;
Huey, “Seven Years on Pine Ridge.”
- ³⁵⁷ Huey, “Seven Years on Pine Ridge.”
- ³⁵⁸ Becker, *Honor the Treaties*.
- ³⁵⁹ Huey, “Seven Years on Pine Ridge.”
- ³⁶⁰ Rabinowitz, *They Must Be Represented: The Politics of Documentary*, 11.
- ³⁶¹ Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty*, 203.
- ³⁶² E.g. Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*, 28–30.
- ³⁶³ Huey, “America’s Native Prisoners of War.”
- ³⁶⁴ Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty*, 197.
- ³⁶⁵ Lacroix, “High Stakes Stereotypes,” 5.

³⁶⁶ <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/pine-ridge/huey-photography#/14-young-man-suffers-neurological-disease-670.jpg>;

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/pine-ridge/huey-photography#/13-possessing-alcohol-in-pine-ridge-illegal-670.jpg>

³⁶⁷ Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, 61.

³⁶⁸ Larson, *Media & Minorities*, 179; Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 71.

³⁶⁹ Huey, “America’s Native Prisoners of War”; Huey, “Seven Years on Pine Ridge.”

³⁷⁰ Huhndorf, *Going Native*, 1–2, 14.

³⁷¹ Valdez Moses, “Savage Nations: Native Americans and the Western,” 278–79; German, “Portrayals of American Indians in Early Radio,” 8.

³⁷² Bloom, *Gender on Ice*, 93.

³⁷³ Boo, “Staring Down Stereotypes,” 51.

³⁷⁴ Shome, “Race and Popular Cinema,” 504.

³⁷⁵ Huey, “America’s Native Prisoners of War.”

³⁷⁶ Huey, “Seven Years on Pine Ridge.”

³⁷⁷ Huey.

³⁷⁸ Nagel and Snipp, “Ethnic Reorganization,” 206; Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities*; Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race*.

³⁷⁹ Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*, 28–30; Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*.

³⁸⁰ For online readers of the *National Geographic*, it was entirely possible to be aware of either the article or the photo project but not the respective other. This happened to me: I only noticed Fuller’s article weeks after I had found Huey’s photos. The website presented Huey’s project as finished and well-rounded without the article, so there was little incentive to go search for it unless readers knew it existed. Recently, the partition of the two projects onto different links seems to have been abolished. As of March 2019, the article and photos are accessible under the same link online. Some photos seem to have been omitted as well.

³⁸¹ Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty*, 199.

³⁸² Valdez Moses, “Savage Nations: Native Americans and the Western,” 267; Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*.

³⁸³ Kitses, “The Western: Ideology and Archetype,” 65–66. The nature/civilization dichotomy even works in Westerns without Indians, where the conflict is between the upright “Wild West” and the corrupt and industrialized East.

³⁸⁴ <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/pine-ridge/huey-photography#/03-oglala-overcrowded-homes-670.jpg>

³⁸⁵ <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/pine-ridge/huey-photography#/14-young-man-suffers-neurological-disease-670.jpg>

³⁸⁶ Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 21–22; Gallagher and Zagacki, “Epiphanies and Transformations,” 131.

³⁸⁷ <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/pine-ridge/huey-photography>

³⁸⁸ “Our Story, Our Success. The Reservation.” For an in-depth analysis of demographics concerning Native Americans in the context of suicide rates: Guittar, “On and Off the Reservation.”

³⁸⁹ <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/pine-ridge/huey-photography#/11-passanger-squeezed-in-car-670.jpg>

³⁹⁰ Lemke, “Facing Poverty,” 102.

³⁹¹ Valdez Moses, “Savage Nations: Native Americans and the Western,” 274–75.

³⁹² Valdez Moses, 274.

³⁹³ Sekula, *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973-1983*, 62; Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible*, 1; Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 52.

³⁹⁴ Boo, “Staring Down Stereotypes,” 52.

³⁹⁵ Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 41–42.

³⁹⁶ <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/pine-ridge/huey-photography#/05-oliver-red-cloud-leads-parade-670.jpg>

³⁹⁷ <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/pine-ridge/huey-photography#/20-sacred-cottonwood-tree-carried-670.jpg>;

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/pine-ridge/huey-photography#/21-sun-dance-sacred-tree-raised-670.jpg>

³⁹⁸ The image is no longer accessible in the online version of the project but is included in the print version. It is also included in Estrin’s “Lens” review. Estrin, “Photographing, and Listening to, the Lakota.”

³⁹⁹ Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities*, 71; Jocks, “Spirituality for Sale,” 415–16; Fielding, “Native American Religion and Film,” 3; Fielding, “Indigenous Religion and Film,” 188; Hernandez-Avila, “Mediations of the Spirit: Native American Religious Traditions and the Ethics of Representation,” 15, 25–26; Kemper, “Sacred Spaces.”

⁴⁰⁰ <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/pine-ridge/huey-photography#/08-red-cloud-indian-school-graduation-670.jpg>

⁴⁰¹ Rothenberg, *Presenting America’s World*, 94.

⁴⁰² In the pilot episode of their podcast *All My Relations*, Dr. Adrienne Keene (Cherokee) and Matika Wilbur (Swinomish/Tulalip) of *Project 562*, group Huey together with Edward S. Curtis, calling their work “terrible misrepresentations of indigenous culture.” Wilbur describes the visceral reactions her Tulalip students had specifically to Huey’s TED talk and Curtis’s images, and links the misrepresentations to high death rates among young people on the reservation. She relies on work of Tulalip scholar Stephanie

Fryberg, who is cited elsewhere in this dissertation, to draw connections between misrepresentations and negative psychological outcomes for Native American kids (Wilbur and Keene, “All My Relations”).

⁴⁰³ Huey, “Pine Ridge Community Storytelling Project: About the Project.”

⁴⁰⁴ Huey, “Seven Years on Pine Ridge.”

⁴⁰⁵ Morris and Mendelson, “*National Geographic* and Puerto Rico,” 460.

⁴⁰⁶ For the discussion of the Community Storytelling Project, I abstain from listing tribal affiliation in brackets behind author’s names since I assume it is understood that the contributors are all Oglala Lakota. I have also abstained from correcting or marking grammar or word choice errors in the contributions for two reasons. First, it seems absurd to enforce rigid grammar guidelines on vernacular variations of American English, and especially on informal utterances like these. Second, marking all deviations from standard American English would have greatly decreased legibility for the reader. I maintain this policy throughout the dissertation’s three chapters.

⁴⁰⁷ Huey, “Seven Years on Pine Ridge.”

⁴⁰⁸ Some of the Oglala Lakota contributors even specifically criticized misrepresentations of Native Americans in the mainstream media, most commonly, the emphasis on alcoholism and the Drunk or Degraded Indian in media representations of Pine Ridge (White Eyes, “Rant”; Blue, “Untitled”; Red Kettle, Jr., “Experiencing Lakota Culture”).

⁴⁰⁹ Huey, “Seven Years on Pine Ridge.”

⁴¹⁰ Huey, “Pine Ridge Community Storytelling Project: About the Project.”

⁴¹¹ Huey, “Seven Years on Pine Ridge.”

⁴¹² Huey, “Pine Ridge Community Storytelling Project. A Partnership with Cowbird.”

⁴¹³ Huey, “Seven Years on Pine Ridge.”

⁴¹⁴ Lutz and Collins, “The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes,” 145.

⁴¹⁵ Pack, “Constructing ‘The Navajo,’” 137.

⁴¹⁶ Faris, *Navajo and Photography*, 16, 20.

⁴¹⁷ The website indicates the 258 posts in its introduction but only 248 posts in the contributions section. I counted 250 contributions.

⁴¹⁸ Brings, “Lakota Language”; Red Kettle, Jr., “Experiencing Lakota Culture”; Dyer, “Rez Food”; Bulls, “Ceremony.”

⁴¹⁹ Steele and Tapio, “Aldon Steele: Writing Therapy Program.” Coach Robin Tapio posted seven contributions of imprisoned tribal members. They can all be found at <http://cowbird.com/robintapio/>

⁴²⁰ Toffoletti and Thorpe, “Female Athletes’ Self-Representation on Social Media,” 15. See also Kearney, *Mediated Girlhoods: New Explorations of Girls’ Media*

Culture; Mazzarella, *Girl Wide Web 2.0: Revisiting Girls, the Internet and the Negotiation of Identity*.

⁴²¹ Toffoletti and Thorpe, "Female Athletes' Self-Representation on Social Media," 16.

⁴²² Loewenberg, "Reflection on Self-Portraiture in Photography," 399.

⁴²³ Olszanowski, "Feminist Self-Imaging and Instagram," 84.

⁴²⁴ Hummingbird, "Sunset on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation"; Blue, "Untitled"; Stands, "Grandma Mary."

⁴²⁵ Brewer, "Rez Lands"; Fire Thunder, "Lakota Religion"; Matthews, "The Moon in the Badlands."

⁴²⁶ Red Kettle, Jr., "Experiencing Lakota Culture."

⁴²⁷ Brown, "The Children of Pine Ridge"; Good Soldier, "Pehin."

⁴²⁸ Chase Alone, "Collective Action."

⁴²⁹ White Eyes, "Rant."

⁴³⁰ Jumping Eagle, Wilhelmina, "We Lost Our Brother."

⁴³¹ Janis and Tapio, "Christian Janis: Writing Therapy Program."

⁴³² Matthews, "No Indians Allowed."

⁴³³ White Eyes, "We Once Held Hands."

⁴³⁴ Brings, “Lakota Language.”

⁴³⁵ DuBray, “Lakota Culture.”

⁴³⁶ Matthews, “The Moon in the Badlands.”

⁴³⁷ Spotted Elk, “Complete Peace”; Spotted Elk, “A Different Kind of Resolution for the New Year.”

⁴³⁸ Brings, “Lakota Language.”

⁴³⁹ Spotted Elk, “Complete Peace.”

⁴⁴⁰ Spotted Elk, “A Different Kind of Resolution for the New Year.”

⁴⁴¹ Shome, “Race and Popular Cinema,” 505.

⁴⁴² Red Kettle, Jr., “Experiencing Lakota Culture.”

⁴⁴³ DuBray, “Lakota Culture.”

⁴⁴⁴ Chase Alone, “Collective Action”; Matthews, “Treating Americans Like Animals.”

⁴⁴⁵ White, “Oglala Lakota Alter-Native Rock Band Dream to Make Music Video About Water Pollution.”

⁴⁴⁶ Brings, “Lakota Language”; Plenty, “Language.”

⁴⁴⁷ Wilson, “Culture.”

- ⁴⁴⁸ Redfield, “Inside the Circle, Outside the Circle. The Continuance of Native American Storytelling and the Development of Rhetorical Strategies in English,” 158–59; Gregg, “The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest.”
- ⁴⁴⁹ Cushman, “Toward a Rhetoric of Self-Representation,” 321.
- ⁴⁵⁰ Cushman, 335.
- ⁴⁵¹ Toffoletti and Thorpe, “Female Athletes’ Self-Representation on Social Media,” 24.
- ⁴⁵² Hummingbird, “Sunset on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation”; Matthews, “Intolerance and My Faith on Pine Ridge”; Bell, “Lakota Church of the Sincere Heart.”
- ⁴⁵³ Spotted Elk, “Complete Peace.”
- ⁴⁵⁴ Bulls, “Ceremony.”
- ⁴⁵⁵ Catt-Iron Shell, “Kasey and the Sundance Tree.”
- ⁴⁵⁶ Bell, “Lakota Church of the Sincere Heart.”
- ⁴⁵⁷ Blue, “Untitled”; Red Cloud, “A Win for All My Relatives.”
- ⁴⁵⁸ Brings, “Lakota Language.”
- ⁴⁵⁹ Red Cloud, “A Win for All My Relatives.”
- ⁴⁶⁰ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 105–6.

⁴⁶¹ Red Kettle, Jr., “Experiencing Lakota Culture”; Brings, “Lakota Language”;
Pourier, “Making A Living in This World.”

⁴⁶² Catt-Iron Shell, “I Took My Family to the Skate Park”; Morgan, “Skate Park
on the Rez.”

⁴⁶³ Brings Three White Horses, “Rez Joke #2”; Brings Three White Horses, “Rez
Joke #1: Puppy Soup.”

⁴⁶⁴ Dyer, “Rez Food.”

⁴⁶⁵ Iron Crow, “My Interest in Artwork and Music.”

⁴⁶⁶ Good Soldier, “Cante’ Waste’ Win.”

⁴⁶⁷ Seger, “Horsedogs of Manderson.”

⁴⁶⁸ Randall, “2012 Homecoming Week.”

⁴⁶⁹ Yellow Thunder, “The Lost Boys of Wounded Knee.”

⁴⁷⁰ Atalay, “No Sense of the Struggle,” 604, 608; Lonetree, “Missed
Opportunities,” 636–37.

⁴⁷¹ Kroeber, “Why It’s a Good Thing Gerald Vizenor Is Not an Indian,” 25.

⁴⁷² Faris, *Navajo and Photography*, 15.

⁴⁷³ Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 45.

⁴⁷⁴ Azoulay, *Civil Contract*, 118–19.

⁴⁷⁵ Azoulay, 118, 121. Azoulay does not use “citizen” and “noncitizen” to refer to legal concepts but to differentiate between those who can exercise full citizenship rights and those whose citizenship rights are “flawed.”

⁴⁷⁶ Azoulay, 131.

⁴⁷⁷ Barbour, *From Daniel Boone to Captain America*, 3.

⁴⁷⁸ Toffoletti and Thorpe, “Female Athletes’ Self-Representation on Social Media,” 28.

⁴⁷⁹ Eason, Brady, and Fryberg, “Reclaiming Representations & Interrupting the Cycle of Bias Against Native Americans,” 71.

⁴⁸⁰ Scherer, *A Danish Photographer of Idaho Indians*, 5.

⁴⁸¹ “Voices: Indian Perspectives”; Brandenburg, “The Land They Knew: A Portfolio.”

⁴⁸² Johnson, “Telling Thanksgiving’s Story in a Vanishing American Language”; Bruchac and Steber, “Indian: Scenes from a Renaissance.”

⁴⁸³ Urken, “Native Americans Sue Frackers Over Manmade Earthquakes.”

⁴⁸⁴ Larsen, “Meet the Native Americans on the Front Lines of a Historic Protest.”

⁴⁸⁵ Ahtone and Zalcman, “Reclaiming Our Stories,” 112.

⁴⁸⁶ Trahant and Zalcman, “Our World, but Not Our Worldview,” 122–23.

⁴⁸⁷ Trahant and Zalcman, 126–27.

⁴⁸⁸ Eason, Brady, and Fryberg, “Reclaiming Representations & Interrupting the Cycle of Bias Against Native Americans,” 76.

⁴⁸⁹ Fryberg et al., “Of Warrior Chiefs and Indian Princesses,” 208.

⁴⁹⁰ Yüyan, “Season of the Whale.”

Chapter 2

⁴⁹¹ The 2016 NoDAPL protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline in Standing Rock by far outdid the CIA in terms of press coverage and attention on social media. However, the CIA protestors purposefully invited a Western lens, playing with the image of the antagonistic relationship between the eponymous groups. Since this dissertation focuses on patterns inherited from the Western, press coverage of the CIA is an appropriate case study. Furthermore, the anti-Keystone XL protests were the first time in recent decades that Native nations made news headlines in mainstream newspapers and online publications.

⁴⁹² DeLuca, *Image Politics*.

⁴⁹³ DeLuca and Peebles, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen,” 134.

⁴⁹⁴ Johnson, “Martin Luther King Jr.’s 1963 Birmingham Campaign as Image Event,” 2.

⁴⁹⁵ DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 3.

⁴⁹⁶ Besel and Besel, “Whale Wars and the Public Screen: Mediating Animal Ethics in Violent Times.”

⁴⁹⁷ DeLuca and Peebles, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen,” 136.

⁴⁹⁸ DeLuca and Peebles, 139.

⁴⁹⁹ DeLuca and Peebles, 144–45.

⁵⁰⁰ DeLuca and Peebles, 136.

⁵⁰¹ DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 20.

⁵⁰² DeLuca, 22.

⁵⁰³ Zelko, *Make It a Green Peace!*, 273–74, 318.

⁵⁰⁴ Zelko, 233.

⁵⁰⁵ DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 3–4; DeLuca and Peebles, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen,” 136.

⁵⁰⁶ Weston, *Native Americans in the News*, 206; Larson, *Media & Minorities*, 112.
See also Black, “The ‘Mascotting’ of Native America.”

⁵⁰⁷ Weston, *Native Americans in the News*; Cobb, “This Is What It Means to Say ‘Smoke Signals,’” 206.

⁵⁰⁸ Baylor, “Media Framing,” 241–42.

⁵⁰⁹ Coward, *Indians Illustrated*, 41.

- ⁵¹⁰ Gallagher, “Crop Art”; Hefflinger, “#NoKXL Crop Art Unveiling.”
- ⁵¹¹ “Boots and Moccasins.”
- ⁵¹² Baylor, “Media Framing,” 242.
- ⁵¹³ Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching*, 3.
- ⁵¹⁴ Jamieson and Waldman, *The Press Effect*, xiii, 95.
- ⁵¹⁵ Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching*, 3.
- ⁵¹⁶ Gitlin, 6–7.
- ⁵¹⁷ Gandy, “Epilogue,” 365.
- ⁵¹⁸ Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching*, 6–7.
- ⁵¹⁹ Baylor, “Media Framing,” 242.
- ⁵²⁰ Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching*, 142.
- ⁵²¹ Gitlin, 245.
- ⁵²² Jamieson and Waldman, *The Press Effect*, xii; Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching*, 142.
- ⁵²³ Jamieson and Waldman, *The Press Effect*, xiii.
- ⁵²⁴ Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, 10.
- ⁵²⁵ Weston, *Native Americans in the News*, 157.

⁵²⁶ Larson, *Media & Minorities*, 112. See also Black, “The ‘Mascotting’ of Native America.”

⁵²⁷ Hoerl, “Burning Mississippi into Memory? Cinematic Amnesia as a Resource for Remembering Civil Rights,” 72; Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching*; Watkins, “Framing Protest: News Media Frames of the Million Man March.”

⁵²⁸ Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, 12, 231.

⁵²⁹ Baylor, “Media Framing,” 244.

⁵³⁰ Weston, *Native Americans in the News*, 163.

⁵³¹ Weston, 148.

⁵³² Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, 3.

⁵³³ Baylor, “Media Framing,” 244–45.

⁵³⁴ Baylor, 245.

⁵³⁵ Baylor, 244, 249.

⁵³⁶ Barbour, *From Daniel Boone to Captain America*, 65.

⁵³⁷ Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 182.

⁵³⁸ Barbour, *From Daniel Boone to Captain America*, 65.

⁵³⁹ Philip Deloria points out that the headband “might mean Geronimo, but it also meant Che Guevara and Stokely Carmichael” (Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 164). Clearly, the

bandana as a symbol of militancy has many layers and I do not mean to exclude potential alternative meanings of these symbols.

⁵⁴⁰ Reed, “Old Cowboys, New Indians,” 79.

⁵⁴¹ Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 433.

⁵⁴² Reed, “Old Cowboys, New Indians,” 76.

⁵⁴³ Baylor, “Media Framing,” 250; Larson, *Media & Minorities*.

⁵⁴⁴ Larson, *Media & Minorities*.

⁵⁴⁵ Reed, “Old Cowboys, New Indians,” 79.

⁵⁴⁶ Reed, 94.

⁵⁴⁷ Sanchez and Stuckey, “The Rhetoric of American Indian Activism in the 1960s and 1970s,” 123.

⁵⁴⁸ Larson, *Media & Minorities*, 182–83.

⁵⁴⁹ Sanchez, Stuckey, and Morris, “Rhetorical Exclusion: The Government’s Case Against American Indian Activists, AIM, and Leonard Peltier,” 38–29.

⁵⁵⁰ Weston, *Native Americans in the News*, 145.

⁵⁵¹ Kelly, “Rhetorical Counterinsurgency,” 226, 229.

⁵⁵² Baylor, “Media Framing,” 250–51.

⁵⁵³ Wakeham, “Performing Reconciliation,” 365.

⁵⁵⁴ Coward, *Indians Illustrated*, 4.

⁵⁵⁵ Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching*, 230, 266.

⁵⁵⁶ Gitlin, 266.

⁵⁵⁷ Larson, *Media & Minorities*, 108–9.

⁵⁵⁸ Itkowitz, “Cowboys and Indians.”

⁵⁵⁹ “Boots and Moccasins.”

⁵⁶⁰ Goode, “Horses, Teepees.”

⁵⁶¹ Smith, “Nebraskans Raise Their Voices in Fight Against Keystone XL Pipeline.”

⁵⁶² “Marching Against Pipeline, with a Few Extra Legs.”

⁵⁶³ “Native Americans Hit D.C. to Protest Keystone Pipeline”; Sheppard, “Cowboys and Indians.”

⁵⁶⁴ Smith, “Nebraskans Raise Their Voices in Fight Against Keystone XL Pipeline.”

⁵⁶⁵ Smith.

⁵⁶⁶ Coward, *Indians Illustrated*, 24–25, 41.

⁵⁶⁷ Smith, “Nebraskans Raise Their Voices in Fight Against Keystone XL Pipeline.”

⁵⁶⁸ Sheppard, ““Cowboys and Indians.””

⁵⁶⁹ The collection includes a variation of the photo of the befeathered rider in front of the Capitol; several images of women with beaded skirts and moccasins raising a tepee; an elderly woman in a red calico dress and a red blanket straightening out the tepee canvas; three women in front of a tepee tying something to a pole, their hair black and in braids, their jewelry and complexion suggesting they are Indian. Even the pictures of the protest march focus predominately on Native American participants, recognizable from their dress, hair, and feathers, with at best a cowboy or non-Indian person in the background.

⁵⁷⁰ Coward, *Indians Illustrated*, 157, 186.

⁵⁷¹ Endres, “Animist Intersubjectivity as Argumentation: Western Shoshone and Southern Paiute Arguments Against a Nuclear Waste Site at Yucca Mountain”; Irwin, “Introduction.”

⁵⁷² Al Gedicks, “International Native Resistance to the New Resource Wars,” in *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism*, ed. Bron Raymond Taylor (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 106–107.

⁵⁷³ LaDuke, “Militarizing Fossil Fuels.”

⁵⁷⁴ Stangler, ““Cowboy Indian Alliance””; “Boots and Moccasins.”

⁵⁷⁵ Hefflinger, “#NoKXL Crop Art Unveiling.”

⁵⁷⁶ Clements, *Oratory in Native North America*, 80; Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 33.

⁵⁷⁷ Bedard, “Splash.”

⁵⁷⁸ Graef, “Nebraska’s Cowboys Abd Indians Unite.”

⁵⁷⁹ Worthington, “2 Old Foes.”

⁵⁸⁰ The question of how Native communities relate to the natural world is complicated, not least because of the variety of cultures but also because evaluating the “environmentalism” of Native communities superimposes Western concepts on non-Western cultures. See Nadasdy, “Transcending the Debate over the Ecologically Noble Indian.”

⁵⁸¹ Moe and Lenz, “Cowboys and Indian Stand Together.”

⁵⁸² Goodman, “Keystone XL”; Grossman, “The Cowboy-Indian Alliance.”

⁵⁸³ “Boots and Moccasins.”

⁵⁸⁴ Kamen and Itkowitz, “For Bacardi, Detailing Its Efforts at Landin a Political Rum Punch Comes Up Short on Form.”

⁵⁸⁵ Buescher and Ono, “Civilized Colonialism”; Keene, “A Deep Read”; Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 153.

⁵⁸⁶ Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching*, 185.

⁵⁸⁷ Black, “The ‘Mascotting’ of Native America,” 609.

⁵⁸⁸ DeLuca and Peebles, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen,” 138.

⁵⁸⁹ Baylor, “Media Framing,” 250. Baylor stresses that he is pointing out the consequences of the self-framing choice, not judging it.

⁵⁹⁰ Smith, “Cowboys and Indians Pipeline.”

⁵⁹¹ Smith.

⁵⁹² Smith.

⁵⁹³ Haq, “Act of War.”

⁵⁹⁴ Schilling, “Cowboys and Indians.”

⁵⁹⁵ Moya-Smith, “Open Crop Art.”

⁵⁹⁶ “Boots and Moccasins.”

⁵⁹⁷ Walker, “First Nations Key.”

⁵⁹⁸ Graef, “Nebraska’s Cowboys and Indians Unite.”

⁵⁹⁹ Grossman, “The Cowboy-Indian Alliance.”

⁶⁰⁰ Grossman.

⁶⁰¹ Sanchez, Stuckey, and Morris, “Rhetorical Exclusion: The Government’s Case Against American Indian Activists, AIM, and Leonard Peltier,” 30.

⁶⁰² Moe, “When Cowboys and Indians Unite — Inside the Unlikely Alliance That Is Remaking the Climate Movement.”

⁶⁰³ Goodman, “Keystone XL.”

⁶⁰⁴ Grossman, “The Cowboy-Indian Alliance.” Grossman has researched Native-white alliances extensively for his doctoral thesis and later publications, and ultimately analyzed the CIA in depth in his 2017 monograph, *Unlikely Alliances: Native Nations and White Communities Join to Defend Rural Lands* Grossman, *Native Nations and White Communities*; Grossman, “Treaty Conflicts and Environmental Cooperation”; Grossman, “Northern Plains.”

⁶⁰⁵ Grossman, “The Cowboy-Indian Alliance.”

⁶⁰⁶ Grossman.

⁶⁰⁷ Moe, “When Cowboys and Indians Unite — Inside the Unlikely Alliance That Is Remaking the Climate Movement.”

⁶⁰⁸ Moe and Lenz, “Cowboys and Indian Stand Together.”

⁶⁰⁹ Other examples from Grossman’s article: in Montana, Northern Cheyenne and local white ranchers in the Tongue River Valley rekindled an alliance from the 1970s in order to stop a coal mine; Bad River Ojibwe and their non-Native neighbors joined together to fight iron ore mining in Wisconsin; also in Wisconsin, Ho-Chunk and local

folks protest frac sand mining; in South Dakota, the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance consists of Lakota people and white ranchers and has been fighting to protect ground water since 2010; and the list could go on (Grossman, “The Cowboy-Indian Alliance”). Alex Jacobs, writing for *Indian Country Today*, offers a very similar list. In fact, the list is so similar in wording and content that I assume he used Grossman’s article (published earlier) as a source (Jacobs, “Unlikely Alliance”).

⁶¹⁰ Grossman, “The Cowboy-Indian Alliance.”

⁶¹¹ Stangler, ““Cowboy Indian Alliance””; Graef, “Nebraska’s Cowboys Abd Indians Unite.”

⁶¹² “Boots and Moccasins.”

⁶¹³ Moe and Lenz, “Cowboys and Indian Stand Together.”

⁶¹⁴ Moe and Lenz.

⁶¹⁵ Smith, “Nebraskans Raise Their Voices in Fight Against Keystone XL Pipeline.”

⁶¹⁶ Stangler, ““Cowboy Indian Alliance.””

⁶¹⁷ Stangler.

⁶¹⁸ Stangler.

⁶¹⁹ Smith, “Cowboys and Indians Pipeline.”

⁶²⁰ Grossman, *Native Nations and White Communities*, 32.

⁶²¹ Grossman, 32.

⁶²² Moe, “When Cowboys and Indians Unite — Inside the Unlikely Alliance That Is Remaking the Climate Movement.”

⁶²³ Moe.

⁶²⁴ Moe.

⁶²⁵ Moe.

⁶²⁶ Moe.

⁶²⁷ Keeler, “The Sacred Pipes.”

⁶²⁸ Lockwood, “Ranchers and Tribes Unite.”

⁶²⁹ Grossman, “Treaty Conflicts and Environmental Cooperation,” 29.

⁶³⁰ Moe, “When Cowboys and Indians Unite — Inside the Unlikely Alliance That Is Remaking the Climate Movement.”

⁶³¹ Grossman, “The Cowboy-Indian Alliance.”

⁶³² Jacobs, “Unlikely Alliance.”

⁶³³ Jacobs.

⁶³⁴ Moe, “When Cowboys and Indians Unite — Inside the Unlikely Alliance That Is Remaking the Climate Movement.”

⁶³⁵ Moe.

⁶³⁶ Stangler, “Cowboy Indian Alliance.”

⁶³⁷ Moe and Lenz, “Cowboys and Indian Stand Together.”

⁶³⁸ Smith, “Grass-Roots Push.”

⁶³⁹ Schilling, “Man on the Street”; Schilling, “Keystone XL Pipeline Protest”;
Goodman, “Keystone XL.”

⁶⁴⁰ Larson, *Media & Minorities*, 109.

⁶⁴¹ Weston, *Native Americans in the News*, 15.

⁶⁴² Larson, *Media & Minorities*, 108.

⁶⁴³ Baylor, “Media Framing,” 249.

⁶⁴⁴ DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 92, 100.

⁶⁴⁵ DeLuca, 100–101.

⁶⁴⁶ Fryberg and Eason, “Making the Invisible Visible,” 554.

⁶⁴⁷ The *Montana Journalism Review* offered an in-depth description and analysis
of the coverage: Stone, “Framing a Movement: The Media at Standing Rock.”

⁶⁴⁸ Endres and Senda-Cook, “Location Matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest,”
266.

⁶⁴⁹ Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, 228.

⁶⁵⁰ Coward, 228.

Chapter 3

⁶⁵¹ Erikson, “Decolonizing the ‘Nation’s Attic.’”

⁶⁵² Atalay, “No Sense of the Struggle,” 599–600.

⁶⁵³ Archuleta, “Gym Shoes,” 431.

⁶⁵⁴ Berry, “Voices and Objects,” 63.

⁶⁵⁵ Cobb, “The National Museum of the American Indian as Cultural
Sovereignty.”

⁶⁵⁶ Quoted after Stryz, “Coyote in the Museum,” 492.

⁶⁵⁷ Teslow, “A Troubled Legacy,” 19.

⁶⁵⁸ Berry, “Voices and Objects,” 63.

⁶⁵⁹ Carpio, “(Un)Disturbing Exhibitions,” 21.

⁶⁶⁰ Brady, “Governmentality and the National Museum of the American Indian,”
765.

⁶⁶¹ Barker and Dumont, “Contested Conversations,” 118.

⁶⁶² Rickard, “Absorbing or Obscuring the Absence of a Critical Space in the
Americas for Indigeneity,” 86.

⁶⁶³ “Americans: About the Exhibition.”

⁶⁶⁴ Schjeldahl, “America as Indian Country: The Omnipresence of Native Americans in Popular Culture.”

⁶⁶⁵ Rothstein, ““Americans’ Review.”

⁶⁶⁶ Kennicott, “American Indian Museum.”

⁶⁶⁷ Miranda, “It’s Not Just Chief Wahoo.”

⁶⁶⁸ Rothstein, ““Americans’ Review.”

⁶⁶⁹ Isaac, “What Are Our Expectations Telling Us?,” 575.

⁶⁷⁰ The prominent Smithsonian on the Mall have impressive audience numbers. The NMAI had around a million visitors in 2018, which is a lot but noticeably less than the Smithsonian American Art Museum, National Portrait Gallery, National Museum of African American History and Culture, National Air and Space Museum, National Museum of American History, and National Portrait Gallery, which all had visitor numbers upward of 1.7 million in 2018. Even the National Air and Space Museum’s Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Virginia had 1.3 million visitors despite its location. “Visitor Stats.”

⁶⁷¹ Atalay, “No Sense of the Struggle,” 599.

⁶⁷² Atalay, 599.

⁶⁷³ While Americans never quite gets around to defining what it means by “image,” it is safe to say that “images” does not mean pictures in the narrow sense of two-dimensional likenesses of Native Americans. The inclusion of objects that use Native terms, photographs of folks dressed up as Indians, and movie experts from variety of movies, TV shows, and cartoons suggests a broader definition. And clearly the discussion of the reception of the historical events over time demonstrates that a valid working definition of “images” in the sense of the exhibit includes perceptions of Native Americans. The discussion of Pocahontas as a founder is a good example of this.

⁶⁷⁴ The book that accompanies the exhibit, *Officially Indian*, is very much a museum catalog. It offers extensive photographs of objects and some interpretive texts. Because these texts do not add meaningfully to the narrative available in the exhibit, I have not integrated the book into this analysis. See Ganteaume, *Officially Indian*.

⁶⁷⁵ McLean, “Museum Exhibitions and the Dynamics of Dialogue,” 193.

⁶⁷⁶ Ferguson, “Exhibition Rhetorics: Material Speech and Utter Sense,” 183.

⁶⁷⁷ Barker and Dumont, “Contested Conversations,” 119.

⁶⁷⁸ Aronsson, “Comparing National Museums: Methodological Reflections,” 7.

⁶⁷⁹ Weiser, *Museum Rhetoric*, 21.

⁶⁸⁰ Aronsson, “Explaining National Museums: Exploring Comparative Approaches to the Study of National Museums,” 48.

⁶⁸¹ Aronsson and Elgenius, *National Museums*, 1.

- ⁶⁸² Weiser, *Museum Rhetoric*, 22.
- ⁶⁸³ Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 14.
- ⁶⁸⁴ Mithlo, “History Is Dangerous,” 53.
- ⁶⁸⁵ Erikson, “Decolonizing the ‘Nation’s Attic,’” 49.
- ⁶⁸⁶ Mithlo, “History Is Dangerous,” 53.
- ⁶⁸⁷ Erikson, “Decolonizing the ‘Nation’s Attic,’” 49.
- ⁶⁸⁸ Lonetree and Cobb, “Introduction,” xvi.
- ⁶⁸⁹ Anderson and Domosh, “Introduction: North American Spaces/Postcolonial Stories,” 126.
- ⁶⁹⁰ Dunn, “Remembering Matthew Shepard; Violence, Identity, and Queer Counterpublic Memories.”
- ⁶⁹¹ Baudino, “A Place of Memory and Possibility,” 61.
- ⁶⁹² Teslow, “A Troubled Legacy,” 19.
- ⁶⁹³ Jacknis, “A New Thing?,” 534; Teslow, “A Troubled Legacy,” 20.
- ⁶⁹⁴ Jacknis, “A New Thing?,” 533–34.
- ⁶⁹⁵ Phillips, “Disrupting Past Paradigms,” 76.

⁶⁹⁶ West, “A New Idea of Ourselves: The Changing Presentation of the American Indian,” 8.

⁶⁹⁷ Conn, “Heritage vs. History,” 52–53.

⁶⁹⁸ Conn, 52–53.

⁶⁹⁹ Jacknis, “A New Thing?,” 534.

⁷⁰⁰ A few examples of critical scholarship and newspaper reviews: Erikson, “Decolonizing the ‘Nation’s Attic’”; Wakeham, “Performing Reconciliation”; Brady, “Governmentality and the National Museum of the American Indian”; Lonetree, “Missed Opportunities.”

⁷⁰¹ Lonetree, “Missed Opportunities,” 638.

⁷⁰² Shannon, *Our Lives*, xiii.

⁷⁰³ Of the other three major exhibits, the one that sounds most likely to be community curated, *Return to a Native Place: Algonquian Peoples of the Chesapeake*, is attributed to just one curator on the NMAI website, Gabrielle Tayac (Piscataway). There is no curator attribution online for the other two exhibits, *Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations* and *The Great Inka Road: Engineering and Empire*. Considering their topics and scopes, I would assume that they are mostly curator-curated.

⁷⁰⁴ The Heye collection, formerly constitutive of the Museum of the American Indian, is not without its problems in the context of how Native Americans have been

treated museologically. George Gustav Heye, by all accounts was the “most notorious and rapacious” of nineteenth-century Indian collectors, and he acquired many of the objects in such problematic ways that many critics consider the objects “stolen” rather than “preserved” (Siebert, *Indians Playing Indian*, 12). Heye’s interest was first and foremost in the Native American past, not contemporary people (Jacknis, “A New Thing?,” 533). The provenance of the 800,000 artifacts and more than 100,000 photographs is another illustration of the colonial legacies that the NMAI must struggle with (Evelyn, “International Institution,” 52).

⁷⁰⁵ Brady, “Governmentality and the National Museum of the American Indian,” 766.

⁷⁰⁶ Brady, 766.

⁷⁰⁷ Fixico, “Change Over Time,” 82.

⁷⁰⁸ Lonetree and Cobb argue that the term “nation” in the museum’s name can relate to the United States as a nation-state, the nation-states of North and South America, and also the Native nations of America (Lonetree and Cobb, “Introduction,” xvii.).

⁷⁰⁹ Bell, “Museums as Relational Entities,” 71.

⁷¹⁰ Shannon, *Our Lives*, 7–8.

⁷¹¹ Weiser, *Museum Rhetoric*, 31.

⁷¹² Shannon, *Our Lives*, 8.

⁷¹³ Conn, “Heritage vs. History,” 70.

⁷¹⁴ Shannon, *Our Lives*, 8.

⁷¹⁵ Lonetree, “Missed Opportunities,” 632; Cobb, “The National Museum of the American Indian as Cultural Sovereignty,” 488.

⁷¹⁶ Carpio, “(Un)Disturbing Exhibitions,” 620–21.

⁷¹⁷ Shannon, *Our Lives*, 5.

⁷¹⁸ Coffee, “Cultural Inclusion,” 263.

⁷¹⁹ King, “Speaking Sovereignty and Communicating Change,” 76.

⁷²⁰ Erikson, “Decolonizing the ‘Nation’s Attic.’”

⁷²¹ Erikson.

⁷²² Erikson.

⁷²³ Jacknis, “A New Thing?,” 533.

⁷²⁴ Rickard, “Absorbing or Obscuring the Absence of a Critical Space in the Americas for Indigeneity,” 85. Other concerns exist beside intransparency about curatorial teams. For example, Steven Conn points out that the NMAI also never offers rationales for why certain groups and not others are chosen for representation, which “reinforce[es] the incoherence of the exhibit spaces” (Conn, “Heritage vs. History,” 67).

⁷²⁵ NMAI, “A Conversation about ‘Americans.’”

⁷²⁶ On my second visit to the exhibit, a guide explained that the objects were chosen because they depicted Indians, used Indian symbolism, or Indian names.

⁷²⁷ There is no explicit suggestion for walking through the exhibit and the u-shaped ordering of the galleries does not lend itself to an intuitive approach. A panel next to the introductory text numbered the main hall and galleries from one to six clock-wise, which also seemed the most intuitive to me. However, following the map in its numbering from one to six means going back in time rather than forward. It also means that “*Americans explained*” and the Thanksgiving video seem to be haphazardly thrown into the sequence without a visible rationale.

⁷²⁸ The battle is called both the Battle of Little Bighorn and the Battle of the Little Bighorn. The NMAI uses the former, therefore so does this dissertation. By Plains nations, the battle is known as the Battle of the Greasy Grass.

⁷²⁹ Visiting the exhibition website, visitors can learn that the voice belongs to Paul Chaat Smith.

⁷³⁰ The website includes the entire Thanksgiving video and virtual tours of all galleries except “*Americans explained*.”

⁷³¹ Anderson and Domosh, “Introduction: North American Spaces/Postcolonial Stories,” 126.

⁷³² Anderson and Domosh, 126.

⁷³³ A comment about the displayed texts throughout the exhibit: The offered textual sources are overwhelmingly of non-Native provenance, which makes sense in the light that *Americans* wants to discuss images of Native Americans in the American public sphere which notoriously excludes Native voices. However, given that the exhibit articulates Native Americans as part of that public sphere, it is a bit conspicuous how much Native objects/voices are downplayed. In a benevolent interpretation, I could argue that this is meant to reflect how thoroughly Native Americans were and are excluded from meaning-making processes concerning their fit into the national imaginary. In a less benevolent interpretation, I could argue that *Americans* perpetuates the invisibility of Native voices.

⁷³⁴ Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular*, 148.

⁷³⁵ Contrast this articulation of Indianness as Americanness within the introductory text panel in the inaugural exhibit *Our Peoples*, which emphasize both the individuality and the non-Americanness of indigenous people before contact: “The people who live here are engineers and artists, cooks and dreamers, hunters and students. They are scientists and kings, farmers and revolutionaries. They aren’t ‘Indians.’ They have never heard of ‘America’” (Weiser, *Museum Rhetoric*, 105). In contrast, the descriptive panels in “*Americans explained*” fail to articulate Native Americans as individual or non-American. Instead, the panels articulate them as generic “Americans” and claim that Indians are actually Americans. In many ways, these two conceptualizations of Indianness are mutually exclusive.

⁷³⁶ Wakeham, “Performing Reconciliation,” 354.

⁷³⁷ Wakeham, 354.

⁷³⁸ Buescher and Ono, “Civilized Colonialism.”

⁷³⁹ Siebert, *Indians Playing Indian*, 2–3, 24–25.

⁷⁴⁰ Penney, “The Poetics of Museum Representations: Tropes of Recent American Indian Art Exhibitions,” 58.

⁷⁴¹ Lonetree and Cobb, “Introduction,” xvi.

⁷⁴² Schjeldahl, “America as Indian Country: The Omnipresence of Native Americans in Popular Culture.”

⁷⁴³ Penney, “The Poetics of Museum Representations: Tropes of Recent American Indian Art Exhibitions,” 59.

⁷⁴⁴ The shirts are from the following tribes: Hunkpapa Lakota, Lakota, Northern Arapaho, Cheyenne. The headdress is Sicangu Lakota.

⁷⁴⁵ Alarming, it seems like at least in the earlier years of the NMAI, the label information for exhibit objects was an exact duplication of the card catalogues from the Heye collection, and that no additional information or perspective had been added. As a result, both material and digital plaques “provided typological knowledge that... had... survived their transition from a Euro-American private collection to a national Native American institution” (Isaac, “Technology Becomes the Object,” 295). I do not know whether this practice has changed by now or whether the objects described in this

paragraph even came from the Heye collection. However, the information provided does not seem to add anything beyond anthropological information.

⁷⁴⁶ Nason, “‘Our’ Indians: The Unidimensional Indian in the Disembodied Local Past,” 38.

⁷⁴⁷ Nason, 37.

⁷⁴⁸ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, “Memory and Myth,” 89–90.

⁷⁴⁹ Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 98.

⁷⁵⁰ FitzGerald, *Native Americans on Network TV*, xiii.

⁷⁵¹ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 4–5; Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American*, 64–70.

⁷⁵² Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 6.

⁷⁵³ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 104.

⁷⁵⁴ Deloria, 104.

⁷⁵⁵ FitzGerald, *Native Americans on Network TV*, viii; Larson, *Media & Minorities*, 47.

⁷⁵⁶ Brady, “Governmentality and the National Museum of the American Indian,” 766–67.

⁷⁵⁷ Chang, *Color of the Land*, 9.

⁷⁵⁸ Barker and Dumont, “Contested Conversations,” 118.

⁷⁵⁹ Dickinson et al. found a similar effect in the Buffalo Bill Museum, arguing that “with no discourse to contextualize the images in the [Wild West] posters, visitors learn more about advertising of the time than about Indian/White relations” (Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, “Memory and Myth,” 100).

⁷⁶⁰ Atalay, “No Sense of the Struggle,” 608; Carpio, “(Un)Disturbing Exhibitions,” 621; Lonetree, “Missed Opportunities,” 636–37.

⁷⁶¹ Atalay, “No Sense of the Struggle,” 604, 608.

⁷⁶² Carpio, “(Un)Disturbing Exhibitions,” 628.

⁷⁶³ Quoted after Stryz, “Coyote in the Museum,” 492.

⁷⁶⁴ Siebert, *Indians Playing Indian*, 25.

⁷⁶⁵ Coffee, “Cultural Inclusion,” 266.

⁷⁶⁶ The fact that removal was not only a terrible action against Native but also directly contributed to the strengthening of Southern slavery-based economies is expressed in cautious language at best. “The American South,” visitors are informed, “became the Cotton Kingdom, an empire that generated vast wealth at great cost.” What, one is left wondering, was that great cost? Slavery is touched upon briefly in one image of enslaved people hauling cotton in the port of New Orleans in 1850. A corresponding caption traces the route cotton took to England.

⁷⁶⁷ To some extent, the online gallery accompanying the exhibit manages to construct better connects between the historical-topical information and the Indian images on the everyday-life objects from the main hall. Partially, the cross-references are more immediately visible because the online texts for each of the three historical-topical galleries first explain the historical event and then show and explain photos of objects with corresponding images.

⁷⁶⁸ Coffee, “Cultural Inclusion,” 265.

⁷⁶⁹ The gallery discussion guide is a better tool for asking the important questions that are underemphasized in the exhibit. However, the guide is tucked away in the corner by the entrance, and in its laminated, spiral-bound form is unappealing in its obvious teaching material function. While it asks good questions (reminiscent of the teacher tool available online), it seems clearly designed for elementary and middle school audiences.

⁷⁷⁰ “Americans: About the Exhibition.”

⁷⁷¹ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, “Memory and Myth,” 90.

⁷⁷² During my second visit to *Americans*, two guides were leading student groups through the main hall and the Little Bighorn gallery. One of the guides went to great length to point out how the imagery of the Little Bighorn is mirrored in the main hall items, and also pointed out how the Indian image was so clearly dominated by the Plains Indian after the 1880s. I maintain that without a guided tour, these connections are incredibly hard to make.

⁷⁷³ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, “Memory and Myth,” 100.

⁷⁷⁴ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, 101.

⁷⁷⁵ Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, 231.

⁷⁷⁶ Tucker, “American Indians Object.”

⁷⁷⁷ “‘Geronimo’ Code Name Sparks Controversy.”

⁷⁷⁸ Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island*.

⁷⁷⁹ Criticizing the US military or Thomas Jefferson might also be beyond what the NMAI can do as an indigenous museum. After all, the Americanness of the Native constituency of the NMAI is still up for debate in the American public sphere.

⁷⁸⁰ Brady, “Subjectivity Through Self-Education,” 454.

⁷⁸¹ Isaac, “Technology Becomes the Object,” 301.

⁷⁸² Lonetree, “Missed Opportunities,” 637.

⁷⁸³ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, “Memory and Myth,” 103.

⁷⁸⁴ *New Yorker* critic Peter Schjeldahl describes main curator Smith as “congenial” to the mostly non-Native audiences, describing him as a “diplomat rather than a combatant” for Native interests (Schjeldahl, “America as Indian Country: The Omnipresence of Native Americans in Popular Culture”). Whether this is accurate or not, Schjedahl recognizes that the tone of the exhibit is reconciliatory rather than confrontational, and he applauds the choice.

⁷⁸⁵ See FN 779 about Schjedahl’s review.

- ⁷⁸⁶ Lonetree, “Missed Opportunities,” 636–37.
- ⁷⁸⁷ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, “Memory and Myth,” 88–91.
- ⁷⁸⁸ Carpio, “(Un)Disturbing Exhibitions,” 620.
- ⁷⁸⁹ Schjeldahl, “America as Indian Country: The Omnipresence of Native Americans in Popular Culture.”
- ⁷⁹⁰ Rothstein, ““Americans’ Review.”
- ⁷⁹¹ Kennicott, “American Indian Museum.”
- ⁷⁹² Penney, “The Poetics of Museum Representations: Tropes of Recent American Indian Art Exhibitions,” 57.
- ⁷⁹³ Barker and Dumont, “Contested Conversations,” 118.
- ⁷⁹⁴ Archuleta, “Gym Shoes,” 433–34.
- ⁷⁹⁵ Barker and Dumont, “Contested Conversations,” 111–12.
- ⁷⁹⁶ Cobb, “The National Museum of the American Indian as Cultural Sovereignty,” 503.
- ⁷⁹⁷ Barker and Dumont, “Contested Conversations,” 118.
- ⁷⁹⁸ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*.
- ⁷⁹⁹ Fixico, “Change Over Time,” 84.

⁸⁰⁰ Genetin-Pilawa, “Exhibit Review,” 73.

⁸⁰¹ Cobb, “The National Museum of the American Indian as Cultural Sovereignty,” 503.

⁸⁰² Lonetree, “Missed Opportunities,” 642.

⁸⁰³ Genetin-Pilawa, “Exhibit Review.”

⁸⁰⁴ Ott, Aoki, and Dickinson, “Ways of (Not) Seeing Guns,” 216–17.

⁸⁰⁵ Archuleta, “Gym Shoes,” 434.

⁸⁰⁶ Weiser, *Museum Rhetoric*, 43.

⁸⁰⁷ “Museum Opens New Exhibition ‘Americans and the Holocaust.’”

⁸⁰⁸ Rothstein, “‘Americans and the Holocaust’”; Cohen, “Where ‘America First’ Once Led.”

⁸⁰⁹ Weiser, *Museum Rhetoric*, 281.

⁸¹⁰ Wakeham, “Performing Reconciliation,” 354–55.

⁸¹¹ Wakeham, 355, 372.

⁸¹² Weiser, *Museum Rhetoric*, 19–20.

⁸¹³ Carpio, “(Un)Disturbing Exhibitions,” 622.

⁸¹⁴ Teslow, “A Troubled Legacy,” 20.

Conclusion

⁸¹⁵ Crane, “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum,” 45.

⁸¹⁶ Cobb, “The National Museum of the American Indian as Cultural Sovereignty,” 502–3.

⁸¹⁷ Berlo and Jonaitis, “‘Indian Country’ on Washington’s Mal,” 17.

⁸¹⁸ Pack, “The Best of Both Worlds.”

⁸¹⁹ In a 2012 review of the Community Storytelling Project on the *New York Times* blog “Lens,” photographs besides the ones in the *National Geographic* are included. One of them shows the side of a blue ramshackle building with graffiti on it that reads “My heroes have always killed Cowboys” (Estrin, “Photographing, and Listening to, the Lakota”). This picture invites an interpretation of Oglala Lakota identity as resistive, and specifically as critical of Indian stereotypes and Western tropes. Since I don’t know whether this photo was ever considered for publication in the *National Geographic*, I excluded it from the analysis. The image does demonstrate that identity articulations on the reservation are more complex than the *National Geographic* makes it seem.

⁸²⁰ Morris and Mendelson, “*National Geographic* and Puerto Rico,” 460.

⁸²¹ Morris and Mendelson, 472.

⁸²² Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching*, 3.

⁸²³ Pack, “Constructing ‘The Navajo,’” 137. In Pack’s findings, Navajo viewers’ reception of movies did not differ meaningfully between white and Native-made films, since those Native-made films were also largely non-Navajo (Pack, “Watching Navajos Watch Themselves”).

⁸²⁴ Pack, “Constructing ‘The Navajo,’” 151.

⁸²⁵ Ahtone and Zalcman, “Reclaiming Our Stories”; Trahant and Zalcman, “Our World, but Not Our Worldview.”

⁸²⁶ Wheelersburg, “*National Geographic Magazine*,” 44.

⁸²⁷ Deutch, “Future of Native American Law.”

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