RE/PRESENTING TRADITIONS:
IDENTITY, POWER, AND POLITICS IN FOLKLIFE PROGRAMMING

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by

ELIZABETH RATHJE

Dr. Elaine Lawless, Dissertation Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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presented by Elizabeth Rathje,

a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Elaine Lawless

Professor John Foley

Professor Joanna Hearne

Professor Anand Prahlad

Professor J. Sanford Rikoon

For Rob, with love.

Thank you for your support, understanding, and all of the home cooked meals.

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Elizabeth Rathje

Dr. Elaine Lawless, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Deliberately playing on the word "tradition," in *Re/Presenting Traditions: Identity, Power, and Politics in Folklife Programming,* my research interrogates both current practices of re/presenting traditional cultures to the public, as well as the traditions of representation within the field of folklore. Moving between theory and case study this project ultimately works to identify roles and practices significant to constituting subjectivity and cultural identities. In recent years, representational studies have moved beyond obvious dichotomies of self and other, etic and emic; however, gaps still exist in our understanding of the ways in which representational strategies enact public policy, effect community development initiatives, and elaborate positive leadership within marginalized groups. This research project argues that the elaboration of cultural subjectivity is always a practice of presentation or performance; further, it posits that the re/presentation of cultures and traditions through public sector and academic folklore work can positively impact and enhance this always ongoing process. And while some of the examples, such as the folklife festival, come from a long history of public programming by folklorists, my example of educational programming within an alternative high school presents new ideas of what role folklorists may play in a classroom. With the tools of ethnography, understanding of narrative, attention to the

processes of contemporary traditions and culture-making, and stern appreciation of ethical conduct in the field, I argue that folklore as a field is well positioned to make an impact in the twenty-first century.

Prologue

The first folklore class that I ever took was in the Summer of 2000 with Dr. Anand Prahlad at the University of Missouri in Columbia. At that time, I knew very little about folklore as a discipline or field of study. I had applied for and started my graduate program in English with great trepidation—concerned that I would begin a largely solipsistic exercise that did not engage in any real way with the social and civic world that I had engaged with as an Americorps*VISTA volunteer the year before. I believe that I had even articulated those concerns with Prahlad who was at the time serving as the director of graduate studies in the department of English as I was going through the application process (an approach that is probably not recommended at the moment you are trying to get into a graduate program). Yet, I definitely perceived confidence in Prahlad's response that there was a way to bring scholarship and research thoughtfully into the public sector through the study of folklore. With these words, he helped me create a path that I could not have ever devised left to my own design. His suggestion that classes in *folklore* might be a good fit for some with my research interests, combined with a concern for human rights and social justice, changed my life.

In fact, that fall I took a course with Dr. Elaine Lawless entitled Politics, Social Justice, and Folklore. By the end of the semester I had changed my emphasis from twentieth century American literature to folklore studies. It was another tale of conversion, and a move on my part taken in full confidence that the discipline of folklore provided the tools I would need to critically engage, better understand, and creatively

contribute to the larger social conversations of our day. It was only after I was fully committed to folklore for study and for my career that I began to see and hear all the existential doubts that seem to continue to dominate many conversations about the field—especially in terms of bringing relevant theory and scholarship to the larger arenas of academic discourse and practice. But these conversations did not deter me; rather, they challenged me.

In many ways, this dissertation research project is my consideration of these concerns about the relevancy of the field of folklore. It can be read as an argument regarding the ways in which theories from the discipline inform not only ethnographic writing and research, but practice. It provides opportunities to consider how the strength of our field also lies in its ability to be interdisciplinary. In looking at the models of representation and programming within the discipline of public sector work, I ask how folklorists can foster social agency and civic engagement through their efforts as mediators, educators, administrators, and interpreters. I frame this question with an eye toward audience in particular, using case studies and critical analyses to identify how audience perception relates to audience reception. As part of my research, I look to identify the special skills that culture workers need to bring to the table to work as social advocates with and for culturally diverse traditions and communities. Namely, with the tools of folklore: ethnographic methodologies[1], understanding of narrative, attention to the processes of contemporary traditions and culture-making, and stern appreciation of ethical conduct in the field, I argue that folklore as a field is well positioned to make an

[1] I specifically attribute to the ethnographic process the tools associated with fieldwork: developing interview protocol; research through audio, video, and photographic documentation; archiving research; and creating a public component through scholarly monograph, public program, etc.

impact in the twenty-first century. And while some of the examples, such as the folklife festival, come from a long history of public programming by folklorists, my example of educational programming within an alternative high school presents new ideas of what role folklorists may play in a classroom.

Ultimately, then, this research is more about "the tools" than "a subject". My examples and case studies do not provide in-depth analyses and critiques of one community's traditions and folklore based upon months of fieldwork (although I have arguably done that work). Instead, these examples demonstrate how a perspective uniquely shaped by rigorous study in folklore can contribute to a conversation about these events vis-à-vis power and politics. I consider how our tools—when shared with community scholars, tradition bearers, students, and others—provide opportunities to define, defend, empower, and embolden this public. The next step following this project would be to continue to find ways to market these tools, illuminating the unique skill set folklorists bring to a variety of policy initiatives, always consciously treading carefully through the political minefields of community development, heritage tourism, and cultural policy.

Much of this research is informed by my own work in the field in a variety of capacities. During my doctoral program, I developed a unique plan of study that combined extensive work in outside agencies, such as the Missouri Folk Arts Program and the Smithsonian Folklife Center, with classes in grant writing, policy decision making, and advanced ethnographic research that would best prepare me to work in cultural heritage and arts agencies. Since 2006, I have worked as a folklorist with the Institute for Cultural Partnerships, directing their statewide folk and traditional arts

apprenticeship and fellowship program, managing archival collections, developing arts and education programs, and co-curating a statewide, traveling exhibition of folk and traditional arts that demonstrates how these artforms act as catalysts within cultural communities of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Since 2006 I have also been involved with on-going research in Cuba with Dr. Juanamaria Cordones-Cook, filming oral histories with a generation of Afro-Cuban artists and writers who came of age with the Revolution in the late 1950s. All of these experiences have helped to inform my writing in this dissertation project. All of my work has been influenced by my critical thinking on the topic of representation relative to research and programming.

In the first chapter following, I review some of the literature that I feel is relevant to this discussion of representation, identity, and politics relative to the discipline of folklore. I begin by defining the parameters of this study and looking at the term "representation." This moves into a discussion of discursive authority and language. Closely looking at text, and how text creates meaning for its audience, creates a space to consider how ethnographic writing is another stylized form of representation through language. Beyond looking at the act of representation through ethnographic prose, I look at the semiotic relationship between text and subject. The theories that seek to understand how one can claim any knowledge—any true belief—about any person or tradition as represented through text are diverse and sometimes contradictory. For the purposes of this project, I ultimately look at the question of "authority" and where authority to constitute meaning resides in the ethnographic or representational "text" (now broadly defined). This question resonates in many ways within the field of folklore today and arguably, this question for me defines one of the most significant bridges that

exists and defines the relationship between theory and practice. In other words, in defining the locus of authority in representational acts, theory is indispensable in understanding the semiotic possibilities within the representational event. At the same time, to persuasively and coherently articulate theory necessitates close readings of a variety of events.

This first chapter creates a frame through which I discuss specific activities that I have personally been involved with as a folklorist in my professional life: museums, folklife festivals, and folk arts in education projects. To talk about representation relative to my own experience is an important part of this project, but it is the first chapter that creates the lens that informs my discussion and analysis. In the second chapter, I begin with a critique of museum exhibits and festival stages, acknowledging the dubious legacy of such ethnographic displays. Throughout these discussions I consider how stereotype and pervasive societal narratives continue to inform audience response to these events. My argument relies upon nuanced understandings of "authority" and the production of meaning. Given the funding mechanisms for many of these public displays, it becomes clear that one necessary component would be to discuss how marketplace forces and ideologies also influence acts of representation. All of the events that I document occur in a messy world that contains multiple layers of contextualizing material that is always informing and influencing meaning production and consumption. This material filters the voices of the represented, the acts of interpretation, and the efforts at documentation. Through it all, I attempt to follow the path of shared and equally distributed authority and empowerment, identifying best practices for curators, staff, and participants.

Identifying how social constructs impact upon acts of representation continues to be my focus in the third chapter. I use this chapter to explore more closely a specific example of how stereotypes, informed by a master cultural narrative, are transmitted and passed along as "true" representations of a specific folk group. This case study demonstrates how representations ascribed to a group impact the ways in which any group will be able to (or will be denied access to) critically engage with a public. The case study described in this chapter follows a school residency program that I direct which helps students use the tools of ethnography, along with art processes, to re-represent who they are and who they consider their community to be to a diverse public that includes both people from their community, as well as the larger metropolitan area. A critical point that this chapter reinforces again is the importance of considering audience in any act of representation. In this particular case study, empowerment is realized through the recognition that there is an audience who will listen and longs to hear voices and narratives that are using the tools of folklore to construct alternative positive visions of who they are and who they can become.

Ultimately, my research and this dissertation offer evidence that folklorists stand uniquely positioned to work with a variety of projects, including those that address issues such as social justice, advocacy, and mediation. To make a case, I look at various projects that I have worked with in the field through the lens of representation. I believe that my research focus remains narrow enough to build an argument, but diverse enough to draw conclusions that reach beyond the projects themselves. Relevance, by its nature, is relative. My story of conversion to the field of folklore belies my own bias. I was not looking to the field to "collect data" in the traditional sense, nor has my career been born

out of desire to study and/or preserve a specific kind of music, art form, or cultural group. Rather, I feel privileged to do work that is relevant by calling attention to the ways in which folklorists are uniquely positioned to participate in questions of identity, power, and politics on local, regional, and venues.

Currently working as a folklorist in a uniquely interdisciplinary organization, I recognize that the common ground between this organization's diverse employees is an approach that is rooted in ethnographic processes. The Institute for Cultural Partnerships (ICP) is an organization that works in the fields of health, education, job training for refugees, diversity training, as well as folklore, or more broadly, arts and heritage. My training in folklore has given me the tools to explore the complexities of representation in contemporary society, and this, in turn, has enhanced my work at ICP. As I think about my decision to work and study within the field of folklore, I am reminded of a word, coined by Sandy Rikoon at an annual meeting of the American Folklore Society, that has really stuck with me. That word was "expertocracy," and he warned against the allure of setting up those hierarchies that better served "us" *as* a field, than "them" *in* the field. I see some of the concern with "relevancy" coming out of this warning. Rather than making sure that the field of folklore remain "relevant" in a backward looking, defending-ones-own-turf kind of a way, I am suggesting that our field's strength lie in its ability to use, and to offer up, our tools with a wide range of collaborators. My work as a folklorist is not one that will always culminate in a program, text, or project. Nor will it always even "look" like a folklore project to those who narrowly define the field in an effort to make it uniquely relevant. But as I continue to engage with the processes found in the tools and knowledge of folklore, I am heartened to think of the opportunities that

exist to identify those policies, institutions, and narratives that can make a difference in the lives of diverse people, communities, and cultures. I know that it is not ultimately about defending a discipline, but it is about knowing why it matters to the future. I am glad that I made the decision to cast my lot with folklore, not because of its legacy, but because of its promise.

Chapter One

A Consideration of Re/presentational Practice as Historicized, Theorized, and Performed: Identifying the Loci of Discursive Authority and Power

Nature of the study to be undertaken

Deliberately playing on the word "tradition," in *Re/Presenting Traditions: Identity, Power, and Politics in Folklife Programming,* my research interrogates both current practices of re/presenting traditional cultures to the public, as well as the traditions of representation within the field of folklore. Moving between theory and case study this project ultimately works to identify roles and practices significant to constituting subjectivity and cultural identities. In recent years, representational studies have moved beyond obvious dichotomies of self and other, etic and emic; however, gaps still exist in our understanding of the ways in which representational strategies enact public policy, effect community development initiatives, and elaborate positive leadership within marginalized groups. This research project argues that the elaboration of cultural subjectivity is always a practice of presentation or performance; further, it posits that the re/presentation of cultures and traditions through public sector and academic folklore work can positively impact and enhance this always ongoing process.

This thesis demands a nuanced argument that is aware of both historical and present challenges. To consider roles of presenter, presented, and audience, as well as

more nebulous roles such as the "assumed community" or the "interpretive community" (Keyes 2000), necessitates a look at re/presentation on the stage and in exhibitions, as well as self-representational and auto-representational[2] practices enacted by individuals and groups. To do this, a range of representational "texts" will present examples of ways in which re/presentation occurs overtly and covertly. These "texts" include a variety of festival and exhibits that I have been involved with, including work with the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and an arts residency project at a predominately Latino and African American alternative high school. Ultimately, I am interested in how the production and reception of representational devices of praxis organize the signifiers and referents of meaning. In each of these examples, representational practices produce meaning on multiple levels for different audiences. In other words this project asks, how do the acts of representation (production and reception) affect people and communities, and what are the variables that contribute to understanding these effects?

There is a wide range of scholarship that considers the theory and practice of representation. Philosopher Harry Redner suggests that mimesis or imitation was "a general paradigm underlying symbolic systems prior to representation… [and] political representation was one of the earliest forms of representation to develop, giving a new meaning to the pre-existing Latin word which originally did not have any of the modern connotations" (1987: 675). To consider the political usage of the term "representation" is to consider how the long debate within the discipline of political science relating to

[2] I am using these terms similarly to Louise Pratt. She characterizes "autoethnography" as the act of colonized subjects representing themselves "in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's own terms…. Autoethnography involves partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror" (1992: 7). This differs from self-representation, a more autochthonous form.

understanding the relationships between the folk (represented) and the elected official (Representative) provides parallels and illuminates debates in the field of folkloristics.

I wish to consider one very brief note (that is not representative!) from the discipline of political science. "Liberal representation" is generally understood to mean that one person gets one vote and the political outcomes are considered equal and fair if the procedure was equal and fair. But is this in fact the case? Melissa Williams (1998) argues that there is a need for self-representation for marginalized groups because procedurally fair processes are reproducing inequities in representation (see also Mansbridge 1999 and Phillips 1995). Critics have noted, however, that to enact this process it would be difficult to avoid Balkanization and other pitfalls (i.e. Beitz 1999 and Hurley 1999). While the representative practices of the folklorist may not be determined through the same processes as political election, the debate over the traditions of representational praxis and its effects have correlations. And given that folklorists may often become a conduit for representational praxis but without a formalized process of invitation nor election by the represented, the concerns of theory and practice become even more immediate.

There are a number of authors in folklore, anthropology, and related disciplines who have worked with these effects of representative practice; effects which may or may not reproduce inequities in spite of, and because of the process. In fact, it is with warnings and critics that I begin my survey of the field; for to consider this thesis without due thought given to the perilous past indiscretions of colonialism and Orientalism[3]

[3] Edward Said defines Orientationalism, writing: "The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the orient into Western learning, Western

would be folly. I begin with the warnings of Trinh T. Minh-ha relative to the act of creating representations/interpretations, who I quote at length:

> To say that man is above all *Homo significans,* that culture is essentially a semiotic concept, webs of significance man has himself spun, and that anthropological writings are interpretations and *only* interpretations is not enough….Anthropology as a semiology should itself be treated in semiological terms. It should situate its position and function in the system of meaning or, in other words, explicitly assume a critical responsibility towards its own discourse, exposing its status as inheritor of the very system of signs it sets out to question, disturb, and shatter….A subversion of the colonizer's ability to represent colonized cultures (albeit in interpretation rather than in direct observation) can only radically challenge the established power relations when it carries with it a tightly critical relation with the colonizer's most confident characteristic discourses. (1989:71)

This challenge demands that the etic perspective (mostly assumed to be privileged and the "us" of the self/other dichotomous thinking) turn the anthropological gaze upon its own work. Because this project concerns itself with the layers of discourse, "webs of significance," created through representational acts, this early acknowledgement of critical responsibility drives subsequent thought. Post-colonial thought and feminist authors critique many claims to objectivity in representational discourse. Trinh T. Minh-ha notes that "one of the conceits of anthropology lies in its positivist dream of a neutralized language that strips off all its singularity to become nature's exact, unmisted reflection…. his language, which he wishes to render transparent, believing he could erase himself in his writing while clinging to the *author's* mastership" (1989: 52). Considering the genesis of power and the direction in which empowerment flows through

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consciousness, and later, Western empire… Orientalism was itself a product of certain political forces and activities" (1978: 203).

the ethnographic written project provides the first concept that will guide the considerations of practice that follow in subsequent chapters.

It would be easier to admit the cynical position, and find that any tradition of re/presentation enacted through processes not of, for, and from within the community being re/presented are problematic, colonizing, and pose very few redeeming qualities for that community. Yet it seems a dangerous fallacy to believe that all etic representational traditions are necessarily positivistic or that hegemonic discourses cannot be disrupted through these representational praxes.

Understanding "Text:" Discursive Authority and Language

The question of how to situate myself relative to this research remains unresolved. Should I first turn the gaze to me? I am a White female, no wait… I am a German, Norwegian, little bit Irish… or, let me try it this way: rooted in the soil of Iowa, and born to a family who had been there since the late 1800's…

The task of transparency is lost[4]. Taking from Edward Said: "No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society" (1979:10). Even without the ridiculous exercise above, the problem of self-referential language's inability

[4] And what does it mean that instinctively I began with race and gender to begin to establish my own subjective stance and bias in this exercise? Is this because these represent points of tension in academic discourse, therefore I have internalized this as being most significant in how I re/present through text? I want to go back and also include my work as an activist, my age, my experiences in the field…but as I continue to obsess over the nature of the "I" in the text I leave it as I began it, perhaps exposing my own internalization of significance in creating academic discourse.

to establish a stable foundation where all of the words of a work would "read" with a coherent perspective and transparent bias for every audience is impossible. But perhaps this very instability of "Text" provides the folklorist with a valuable discursive tool. How can the "play" afforded a writer of a "Text" create a space where "no language has a hold over any other, where languages circulate (keeping the circular sense of the term)" (Barthes 1971 [2001]: 1475). Using Roland Barthes's post-structuralist theories of "Text," the coherence of meaning that comes from a work that one would read becomes now disrupted; the text consists of signifiers that must be "written" or interpreted by each reader (now writer) of the Text. This allows what has been read as an object of consumption to now be written as a plurality, irreducible to meaning: a social text. "The theory of the Text can coincide only with a practice of writing" (1971 [2001]: 1475).

This "playful" essay by Barthes brings to mind the ways in which this research project skirts around creating an argument that asks the impossible: presume and coordinate the audience response to a specific re/presentation. The corollary narrative is asking that the represented peoples and traditions empower themselves through the writerly process of creating Texts themselves. In my later chapter on the festival, this topic will be revisited and the page will be exploded as active participants create, participate in, talk back, confuse, disrupt, interpret, and consume discourse *en vivio* along with an outside audience. Bringing the festival experience to my reading of Barthes' creates possibilities of theory and practice working together in ways that the rigid schematics of classificatory systems disallow: "The Text (if only by its frequent 'unreadability') decants the work (the work permitting) from its consumption and gathers it up as play, activity, production, practice. This means that the Text requires that one try

to abolish (or at the very least to diminish) the distance between writing and reading, in no way by intensifying the projection of the reader into the work by joining them in a single signifying practice" (1971 [2001]: 1474). This insistence on "production" and on "signifying practice" creates a space where I see theoretical concerns melt into practical concerns; where the abstracted idea of a person can regain a shape of an identity and the production of cultural identities has a stage for the (re?)presentation of culture.

But the critique that I would bring to the deconstructed act of writing is that there is an assumption that all people equally have access to the "tools" of writing. Can the language of the folk "play" in the necessary ways to create the meta-discursive signifiers that will parlay representative meaning to their not always known, but to be communicated with, audience? Even after years of study I find myself daunted by the task of specialized language I could/should employ to ethically/adequately/authentically present a text that will elucidate as much as it avoids __(*fill in the blank*)__... Stereotype? Objectification? Quantitative data sets? Concrete assertions that in fact, something exists as I construct it through discourse? My concern seems to only support Gayatri Spivak's point that "Western theorists" fetishize the concrete (1999 [2001]: 2204). Donna Harraway answers to some of the frustration that the relativististic (subjective) discourse creates, writing:

> We seek not the knowledges ruled by the phalogocentrism (nostalgia for the presence of the one true Word) and disembodied vision. We seek those ruled by partial sight and limited voice—not partially for its own sake but, rather, for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledges make possible. Situated knowedges are about communities, not about isolated individuals. The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular. The science question in feminism is about objectivity as positioned rationality. Its images are not the products of escape and transcendence of limits (the view from above) but

> the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position that promises a vision of the means of ongoing finite embodiment, of living within limits and contradictions—of views from somewhere. (Qtd. In Marcus 1990: 394)

The concept of localized knowledges—knowledges situated within a specific context—creates a space where the careful author (as much as one can claim the title) re/presents through pen (metaphorically) the subject. Gaytri Chakravorty Spivak's use of deconstruction in her radical post-colonial critiques allows her to disrupt and bring into crises tenets of knowledge and belief found in many Western thinkers. As an editor of the *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* observes,

> her restless critiques connect directly to her ethical aspiration for a 'politics of the open end,' in which deconstruction acts as a "safeguard" against the repression or exclusion of "alterities"—that is, people, events, or ideas that are radically "other" to the dominant worldview. She writes against the "epistemic violence" done by discourses of knowledge that carve up the world and condemn to oblivion the pieces that do not easily fit. Characteristically, she does not claim to avoid such violence herself; rather, she self-consciously explores structures of violence without assuming a final settled position. (qtd. in Spivak 1999 [2001]: 2193)

This also challenges Harroway's point, however, regarding the possibility of a "community" that can be understood, even through "partial views and halting voices." There is a move towards the collective in Harroway that Spivak seems to not only reject, but finds no less problematic than other totalizing discourse. But does this leave no room for representative practices to occur?

Susan Ritchie advocates that we need be able to utter "without nostalgia, regret, or acceptance" Spivak's words: "The subaltern (the folk) cannot speak" (1993: 375). Ritchie argues that "Systems of representation—where some surrender their proxy to a

few—are not a universal good, but specific political developments in the history of the nation-state; and correspondingly, representation (in both its theoretical and political manifestations), as a master narrative, works persistently to homogenize differences that matter" (1993:369). But a logical fallacy is committed by Ritchie as she equates different meanings of "representation" similarly. While parallels and connections between the politics and the theory of representational practice are apt and helpful (I myself began with that because the practice of representation is, indeed, rooted in political processes), they are not exact corollaries. Her parenthetical assumption is only that, an assumption. Using the concepts of situated or local knowledges and with a wariness of generalizing the whole from a part, I would argue that some representative praxis may be allowed that does not work to homogenize difference or negatively contribute to larger master narratives.[5]

Also, Ritchie's argument does not allow for Spivak's later note: "I was so unnerved by this failure of communication[6] that, in the first version of this text, I wrote, in the accents of passionate lament: the subaltern cannot speak! It was an inadvisable remark" (1999[2001]: 2206). The failure of communication was not only in being able to "read" the meaning of the "text," but in the immediate power of the signifier (Bhubaneswari's dead, menstruating body) to affect discourses that were not of her making. Spivak recognizes that ultimately Bhubaneswari did speak, because she heard her and that "all speaking, even seemingly the most immediate, entails a distanced decipherment by another, which is, at best, an interception…. I acknowledge this

[5] This speaks directly to a point that will be elaborated in more detail as I unpack the relationship between theory and practice relative to the festival exhibition. (See especially Bakhtin [1965 (1984)], Cantwell [1993], Hansen [2000a; 200b], and Rydell [1999])

[6] She refers to the suicide of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri, and its subsequent (mis)interpretation by her family.

theoretical point, and also acknowledge the practical importance, for oneself and others, of being upbeat about future work" (1999[2001]: 2207). For me, this reconsideration of the original scholarship alludes to the greater promise found in post-colonial and post-modern critical work. Namely, a) that the texts are fluid because the contexts are always-changing, and b) the very structure of the work is revealed so that all, author included, must be more self-aware of the ever-present perceptive bias that shapes individual texts, which leads to c) because in revealing the structure, so too, is the "I" of the author known rather than hidden as the disinterested teller of "truths." I cannot believe that I am the only one who is relieved that Spivak wrote emotion into the page and brought that to bear on the representation of the woman's death.

Ruth Behar has also argued in her text *The Vulnerable Observer* that "A personal voice, if creatively used, can lead the reader, not into miniature bubbles of navel gazing, but into the enormous sea of serious social issues" (1996:14). Situated knowledges, then, write from a particular subjective stance and create a representation that simultaneously performs and constructs. But this presents a difficult question, then: can one present beyond oneself? Elaine Lawless considers Sally Robinson's argument that "'Representation' is an act of violence, perpetrated by the self-present and knowing subject against, one can only assume, the Others that that subject desires to know and control…. Representation must also be made to signify the process by which 'invisible' subjects 'legitimize' themselves by inscribing their experience, their desires, and their 'reality' into discourse" (qtd. in Lawless 2001: 19). Lawless comments on this, writing: "The possibility of women as subjects in world discourses and in history can only be realized through women's *self-representation*" (2001:19). Linda Alcoff writes "in

feminist magazines such as *Sojourner* it is common to find articles and letters in which the author states that she can only speak for herself" (qtd. in Ritchie 1993: 369), but she allows that she does not limit herself to this narrow discursive path. This question can help frame some of the case studies where the "practice" of representation must reconcile with the narratives it produces about a subject—be it singular or plural. Additionally, how does the idea of "mediated" representation, as in the folklorist as presenter at a festival or the folklorist as teacher, intersect with this discussion of discourse?

Translated Woman: The Act(s) of Representation and Ethnographic Writing

To consider the relative merits and pitfalls of practically engaging with this personal style of representational practice through ethnographic writing, I look at Behar's *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story.* Behar's writing attempts to theorize the ways in which the politics of representation can avoid becoming the politics of domination; the text presents an ethnography that challenges conventional borders in many senses of the word. The walls that normally distance the subjective from the objective, the personal from the academic, the fact from the fiction, and the Other from the Self begin to crumble as Behar articulates a new understanding from which the politics and negotiating of representation must begin.

Translated Woman, from preface to final reflejos/reflections, engages with the theories of ethnography to provide what Behar hopes is an ethical representation of Esperanza, a Mexican of Indigenous heritage. The preface acknowledges not only the

people whom she wishes to thank, but also the difficulty that she had in rendering a story that best presented Esperanza. She writes: "Yet because it is not in her power to put words to paper, my comadre left me the task of putting the words down in this book…. If nothing else, I hope I've made her life in this book too big for easy consumption" (1993: xii). And again as she concludes the text, she reflects on where authority in the project resides as her attempt to give Esperanza a copy of the book for herself is refused. Behar interpreted this, finding that "not accepting *Translated Woman* was my comadre's way of refusing to say goodbye, of refusing to be translated, of refusing to end this book" (1993: 342). By making this sentence the last word, Behar seems to indicate that she feels she allowed her subject to enact her own subjective authority within this representational frame that she (Behar) created. However, I am also reminded of Kwesi Yankah's arguments regarding other "folk", and would juxtapose with my reading of Behar's final sentence the notion that: "Like the indigenous scholar confronted by an intimidating global academy, the African folk struggle to digest mainstream systems of knowledge, knowledge transmission, language, and modes of power enactment and representation that fall outside their domain of enculturation" (1999: 155). I now ask, did Esperanza have any tools to enact this discursive authority relative to the representation of her by an outside scholar—could she "digest" the implications of taking or rejecting it?

In her introduction, Behar openly presents her methodological structure for scrutiny to the audience. This, in itself, is a departure from writers who authoritatively presume to have the best tools with which they can give meaning to the practices of another culture. It is also daring and reinforces the "vulnerability"—expanding this notion beyond the "observer" and indeed, allowing critical fissures of the text to be

exposed. (I ask, to what extent has the seriousness of some ethnographic representations been ignored because the structure allows for doubt… allows for the *authoring* of a text that admits to the (in)ability to ever completely represent, in contrast to other text's *authorizing* representations whereby *authority* is assumed over its representations.[7])

"The Talking Serpent" is the introductory chapter of Behar's text; its name originates in a story that Esperanza relates detailing how with all serpents that she kills she must remove their tongue so that they cannot tell the "Evil One" who did this to them. In this introduction, Behar writes that she shaped the book in a way that "neatly reflects the process of how my *comadre* and I became mediums for each other's stories" (1993: 14). Behar wants to assure her audience that no tongues have been cut; that Esperanza and she both participated in the telling of these stories. Of course this reciprocity extends only so far, for Behar ultimately is the one who is privileged to communicate both of their stories. I would argue that in allowing her voice to not only translate Esperanza's story, but also to provide a medium through which she could translate her own, the ethnographic representation becomes increasingly (and problematically) autobiographical.

While Behar's methods mark an important move towards a new ethnography that expands opportunities for shared empowerment and authority, her methods, which

[7] In fact, let me insert here as footnote a text that many would consider seminal and impossible to ignore when considering the representational theories of the discipline. *Writing Culture*, edited by James Clifford and George Marcus, is often credited with bringing the post-modern project to ethnographic writing. Feminist anthropologists were appalled when they noted the absence of women and Clifford's seeming dismissal of their work when he wrote: "[feminist ethnography] has not produced either unconventional forms of writing or a developed reflection on ethnographic textuality as such" (1986:21). Ruth Behar in the introduction to *Women Writing Culture* considers the historical facts of women who have been writing culture, and points to women who have used the very means considered as post-modern and necessary tools (but not the tools recognized by the institutional powers) such as fiction, personal memoir, and poetry (1995). See also Clifford's footnotes 9-11 (pp. 19-21) for additional consideration of women's writing and feminist theoretical contribution.

include placing herself into the text, present their own issues. A common critique of Behar is that she, by situating herself in the text as what she terms a "vulnerable observer," evokes a modern solipsism that works to negotiate her self-identity through her subject, a methodology which ultimately may differ only a little from the historical attempts of representation that she wishes to avoid. This recalls the mocking question of Trinh Minh-ha's "If you can't locate the other, how are you to locate yourself?" (1991: 217), or Said's statement that "Orientalism is—and does not simply represent—a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world" (1979:12). But as Clifford notes,

> Dialogical modes are not, in principle, autobiographical; they need not lead to hyper self-consciousness of self-absorption. As Bakhtin (1981) has shown, dialogical processes proliferate in any complexly represented discursive space …. Polyvocality was restrained and orchestrated in traditional ethnographies by giving to one voice a pervasive authorial function and to others the role of source, "informants," to be quoted or paraphrased. Once dialogism and polyphony are recognized as modes of textual production, monophonic authority is questioned, revealed to be characteristic of a science that has claimed to *represent* cultures. (1986: 15)

Of course the question remains, to what extent can discursive authority be claimed by some subjects who are represented through this process, dialogic or not? The image in the mirror is allowed to speak, but does it reflect beyond the author who creates it?

The concept of a mirror has been often invoked by folklorists and anthropologists to provide a conceptual aid of how they imagine the folklore and traditions of the group functioning; they "mirror" the society from which they emerge. This has proven to be problematic on a number of levels, and as William R. Bascom indicates in his early article addressing the functions of folklore in society, one cannot simply assume the

extent to which the folklore actually mirrors reality, but that "the folklore of a people can be fully understood only through a thorough knowledge of their culture" (1954: 339)[8]. He continues to indicate that not only does folklore *not* present a true "mirror" of culture, but that "characters in folktales and myths may do things which are prohibited or regarded as shocking in daily life" (1954: 339). The relationship between folklore and culture is not the only instance of mirroring that occurs in ethnographies, however.

Scholars in the later twentieth century found that ethnography often demonstrates an aspect of mirroring that has heretofore been unconscious: In studying an Other, reverse "mirroring" provides the images that are used to then define the Self. Rather than simply *studying* culture, there is mounting evidence of *using* the Other's culture and identity towards political, economic, and ultimately personal ends. bell hooks identifies this phenomena in her essay "Eating the Other" in which she uses Marianna Torgovnick's assertion that "the West's fascination with the primitive has to do with its own crises in identity, with its own need to clearly demarcate subject and object even while flirting with other ways of experiencing the universe" (qtd. in hooks 22). To understand the Self, then, is to understand what the Self is not.

A *New York Times* review of *Translated Woman* also suggests, "The lesson is clear, the lives of anthropologists are rarely as rich and fascinating as those of their subjects" (qtd. in Behar, 1995: 78). The question is then posed: In ethnographic writing,

[8] Of course contemporary scholarship would problematize this statement of Bascom. Specifically, his belief that he ever could obtain this "thorough knowledge" of a culture is presumptuous at best, and hints of colonial ideologies that create knowledges of and about the Others, thereby constituting objective identities and denying the elaboration of subjectivity. The whole functionalist school of thought of which Bascom is a part is caught up in the business of classification and the authority that presumes (see discussion on "collect, classify, analyze" below). However, to his credit, some correlate his insistence on noting context and situation in determining function to being a precursor to performance theory (see Foley [1992] as well as discussion below on performance theory relative to representational practice).

how does one best negotiate the issues of self and other so that an ethical and authentic representation may be reflected in the text? As Behar reflects upon the negative *New York Times* statement, she writes, "It doesn't matter if my life is boring, if I'm not a sufficiently exotic Other. By the end of the month, just by virtue of a *New York Times* review, the book sells out" (Behar 1995: 78). There is a sense of vindication in this statement. She knows the "expected" narrative, and she knows that she tried to not give it. She knows that this book review is often a voice of "the academic establishment," but it provides her with a boon in terms of her book sales. Is this another instance that supports the notion that she is participating in the narrative of anti-conquest? Perhaps. She seems to clearly reject classical modes of discourse that create Self/Other dichotomies, yet at no point does she remove herself from the frame that she composes. The image of her is always next to or inscribed within that of Esperanza. The idea of Esperanza cannot live *en el otro lado* without Behar serving as her coyote[9].

This boundary is never removed by Behar, and while many could argue that it *never* could be moved, one must ask to what extent did she reinforce the border through her writing? Does the tongue of the snake remain intact? Yet conversely, to what extent was a breach allowed by Behar's insistence on bringing Esperanza's story to el otro lado? In letting Esperanza, before only a nostalgic image, to speak and not move out of the mirror, but to reflect in the mirror a different image than that which had heretofore be inscribed, did Behar make an ingenious and necessary move forward? Gloria Anzaldúa writes that "the U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (1987: 3). Does Behar's transgressing of the border allow

[9] A coyote is the person paid by illegal Mexican immigrants for safe passage across the border to what they refer to as *el otro lado*, or "the other side."

some healing, or only a greater wound? Is Esperanza still waiting to be able to truly let her tongue, her voice, her Self, become more than only an Other?

These questions cannot be answered adequately or sufficiently. One could argue that to infuse the genre of autobiography with ethnography might allow similar abuses to reign as Louise Pratt identified in what she terms anti-conquest narratives:

> In the literature of the imperial frontier, the conspicuous innocence of the naturalist, I would suggest, acquires meaning in relation to an assumed guilt of conquest, a guilt the naturalist figure eternally tries to escape, and eternally invokes, if only to distance himself from it once again…. the *discourse* of travel that natural history produces, and is produced by, turns on a great longing: for a way of taking possession without subjugation and violence. (1992: 57)

While Pratt is specifically referring to those texts that articulate a "utopian, innocent vision of European global authority," in what ways does the ethnographic project infused with autobiography also participate in this vision of participating in a move for social justice (let the voices be heard!) while at the same time subjecting the representations to the same objectifying discourse? While the desire to undo the years of classifying, containing, and sterilizing of culture has led to Behar's important moves forward, attention needs to be given to the implications of writing the self into the narrative of an other. Is the guilt of the past blinding us to the consequences of new genres of writing today?

Gloria Anzaldúa wrote a poem titled *No se raje, chicanita* (Don't Give In, Chicanita), in which the last stanza reads:

> Yes, in a few years or centuries
>
> *la Raza* will rise up, tongue intact
>
> carrying the best of all the cultures.

That sleeping serpent,

rebellion-(r)evolution, will spring up.

Like old skin will fall the slave ways of obedience, acceptance, silence.

Like serpent lightning we'll move, little woman.

You'll see. (1987: 203, translation hers)

How can an innovative ethnography of Esperanza allow a tongue to speak that has before been silenced, contained, appropriated, and colonized? In giving herself a place within the ethnography, Behar perhaps permitted a more representative image of her work with Esperanza to emerge. However, too often the negotiation of narrative about which Behar candidly writes seems to re-enact the process of mirroring that Trinh-Minh Ha's question provokes[10]. Through text, Behar was able to not only "fix" in time who Esperanza is, but who Ruth Behar is. What is the next step that a conscientious ethnographer can take? How can they avoid this pitfall? Are the fields of folklore and anthropology irrevocably bound up in a business of colonizing an Other?

Gloria Anzaldúa's writings advocate a rethinking and reworking of cultural theories of the "Other," be it an ethnic, sexual or a gendered Other. Yet also through her theory, the relationship between self and academia and self and society is interrogated; she exposes the constructedness of identity and how those constructions operate and permeate throughout today's society. I return again to the metaphor of the mirror, for particularly useful is Anzaldúa's invocation of the mirror as an "ambivalent symbol" (1987: 42). She finds that the mirror is always both bound up in reproducing images, and also in containing them and absorbing them. Further, and of especial use for this

[10] See above: "If you can't locate the other, how are you to locate yourself?" (1991: 217)

discussion, she exposes the nature of "seeing" relative to the mirror: "Seeing and being seen. Subject and object, I and she. The eye pins down the object of its gaze, scrutinizes it, judges it. A glance can freeze us in place; it can 'possess' us. It can erect a barrier against the world. But in a glance also lies awareness, knowledge (1987: 42). This contradiction embodied in the act of "seeing" she names the *Coatlicue state*, evoking the Aztec ancestry that she claims. This intersection of self and object, a construction made—a visioning or containment—in a look, which culminates in the naming of a self born of an ancient and (until reclaimed)[11] corrupted tradition, ultimately presents the moment of truth for the representational project. A new consciousness must emerge that embraces the contradictions and moves through them.

However, this metaphor of a mirror, as any, can only reflect part of what is usually a more complex reality. The politics of representation and difference in Behar's self-conscious and critically-aware text become the politics of identity and sameness. As a feminist ethnographer mediating the boundaries of Self and Other, Behar cannot ignore the fact that she is a woman writing another woman's life. In the introduction to *Women Writing Culture*, Behar acknowledges that the relationship between feminist and ethnographer identities is awkward: "The awkwardness arose from the difficulty of maintaining the premise of anthropology as a Self in relation to an Other in a context where the feminist researcher is herself an Other to patriarchy's Self" (Behar and Gordon 1995: 14).

[11] At another point Anzaldúa indicates how her female ancestors (she considers here especially her "three mothers," *la Guadalupe, Malinche,* and *la Llorona*) have been appropriated to support institutional and male dominance, writing: "In part, the true identity of all three has been subverted—*Guadalupe to make us docile and enduring,* la *Chingada* [Malinche, literally "the fucked one"] to make us ashamed of our Indian side, and *la Llorona* to make us long-suffering people" (1987: 31).

Like the authors of *This Bridge Called My Back* (Moranga and Anzaldúa 1981), Behar is hoping to move beyond the narrow definition of feminism posed by many North American academics, and instead translate Esperanza's story as a specific case rather than one that would be considered representative of a whole group or one that essentializes. However, as Behar bemoans: "No one is quite sure anymore of how to reconcile feminist politics of social transformation and international sisterhood with a research practice in which relatively privileged academic women seek out, record, and publish the edited voices of relatively underprivileged women from somewhere else in the name of a feminism to be borne across the border" (1993: 297). As Behar explores this issue, the reality of needing to understand how she needs to translate her work as a feminist ethnographer into language which the academy for whom she works would understand and condone implicates her and others in the additional issues of academic integrity relative to her subject:

> Working to put feminist principles that challenge neutrality and objectivity into practice, feminist ethnographers have found themselves caught inside webs of betrayal they themselves have spun, with stark clarity, they realize that they are seeking out intimacy and friendship with subjects on whose backs, ultimately, the books will be written upon which their productivity as scholars in the academic marketplace will be assessed. (1993: 297)

Calling herself "*un ajiaco de contradicciones*[12]" she wonders if she must label herself a "Translator, traitor" (1993: 339). Not only do questions of authority and power permeate her introduction and her final reflections, but also she exhibits a self-awareness that goes so far as to imagine the perspective of Esperanza. For example, when at another time Behar sees herself being scrutinized by others; evaluated and translated, she writes, "I

[12] Literally this means "a mix of contradictions." She says this in light of her identities as a Chicana, feminist, woman, anthropologist, academic, translator, etc.

start to think I can imagine how Esperanza must have felt when I kept pointing my camera at her as she walked down the streets of San Luis Potosí with the bucket of produce on her head" (1993: 341). This awareness of being the one who is "under the microscope," and whose life is being presented for the scrutiny of others presents one component of post-colonial critique.

Behar's recognition of scrutiny also illuminates how representation problematically works to commodify those subject(s) of the margins through identity objectification (the "object" of study under a microscope). I use the word "commodify" because as many post-colonial critiques have alluded, the system under which much academic writing and scholarship occurs is itself competing for "bankable" ideas from their scholastic halls. The subjects that become the objects of much academic scholarship are "theorized" and "debated" and made resources to be used for such purposes.[13] bell hooks knew this too well when she wrote in "Eating the Other," "When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other" (1992:23). Trinh Minh-ha notes that,

> Now, i am not only given the permission to open up and talk, i am also encouraged to express my difference. My audience expects and demands it; otherwise people would feel as if they have been cheated: We did not come to hear a Third World member speak about the First (?) World, We came to listen to that voice of difference likely to bring us *what we can't*

[13] I will again revisit this thread of thought in my discussion of both the festival and the high school production. The relationship of funders to public events, not to mention the rhetoric that goes into grant proposals to fund public events, are areas that speak to this question of bodies becoming commodities. (See also Kurin [1997], Rahn [2000], Hanson [2000a]) I also will consider more fully hooks' argument regarding the commodification of difference, linking it to the larger, more insidious issues of decontextualizing Other's histories and fetishizing the exotic Others' body (1992).

> *have* and to divert us from the monotony of sameness. They, like their anthropologists whose specialty is to detect all the layers of my falseness and truthfulness, are in a position to decide what/who is 'authentic' and what/who is not. (1989: 88)

The question of authenticity looms in this thought, as it does, in fact, permeate many discussions of "representation."[14] But also at point here are the ways in which one can insert oneself into the discourse of the academia. Is it through the discipline of folklore (or another academic area) that one ought to be advocating for changing social narratives of Otherness and Difference? And it what ways does this implicate the impossibility of any scholastic project participating in representative praxis due to the fact that its [Western scholarship's] very foundational structures and moorings are built using language and discourses that are antithetical to the projects I have been describing? I found this note by Dorine Kondo in my research and not only appreciate how it speaks to this issue, but also how it serves as notice for what she hopes will be the effect of her and others embracing their "specialness" (see Trinh Minh-ha's sarcastic usage of the word in the section: "The sense of specialness" [1989: 86-89]) and using their "special knowledges" as a tool:

> This feminist politics would be premised on the subversion of the presumed distinction between the academy and the real world. The liberal humanist monastic conceit of academia as the Ivory Tower, where nothing we do matters in the 'real world,' and the activist conceit of politics occurring only in the 'the community,' are both premised on a narrow view of politics and of the academy as basically apolitical…. For me, academia is NOT the ivory Tower, but a battleground and a site of struggle, where matters of life and death are at stake: what counts as knowledge, how social class, sexuality, race and gender will be reproduced and contested, how knowledge and social reproduction get legitimated, what directions people's lives will take…. it is a site of struggle that has too much legitimacy in this society to be left to the white

[14] "Authenticity" as a term is problematized throughout this study, but see especially footnote 18.

> boys." (unpublished manuscript "Women of Color and the Cultural Politics of Identity" 1990, quoted in Marcus 1990: 393)

This points to the correlations that exist between the writerly aspects of representational praxis and the productive or practical aspects of representational praxis. While the correlation between political representation, discursive representation, and exhibition may seem spurious, I would argue that they all portend to the same ends: enacting epistemology, and creating systems of knowledge and belief.

Enacting Epistemology: Representation in Theory and Practice

Many writers on the topic of representational practice are indebted to Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory of practice. He writes,

> Objectivism constitutes the social world as a spectacle presented to an observer who takes up a "point of view" on the action, who stands back so as to observe it and, transferring in the object the principles of his relation to the object, conceives of it as a totality intended for cognition all along, in which all interactions are reduced to symbolic exchanges. This point of view is the one afforded by high positions in the social structure, from which the social world appears as a representation (in the sense of idealist philosophy but also as used in pointing or the theatre) and practices are no more than "executions", stage parts, performances of scores, or the implementing of ideas. (1977 [2003]: 96)

To consider representation to its fullest theoretical extent requires that we interrogate the relations between knowledge and belief, as well as the role that cognitive recognition plays relative to this. How do we create meaning, enact meaning, subvert meaning, play with meaning, understand meaning, believe meaning… the list goes on. However, simply in enumerating this list one concept becomes more clear; namely, that the way

things are “known” correlates to the ways in which things are constructed by both the producer and the recipient. The ethnographic project must understand itself as both a conduit of information but also as a forum through which a subject participates in her own elaboration, refining, and creation.

I don’t believe that there exists a fieldwork situation that isn’t always already being mediated when the folklorist “walks in the room” (a common trope that you see in so many works). This is the realization of Introduction to Folklore students when you begin to discuss the role of the ethnographer. What is less understood, however, is how the same narratives that are always already mediating the initial (and subsequent) interactions between folklorist and folk are also always already mediating the ways in which further representative acts are received—be it at a festival, museum, performance, or written text. What is exciting about the opportunities afforded the folklorist, however, is how the very nature of the folk and traditional often allows for unscripted moments to occur that, as de Certeau notes, are creative, but not completely outside of, otherwise structuring narratives. This concept informs much of the discussion that follows in my second chapter on the museum and festival, but key to this particular discussion is the relationship between discourse, reception, perception, and representation.

Like de Certeau, I take from Bourdieu to argue the relation or value of structuring narratives to the elaboration of meaning depends upon the “conditions of production and use” (1977 [2003]: 97). To understand how social narratives are constructed as conduits to meaning and shared among groups of people offers a path for analysis of these narratives as instruments. Specifically, as this project looks at representational practice, one foundational component that must be considered is the role of epistemological

pursuits for "Truth" through a variety of instruments and classificatory systems. To an extent, to make more apparent the relationship of these structuring narratives to representation is one goal of this project. I would identify two specific examples. There are those narratives that live as "truths" which remain unexamined due to their being "unmarked" (as in Butler 1990). There are also those other "truths" that are supported through evidence derived through taxonomies, classificatory schemata, and other modes of "structuring" that obscure their own structured genesis (Bourdieu 1977 [2003]). Within some academic circles, Trinh T. Minh-ha's assertion denouncing the "unity and uniformity of dissection, classification, and synthesis toward a higher truth" (1989:49) found in epistemic practices and hegemonic discourse may invite outrage. Yet it is a response that directly challenges the authority presumed through the scholastic project to create these schematics that represent and codify what should be understood as Other. Edward Said makes this connection explicit, noting that one of the elements that contributed to the construction of Orientalist structures

> was the whole impulse to classify nature and man into types. The greatest names are, of course, Linnaeus and Buffon, but the intellectual process by which bodily (and soon moral, intellectual, and spiritual) extension—the typical materiality of an object—could be transformed from mere spectacle to the precise measurement of characteristic elements was very widespread. (1979:119)

How much has changed since Said wrote this in 1979? In 1968 Jan Brunvand wrote a text that has been a classic for many introductory folklore classes since. The fourth edition was just released in 1998 with the mantra that fuels many of the introductory folklore class projects: "Collect, Classify, Analyze." Yet this seemingly innocuous imperative to collect and classify can also be understood as participating in an exercise

that encourages not only the distance between observer and observed, but that also reinforces the subject as object.

For folklorists these questions all resonate gravely. As Dipesh Chakrabarty (1992) entreats historians to acknowledge and make visible the repressive structures and practices of their discipline's narrative forms, similarly post-colonial theory is a call to consider the colonizing history of the institution as well as the discipline of folklore. Prahlad notes that "the discourse of western folklore studies emerged out of colonial discourse and has not yet adequately interrogated the impact of this origin on the study of materials from postcolonial subjects….The term 'folklore' is saturated with colonial narratives that contain deeply ingrained notions of class and race" (2005:260). Joan Radner notes in her 2000 presidential address to the member of the American Folklore Society that

> Much of our strongest work, wherever we do it, grapples with the challenges of our historical identity, which Roger Abrahams [1993] has highlighted:
>
> - That since the very origins of their field, folklorists have been embroiled in class and cultural politics;
> - That our disciplinary history of looking backward at an every disappearing cultural heritage tends to exoticize, patronize, and marginalize the 'folk' with whom we work;
> - That the very cannon formations and generic categories of our discipline carry ideological messages and can objectify culture; and
> - That the language we use, the research situations we choose, and the examples we bring forward in our teaching and public presentations have their roots in Romantic 'dreams of community'. (2001: 266-7)

Susan Ritchie skeptically asks, "Is there any difference between the fraud and the folklorist" (1993:375), submitting a warning regarding the ability of post modernist and

deconstructive approaches to transmit culture: "Yet the concept of representation, deployed so often as it is through the trope of mutism, is a modern idea that is unlikely to survive the strain placed on it by a postmodern agenda. A politically progressive postmodern study of culture will have to learn to carry out its tasks while maintaining a skepticism about the ideological work of representation" (1993:365). She then obliquely states: "What follows is a model of such a distrust" (365), coining the term "ventriloquist folklore" to name this effect of folklorists assuming the voice in their book, festival, program is really that of the "folk" and that the folk have retained final control and ownership of the presentation. Arguing that current practice fails to address larger issues of what it means to move local expressions into larger discourse, Ritchie's article is helpful in historicizing the move from modernist practice to post-modern sensitivities within the field of folklore.

Questions regarding the location of authority, the ability to claim discursive authority, as well as the means to contest it, reside in the works, among others, of Behar (1996), Behar and Gordon (1995), Bendix and Welz (1999), Briggs (1996), Cantwell (1993), Clifford and Marcus (1986), Geertz (1973), Lawless (2001), Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989), Visweswaran (1994), and are echoed in Melissa Williams' (1998) desire to have self-representation in governing bodies for marginalized groups. Prahlad, in outlining the history and challenges of Africana folklore, notes that the transnational perspective recognizes that Africana cultures embody the postmodernist reality. In drawing this parallel, he continues that

> Transnational perspectives in many ways challenge some of the basic ideas of folklore studies, for instance, those notions having to do with tradition, authorship, transmission, face-to-face communication, local

> communities, and small groups. It is worth pondering how folklore studies may reorient itself in a future world in which fewer people on earth are isolated, as the marginalized become ever closer to the center, as the center becomes increasingly difficult to identify, and as boundaries between national and ethnic identities become increasingly more fluid. (2005: 265)

Acknowledging the increasing globalization of society and how its ramifications on representational work requires additional study, I would argue that the continuing trend towards relativism and situated knowledges will continue to have importance due to the impossibility of "pure narratives". But I continue to ask the questions, to what extent can "difference" be mediated? And to what extent must communities demand self-representational practice to ensure their own definitive subjectivities and modalities?

Ritchie argues that "a truly postmodern folklore presents a different task than the mere critique of totalizing master narratives: the affirmative theorization of emergent difference" (1993:366). I acknowledge her point that "Until we postmoderns, trapped as we are within the writing machine, learn to argue for difference, but not representative difference; until we learn to argue for political privilege, but not agency, we will fail to move beyond a modern or even postmodern politics of global claustrophobia" (1993: 377). Trinh Minh-ha examines the language that exists to enact representation, the Master's, to argue that this in itself complicates the ability to ever speak. Noting difference, Trinh Minh-ha articulates that many have decided to suspend judgment of others, finding the task impossible. She believes this "attitude is a step forward; at least the danger of speaking for the other has emerged into consciousness. But it is a very small step indeed, since it serves as an excuse for their complacent ignorance and their reluctance to involve themselves in the issue" (1989:80). Sara Suleri writes, "The claim

to authenticity—only a Black can speak for a Black; only a postcolonial subcontinental feminist can adequately represent the lived experience of that culture—points to the great difficulty posited by the 'authenticity' of female racial voices in the great game that claims to be the first narrative of what the ethnically constructed woman is deemed to want" (1992: 275). She deems this process the "will to subjectivity," and does not admit to easy answers to this representational quandary.

Kwesi Yankah in a 1998 plenary address to the American Folklore Society finds that any globalizing agenda in the discipline will necessarily need to acknowledge the "uneasy crises of sorts between dominant and marginal cultures in knowledge production and dissemination" (1999: 144). He notes that with English, French, and German remaining the hegemonic languages of scholarship, local African scholars struggle to be a part of the academic discourse, and similarly African voices struggle to be heard because of the resistance of Western publishers "who complain of intrusive African vocabularies in titles and text: intrusive because they are not mainstream languages" (1999: 144). Yankah then notes:

> These postulations index disturbing trends in the politics of the academy: the domination of global academic discourse and publishing by Eurocentric standards; the subsumption of local intellectual paradigms under received Western hegemonies; the monopolistic control of the center of academic authority; and subsequently the marginalization of other intellectuals and their local academic agenda. (1999: 144)

Two years later, Joan Radner addressed the membership gathered at the annual meetings of the American Folklore Society (AFS) in a paper that considered the high and the lowlights of AFS history and its present course. She quotes Gerald Davis as she

considers the relative absence of racial, international, and class diversity among AFS membership in 2000:

> so very few of those we have studied are with us as colleagues to police our excesses, to authoritatively warn us of our imminent transgressions across intentionally erected and maintained customary boundaries, to applaud us and slap our backs when we have made genuine 'discoveries' of use to our host communities and to the field, and most importantly, to follow their own paths and journeys through their own cultural formations. (2001: 267-8)

She then asks, "If more members of these [diverse cultural] communities do not choose to become folklorists *and* join us in AFS, can we live with the answer to the most disturbing question: what *are* we doing, as outsiders, in and for their communities?" (2001: 268). I would add to that question, how flexible can the discipline of folklore be in determining the nature of "folk", the types of "lore", and the modes of discourse to be re/presented through ethnographic text, exhibition, or festival stage?

Charles Briggs' work supports the notion that claims to discursive authority fuel concerns by many groups regarding outsider interventions. His article on "The Politics of Discursive Authority in Research…" brings insight to the relationships of discursive power. He considers community scholars Ramón Gomez and Catalina Medina to present a case study indicating how their artistic and preservation work is threatened by outside scholarly restrictions on notions of tradition. Briggs writes that, "Both overt racism and limitations on access to higher education make it difficult in most cases for indigenous performers and scholars to compete with nonindigenous anthropologists and other professionals over the circulation of cultural forms. If wide-ranging intertextual connections of the sort that I made in this essay become the privileged means of

authorizing cultural representations, then cultural distance and political-economic advantage will have gained even more hegemonic force" (1996: 461).

Drawing comparisons to political systems, Briggs looks at the free trade agreements that Mexico and Canada entered into with the United States in the mid 1990s. Going beyond studies on the "invention of tradition," Briggs draws this analogy to include much post-modern scholarship that creates "free-trade spaces" for discourse about culture: "If scholars privilege perspectives that view discourse as a free play of signifiers, then the way that racism and (post)colonialism greatly limit the ability of members of dominated communities to play with signifiers and to circulate their signs may be even more neatly concealed" (1996:462). Simon Bronner notes in his chapter aptly titled "The Problem of Tradition" that the "construction of tradition as conventional knowledge and a form of narrative apart from a written or elite record has been especially useful to describe cultural histories of marginal societies of everyday life in industrialized nations" (1998:15). Here, the discourse of tradition supplements or even supplants the record of history for present-day representations of a community group, but it also points to the nefarious slippery slope that can contribute to (Western) academic smugness. As his text considers the changing invocations of tradition for economic, political, and personal gains, I increasingly notice that the ways in which the constructedness of tradition is so often neatly used by those with the power to manipulate discourse, yet concealed under the cloth made out of the very ambiguity of the term "Tradition" itself.

Clearly, this debate in scholarship concerning the invention of tradition is another aspect that informs and impacts representational constructs today. Most well known in the debate are the critical works of Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin (1984), and

Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983). Handler and Linnekin argue in their text, "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious?" that tradition is a wholly symbolic construction—it cannot be defined in terms of "boundedness, givenness, or essence" and is not a "core of ideas and customs always handed down to us from the past" (1984:273). They posit that there exists a false dichotomy between tradition and modernity—the terms are interpretive rather than descriptive. In other words, "there can only be what is new, although what is new can take on symbolic value as 'traditional'" (1984:273). Reminded of the A. L. Kroeber's definition: "the internal handing on through time" of culture traits (1948:411), Handler and Linnekin challenge this idea to instead suggest that tradition "resembles less an artificial assemblage than a process of thought—an on-going interpretation of the past" (1984:274).

This intersects with the larger processes of representative practice, then, because their argument highlights how understanding tradition is not about an authentic portrayal of traditions preserved, but rather about the conceptual needs of the present. To posit a distinction between genuine and spurious traditions is to overlook the fact that social life is always symbolically constructed, never naturally given. In fact, this brings back the point of considering the objectifying impulse of representative practices. Handler and Linnekin write in their conclusion, "Thus we can no longer speak of tradition in terms of the approximate identity of some objective thing that changes while remaining the same. Instead, we must understand tradition as a symbolic process that both presupposes past symbolisms and creatively reinterprets them" (1984:287). This argument is indebted to the work of Dell Hymes, whose "traditionalization" posits a process that is always creative (1975b). Subsequent work by folklorists and other scholars in the area largely

argues that traditions are emergent and indebted to their "present" performative contexts (i.e. Bauman (1977), Bhabba [2001 (1989)], Cantwell [1993], Herzfeld [1982], and Linnekin [1991]). I especially find John Foley's definition useful, when he writes: "I have assumed tradition to be a dynamic, multivalent body of meaning that preserves much that a group has invented and transmitted but that also includes as necessary defining features both inherent indeterminacy and predisposition to various kinds of changes of modifications" (1992: 277). To represent tradition, then, necessitates close attention to context and practice.

The claims to discursive authority and self-representation are concerns that guide much of the writing on representative practices. Henry Louis Gates in African American studies, Gerald Vizenor in Native American studies, and Homi Bhabha in post colonial studies are some of the advocates who argue the need of minorities to adapt the critical tools of academic discourse to engage and change the process. Audre Lorde's oft repeated "The master's tools will not tear down the master's house" (1981: 99) and Trinh Minh-ha's corollary "How many, already, have been condemned to premature deaths for having borrowed the master's tools and thereby played into his hands?" (1989: 79-80) point toward the difficult task of understanding the ways in which dialogical representation enacts knowledge and power. However, Susan Suleri offers an interesting critique of Trinh Minh-ha and others engaged in this scholarship; namely, that they are still engaging with the master's discourse, even if they are rejecting some of his more obvious tools. In trying to articulate a realism written through the body that is both female and colored they are only reifying binary relationships that contribute to

oppression. In living post-, they reify post-, be it post-colonial, theory, modern, etc. (1992).

Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon in *Women Writing Culture* argue that, "For ethnography to matter in a multicultural world it needs to reach a wider range of audiences both in and beyond the academy" (1995:21). Subsequently, their text includes fiction, theatre, and creative non-fiction as just a few examples of ways folklorists, especially women folklorists, are finding ways to creatively approach the problematic nature of language and discourse. Does this mean that deconstructionism as a theory is obtuse and unreadable, but deconstructionism as practice is liberating genres and creating utopian communicative anarchies? More likely, the discipline is finding new ways to interact with post-modern and deconstructionist pedagogy through their own works. Arguably, work in performance theory is one example that I would present and that has particular relevance for the topic of re/presentation and for redefining discursive authority relative to the academic project.

Performance Theory and Representative Practice

Assumptions fueled by this history of "collect, classify, and analyze" did the field a great disservice in terms of the theory and practice of representation relative to folk and traditional arts. In fact, while Robert Baron (1993) notes that a paradigmatic shift was already occurring in the late 1940's[15], I believe that this specter of positivism contributes to the on-going debate of a theory (or lack thereof) for folklore practice. As noted above,

[15] Baron writes, "By 1947, folklore studies was clearly bursting loose from antiquarian origins and a consuming interest in collection and classification" (1993:235). He illustrates this by pointing to the increasingly pluralistic approaches and interdisciplinary practices of the field, both of which contributed to disciplinary growth and unease.

folklorists have long dealt with the relative and the local: documenting the arts of everyday life. The interpretative process that accompanies this work has also continued to be refined. However, a naivety about how available and accessible the meaning of the practice, let alone the ability to define or describe the practice, continues to be an issue for the field. Considering the tools available to a folklorist when looking at representation through the lens of performance offers a variety of ways through and around some of these issues.

Clifford Geertz writes that the role of theory in the ethnographic project is to "provide a vocabulary in which what symbolic action has to say about itself—that is, about the role of culture in human life—can be expressed" (1973:57). Rereading this assertion, the assumptions Geertz makes that seem trivial begin to take new shape when questions of authority are raised. Specifically, who may create the vocabulary which tells a story of symbolic action and upon whose authority do the interpretations thrive? And as my discussion earlier indicates, it would be naïve at best to ignore how vocabulary not only describes, but defines; that language through its very existence generates knowable concepts (noting especially, Trinh Minh-ha [1987], Anzaldúa [1987], Barthes [1971 (2001)], Saussure [1916 (2001)]). To consider an act without understanding the context of that act would create representations that do not make sense or impossibly make sense.[16]

Similarly, to write about practice without some basis in theoretical positioning and understanding would naively accept rather than engage with and interrogate the

[16] I note here Geertz's assertion that "Nothing has done more, I think, to discredit cultural analysis than the construction of impeccable depictions of formal order in whose actual existence nobody can quite believe" (1973:49)

implicit foundations of knowledge production as expressed through representative practice. While this first chapter presents the theoretical foundations that inform the fieldwork and practices of the later case studies that will be presented, neither occurs in a vacuum. In part, this research project comprises a small part of a much bigger project that is being conducted on many levels by many thoughtful people. As I noted above in earlier sections, there exists growing awareness of the limitations of the discipline, and some rigorous inquiries are now being made into the institutional history and its premises. But the question remains: Can theory account for and mediate the political and other biases that have shaped the discipline? De Certeau is masterful in his use of words and metaphor to articulate his understanding of Bourdieu's theory of practice and how it can relate to this discussion:

> But perhaps what is at stake is different and has to do rather with the otherness introduced by the move through which a discipline turns toward the darkness that surrounds and precedes it—not in order to eliminate it, but *because* it is inexpugnable and determining? In that case theory would involve an effort on the part of a science to think through its relation to this exteriority and not be satisfied with correcting its rules of production or determining the limits of its validity…. In any event, practices shape the opaque reality out of which a theoretical question can arise beyond the frontier of any discipline. (1974 [1984]: 51)

This is why I finish this first chapter considering performance theory and its intersections with public practice, with a brief forward look toward how different types of performance may enact or enable opportunities for empowerment and/or resistance. To research the public re/presentation of culture through public sector programming, understanding how the vocabulary of performance theory informs (or could inform) these practices will prove useful.

Robert Baron notes that performance theory provided a unified body of theory and a more secure academic identity, providing the coherence that the field was seeking. Similar to Ritchie, he notes that it was not a sharply divergent path when he considered the history of the discipline. Baron writes that "conceptual pluralism … is a continuing hallmark of folklore studies of the past half century…. The movement in folklore studies from concern with the 'traditional and received' to the 'emergent and creative'; towards an association with the 'artistic dimensions of communicative practice' and away from 'fixed and reified' texts… was prefigured … by such scholars as Bascom, Halpert, Herskovits, and Lomax" (1993: 240). As I chronologically look for intellectual lineage, I would next add to that list the work of Geertz, who identified the nuance necessary in developing an interpretative theory of culture; namely, that "culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causually attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is, thickly—described" (1973: 46). I see this notion of theory complementary with that of performance theory in that both are concerned with context and distinctions rather than abstractions and generalizable, objective proofs.

Significant texts that further pushed the discipline towards new understandings of tradition and presentation are found in the collection of articles in Richard Bauman and Américo Paredes's *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore* (1972) and Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth S. Goldstein's *Folklore: Performance and Communication* (1975). Both have been counted as being the forerunners to contemporary performance theory in folklore. Many of these authors mindfully abandon the artificial dichotomy that prevailed in folklore studies between collecting and analysis —they acknowledge that they must not

subscribe to the naïve position that it is possible to observe and record information without having a point of view. Particularly of interest to this project, many of the authors consider how practice (representation) affects performance and how the emergent qualities of the performance are informed by context and tradition. Dell Hymes noted in his work "Breakthrough into Performance" that scholarship concerning the relationship of the methodology of observational description and the methodology of cultural description needs to be further expanded to consider how the "fruitful integration" of these approaches will expand the ability to create an "adequate account" of folkloristic performance (1975a:13). As many different ethnographic accounts are considered, from the textual, to the exhibition, to film; often these methodologies (observational and cultural), rather than being integrated in a thoughtful and useful way, are left under-considered and too often, also equivocated. This of course brings to bear questions of emic and etic perspective when considering the presentation of various types of acts.

Hymes notes that there are three dimensions to performance: the interpretable, the reportable, and the repeatable, and later adds the acceptable or appropriate. In carefully delineating each of these categories, Hymes presents a compelling case with a warning that performance is a specific specially-designated category of cultural behavior or representation and cannot be lumped together with other behaviors observed. To understand and recognize the "authentic" performance, one must know the difference between "knowing tradition and presenting it; between knowing what and knowing how; between knowledge, on the one hand, and motivation and identification, on the other, as components of competence in the use of language" (1975a: 18). And I would also suggest that this notion of performance goes beyond the linguistic, moving into other

arenas of performative acts[17]. I especially appreciate how Hymes identifies the actor, as well as the observer, as significant to the performative event. I'm reminded of a recent visit with a traditional maker of Caribbean drums. In our interview he tries to articulate his relationship with "knowing" the traditional (conservative) and the artistic "presentation" of it in his work (dynamic) —in his "performance" of drum-making:

> [This drum] is not something that I'm going to copy and start producing—I'm not real big on that. I'm not somebody that copies, but I am somebody that will take what somebody's done and then add my thing to it, you know what I mean? Because, for one thing, it has to have a certain sound—there is a certain sound that we are looking for. And so in a *timbale*[18] it has to have the right, what they call *cascara*, or side of the metal shell. There is a certain pitch and a can-y, kind of garbage can, kind of sound that you want. So you can't change it too drastically, otherwise you're going to change the sound of the music and that's not what you are trying to do. You as an artist are just putting your own signature on it… just trying to make it better. (Personal Interview 9/11/07)

This description by the artist captures part of the heart of how to define "traditional" or "folk." It clearly delineates limits or bounds of a particular traditional process—here, making a *timbale*—yet celebrates the individual artisan within a meaningful (and meaning-making) context. This demonstrates the expansive ways in which context "means"; for the drum-maker the context is not about that workshop or about one drum. Context comprises a knowledge of the culture and the tradition. In the description above, the artist could not define his process and the tradition without invoking those who will play his drums and those who will hear and listen to his drums. This audience always

[17] See Ben-Amos's consideration of the "false dilemma": text vs. context (1993: 211). As he notes, there can be a slippery slope to consider all social action as text, but further development of performance studies and "performativity" has continued to expand our notions of how we can understand text and context as emergent and metaphorically necessary to ethnographic representation (see Foley [2002] and Tedlock [1999] for further consideration of narrative and ethnographic representation, and Butler [1990] as one of the early and seminal texts on identity, gender, and other social constructs as performance).

[18] A *timbale* is a metal drum used in Latin music (especially Cuban and Puerto Rican) related to the timpani.

informs the work that he does. The object that he is making as an artist creates meaning through the music it produces, therefore the music and its audience become a part of the process that he must be accountable to in his workshop, making the drum.

This goes back to my question, in what ways are narrative and other performative acts already participating in representative events? Where does the foundational presentation [R^1] lie, and how does the act of representation change and act differently when it becomes meta-representative twice or three times removed? This question is additionally complicated when you ask how representation changes when it is a 2^{nd} or 3^{rd} order act (R^2 or R^3) that is posited as R^1. Ultimately, as Hymes specifically asks, how can one find and identify the "authentic" performance? What I think has become the more relevant question in my work, though, is how do representative acts perform authenticity? A corollary asks, how do *audiences* define and "read" authentic acts? The relationship between these two is more closely tied than is first assumed by many ethnographic accounts. In what ways is a re/presentation of a cultural art or behavior influenced by audience? Or asked another way, is the authenticity of a re/presentation informed by what the actor assumes the audience expects and needs to validate the performance?[19]

[19] I will return to this thread of thought in later chapters. The topic of "authenticity" especially will continually follow all of these discussions, but as a concept I would liken it more to a chameleon than to an elephant. While some ethnographic accounts and representations would attempt to make authenticity the standard to which all practice is measured, I would argue that authenticity is much more relative than this. It changes as the need for it and its role in that particular situation changes. However, this relativity that I attribute to the term goes against the very definition of "authentic" as it is popularly understood. My etymology dictionary defines "authentic" as of 1369 as meaning "entitled to acceptance as factual," and coming from the Greek "authentikos" or "original, genuine, principal." While I would prefer to do my research on representative practice without dealing with the concept of the "authentic" at all (attempting to negate its privilege), instead I begin by carefully acknowledging that I need to articulate my disdain for privileging one kind of performance over another. I would like to recognize the different uses and contexts for different types of representation and note the various types of audience reception relative to that particular performance regardless of some desirable Ur-form. However, let me be clear that my own

Richard Bauman in *Verbal Art as Performance* (1977) moves beyond the static conceptualization of folklore as text to a more dynamic consideration of folklore as communication. "Process" is inherent in his use of communication. Just as Ben Amos's definition of folklore in context relies heavily on process to explicate his notions of text, texture, and context (1971), Bauman's text is critical to the field and to the theory of performance, asserting that performance is always part of the meaning. Bauman writes that in an artistic performance, the audience understands: "interpret what I say in some special sense; do not take it to mean what the words alone, taken literally, would convey" (1977: 9). In other words, because of some contextual, emergent coding the audience understands and constructs meaning from the presentation. Bauman adds, "the essential task in the ethnography of performance is to determine *the culture-specific constellations of communicative means that serve to key performance in particular communities*" (1977: 22, emphasis his). This relativism echoes the post-modern concern with universals and the awareness that to represent, one needs to be aware of the specific context with which one is working.

One of the powerful parts of the context that performance theory opened up for consideration is that of the audience, yet much of the scholarship in this topic area theorizes the semiotic relationship of the performer/traditional artist to the act of

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rejection of authenticity in traditional performance does not correlate with an audience rejection of that same thing. Rather, it is my awareness that the reality operates antithetically to this that guides some of my later discussion on the practice of representation. It is *because* the performer and the audience "*Know*" authenticity, that this concept in fact mediates much of the performance. Therefore, similar to the ways in which "Text" is fluid and can "play," I too must find ways which the "play" of authenticity can inform but not dictate the practice of representation. More helpful perhaps than the popular definition of "authentic" is the word the Greek "authentikos" is predicated on: "authentes;" which means "one acting on one's own authority," coming from "autos" or "self" and "hentes" or "doer, being." To bring "authentic" back to being a self-referential term brings the possibilities of "authenticity" back into the very relativistic sphere. It is the subject that is empowered to authenticate her/his own experience of a behavior or performance. This will inform many of my later ideas.

re/presentation, only briefly noting audience reception at best, and more often ignoring it. As I've noted above, scholars of folklore and anthropology have rigorously theorized the written traditions of representation, but the traditions of presentation and/or representation of people and their music, food, clothing, and so forth before a live audience have been problematically understudied and under-theorized. Building upon Robert Cantwell's assertion in *Ethnomimesis* (1993) that the visitor should be identified as a curator in the sense that it is the visitor who creates meaning from the experience, not vice-a-versa, I would argue that the nexus formed between institution, folklorist, participant, and audience creates a polyvalent event that needs to be considered in all of its complexity.

While performance theory provides tools for a consideration of the audience in context, too often the gaze of the researcher is not on the audience, and as some theorists have wondered aloud, is this because they are not exotic enough to merit this look? How does the performative arena construct authority and power? In what ways does it deconstruct it? Of course every event has a different type of audience. Some performances are intimate and only meant for members of that cultural group. Other performances like those staged in a public festival setting such as the Smithsonian are large and many of those in the audience are not of the cultural group. Then there also exists every gradient of possibility in between the two. In the case studies that follow, there are multiple audience types that will be considered. The brief example of the drum-maker above is likely the most intimate in terms of his articulation of his audience, but the obvious question is how his answer became framed in a certain way for his immediate audience: me? Most of the work that I will be considering, however, involves

performance for a public that is fairly mixed in terms of its cultural knowledge and perspective.

The politics and ways of looking and constructing meaning will be considered more fully in upcoming chapters. But by way of introduction, I consider a few salient points that come from film theory because this media has leant itself to critical analysis of the processes of perception and reception in the performance event. Fatmah Tobing Rony uses the term "The Third Eye" to liken the experience of the represented in ethnographic film to the experience described by W.E.B. Dubois as "Double Consciousness." She notes that "The movie screen is another veil. We turn to the movies to find images of ourselves and find ourselves reflected in the eyes of others" (1996: 4). This brings to the fore the concept of the event as mediated. There is the performance, but also there is the realization that all of the actors are participating in a larger system of meaning construction—a system that may be more insidious and inflexible than first imagined. However, there are a number of theorists who begin with this acknowledgement and then begin to expose the cracks in the system. They begin to find ways in which performance can both work within the system and simultaneously create moments of disruption, and through that, empowerment. Rosalind Morris notes that:

> Feminist film theorists have long been concerned with the processes by which power and visibility have been entwined and allocated to the masculine along with the right to look…. However, many anthropologists have implicitly reproduced and extrapolated a phallocentric logic by defining visibility and power as synonymous terms rather than as historically related positions. This is especially true in analyses of domestic and public domains. The anthropology of gender that is emerging under the influence of performance theory resists such conflations, however. Instead, it is concerned with the relationships and

> the dissonance between the exclusive categories of normative sex/gender systems and the actuality of ambiguity, multiplicity, abjection, and resistance within these same systems. (Morris 1995:569)

To understand agency and the possibility of enacting subjectivity through representation, it is helpful to invoke bell hook's theoretical concept of the "Oppositional gaze"—the notion that "Not only will I stare, I want my look to change reality" (1992: 116). Using Foucault's notion that domination can be seen as relations of power through which there exists *necessarily* the possibility of resistance, hooks begins to probe the margins and gaps where agency may be claimed. She notes that Black women use this critical space to open up looking politics: 'In resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating 'awareness' politicizes 'looking' relations—one learns to look a certain way in order to resist" (1992: 166). But clearly this concept offers more than resistance: looking relations include being able to contest, resist, revision, interrogate, and invent on multiple levels. The concept of the oppositional looking is relevant to other encounters of spectacle and display such as festival and the museum exhibit. The question remains, how can folklorists and folk mediate these histories and narratives in ways which empower rather than reinforce? As Tobing Rony notes, "when the average museum goer views a life group of Hopi dancers handling snakes, or a display of Wolof pottery, or an ethnographic film about trance and dance in Bali, he or she does not see the images for the first time. The exotic is always already known" (1996:6). These ideas, questions, and concepts guide much of the discussion that follows, for to understand performance and "Text" as play is to also concentrate on the reception and reading of those texts.

Studying performance allows for folklorists to study emergent culture, rather than just residual culture: "Performance…constitutes just such a point of departure, the nexus of tradition, practice, and emergence in verbal art. Performance may thus be the cornerstone of a new folkloristics, liberated from its backward-facing perspective and able to comprehend much more of the totality of human experience" (Bauman 1977: 48). But I read this next to Susan Ritchie who fifteen years after Bauman, and on the 20th anniversary of *Toward New Perspectives,* notes the ways in which context continues to elude many who are working with (especially) the subaltern. Ritchie states,

> It is possible to say that ventriloquist folklore is that which ignores the ways in which context mediates presentation (not only of the performance, but of the final scholarly product). Ventriloquist folklore establishes the folklorist as [a] kind of medium or channeler, who presents the true voice of those otherwise lost to an audience so eager for diverse articulations that they fail to note this 'diversity'—these signs of another world—issues from folklore's single disciplinary throat. (1993: 367)

Her work along with others has complicated the celebration that was evident in the work of Bauman and *Toward New Perspectives.* I note especially the special issue in *Western Folklore* (1993) edited by Amy Shuman and Charles Briggs who argue in their introduction that that "folklore" as a discipline is as much about the "politics of culture" as it is about the processes or descriptions of culture. Folklore as a field—bound to the mediating of presentation and representation, discourse and metadiscourse, folklore and fakelore—needs to be aware of this constant engagement with other concepts, presentations, and narratives that constantly construct and change cultural identities. Patricia Sawin reminds the field that political and gender issues also frame performance contexts, and that women make social sacrifices for public performance: "We should no longer leave unchallenged theories in which hegemonic assumptions become an integral

camouflaged part because of scholar's attempt to maintain an objective, apolitical, unemotional stance" (2002:40). Bauman illustrated the relevance of folklore in contemporary society by positing that performance constitutes the nexus of tradition practice and emergence. Feminist theorists among others need to show how performance also forms the nexus of gender, power, and desire.

Representative Acts and Practicing Social Justice

Bauman's keys to the performative event have provided one of the tools that folklorists continue to use today to unlock some of the "coding" found in performances. Barbara Babcock uses performance to highlight instances of metanarration which act as code, illuminating ideas of text previously ignored. Quoting from Bauman and Sherzer (1974), Babcock writes, "Metanarration generally, shows us how verbal art is defined and organized from the native point of view and can give us 'the means of circumventing the a priori analytical definition of verbal art in favor of the esthetic principles by which the people themselves define artistic verbal performance and shape artistic structures'" (1977:75). She then concludes: "If we listen, every storyteller tells us the story of his story itself" (1977: 75). Arguably, a folk-centric definition of performance, representation, and authenticity becomes one of the most important legacies of performance theory. Charles Briggs writes that "Simply describing 'the context' from a purely analytical perspective completely overlooks crucial and complex linguistic and social strategies through which speakers and hearers use the process of contextualization in attempting to empower their words and actions in particular ways" (1993:406). Many feminists have been studying the use of coding and the manipulating of context in

women's performative acts for the ends of empowerment and resistance (see esp. Radner and Lanser 1993, and also: Bennet 1989; Butler 1990; Jordan and Kalcik 1985; Lanser 1993; Lawless 1998, 2001; Lorde 1981; Trinh T. Minh-ha 1989; Radner 1993; and Spivak 2001). I especially find powerful Lawless's work in which she advocates for women's narrative as being in its very telling a tool for empowerment: "I believe the narratives reveal a 'truth' about how the women view themselves and their world as reflected in these narratives…. As far as we are concerned, there is no other truth than that one" (2001:6). Narrative acts as a performance that empowers and creates, one that authenticates and disrupts. As Lawless writes: "the act of telling a story is a *creative act*, a kind of performance, that takes words and language beyond their mere rhetorical power and enables them to work for the narrator toward transformation and self-representation" (2001:106).

However, this is also anticipating another correlory that will need further analysis: the acts of social justice relative to the ethnographic project. As Lawless notes, her book *Women Escaping Violence* is a "work for justice" (2001: 2), and I believe that it convincingly argues this case. Yet, Rosalind Morris offers a warning for those attempting to understand performance-based theories as providing The Way to liberation for the objects of study in the social science disciplines:

> Anthropologists may do well to consider these debates now, as the notion of performativity begins its ascent both as an analytic paradigm and as the latest 'romance of resistance'…. in order to understand how ideology has falsified the relationship between a signifying system and a particular reality, the two dimensions of the performance—the actor and the character, the sign and the signifier—must be alienated from each other. Only then can the inadequacies of realist mimesis be overcome—not with an anti-mimetic representation but with a better mimesis. …. What is forgotten in many of these analyses is the final step in the Brechtian

> system, namely the transcendence of the bastard mimesis with the 'truer,' more 'adequate,' or more 'liberating' mimesis. In the absence of that final moment, it may be more appropriate to speak of ritual reversal, liminality, anti-structure, or even play, than resistance. And when recognizing the lack of resistance in parodic performance, we may also be forced to consider some of the more coercive structures in operation, the structures that mitigate against voluntarist forms of performative self-constitution even as they summon creative forms of subversion and opposition." (1995: 586-87)

There are many ways to understand how representational practice works through discourse to enact or elaborate the empowerment of subjective selves. Morris, invoking the concept of "play," echoes Barthes, and again I come full circle noting how language use has often been employed as a tool of representative practice. I acknowledge the warning of Morris, but note how the study of the emergent event allows for signifiers that may be of both the coercive structure and yet offer resistance. As one very brief example of many, I look to literature: Mark Twain in his essay " The War Prayer[20]," and Henry David Thoreau in an excerpt from his essay from Walden easily named the "Battle of the Ants[21]," use the rhetoric of war to *protest* war. Both of these pieces create a protest through challenging the fine lines between lunacy and reality, propaganda and prophecy. In taking an idea to its logical, yet fanciful ends, Twain and Thoreau both allow their words to be heard and make meaning over and above the words of war due to the ultimate absurdity that they force the reader to face. This is a complex idea that Albert Camus uses to describe a similar realistic absurdity in Franz Kafka's writing. Camus compares the logic of Kafka's stories to a psychiatric doctor asking a crazy man fishing

[20] This short essay describes a scene where a town is celebrating its young soldiers who are heading to war, and in the church service an elderly gentleman who no one knows arrives and offers a "war prayer" that exposes the other side of the prayers being offered by the congregation to keep their youth safe (i.e. God must kill, rape, maim other mother's sons and daughters).

[21] This excerpt from Walden chronicles an epic battle between the black and red ants observed by Thoreau under a magnifying glass.

in a bathtub "if they were biting," to which the man answers "Of course not, you fool, since this is a bathtub" (1955: 96). This "excess of logic," as Camus puts it, demonstrates the point that I wish to make about Twain and Thoreau: They both use an excess of logic to expose a truth that would otherwise remain entangled in the rhetoric of war that had before contained it. These texts avoid the messy criticism that they are only using words to fight words, for they use the very words that they challenge to make their points. In using an approach closer to parable than essay, and closer to absurdity than reality, these texts look at an absurdly real "slice-of life[22]" in order to create a critical space wherein a discussion of a topic may begin. In fact, it may be within this everyday, those acts which folklorists are already trained to consider as significant, that the key to understanding empowerment relative to other discourse may lie.

Rosalind Morris provides a helpful reading of de Certeau that brings additional thought to how acts of the folk can actually destabilize systems or structures that exert domination:

> Practice pertains to the meandering, improvisational acts of individuals who must move through the systemized world of collective schemes and images. Practices, for de Certeau, are not functionally subservient to cultural reproduction but instead are creative gestures incommensurable with, but not completely outside of, structural principles. (1995: 572)

To recognize creativity in everyday life as more than mundane presents one opportunity to demystify the seemingly totalizing, systemic master narratives of cultural identity that all representation occurs within (see especially Hufford 1999). As I consider the

[22] Walter Rideout's categories of the protest novel include that of "realism," or the "slice-of-life" approach to the text. While "slice-of-life" provokes the connotations with realism, I note that absurd reality (in the case of Twain) and an ultra-reality (as found in Thoreau's text) both act to subvert through irony the "reality" that is highlighted.

museum, festival, and production, my consideration of representation will be guided by ways in which practices can be seen as artistic, and the ways in which traditions can be powerful. Where Morris notes a dichotomy between "meandering, improvisational acts" and "systemized" acts, I aim to consider the reason and deliberateness behind the everyday practice. In doing so, I believe that common misconceptions of the folk regarding their (in)ability to use reason, as well as questions of their intellect, will be turned on its head. In part, the "justice" part of this work is considering how many forms of representation, both mediated and not, are continually adapting to encourage and develop the subjective self and that self's narratives that represent authority and power. While the coding may exist that defines these acts as "improvisational," the power of these acts lies in the will to empowerment that creates them.

I conclude this introductory chapter noting that numerous acts of representation occur in both the obvious as well as seemingly innocuous but obscured places. I have found the following quote at the bottom of many emails, at the top of numerous syllabi, as the pithy saying that begins or closes a exposition detailing any number of academic subjects, and as lead quote on the home page and T-shirt slogan for the group United Students Against Sweatshops:

> *"If you are here to help me, then you are wasting your time; if you are here because your liberation is tied to mine, then let us begin."* Lilly Walker/Lilla Watson/Australian Aborigine

These words, this sentiment, have become both rally cry and powerful rhetoric, but the person who first uttered it has been erased as simultaneously as her name circulates to champion for social causes. The three name markers following the quote are three

different attributions I found when looking in these words and how they were being used.[23] Bringing this issue forth provides a way in which to begin to problematize representational practice which occurs in the act of campaigning for causes of social justice. It also underscores the complex relationship between what can be characterized through the problematic dichotomy of "activist" and "acted-for." What does it mean when someone attaches Ms. Watson's statement to their email, or to their cause? The point of subjectivity and empowerment grows sticky when considered along side other political issues contained in the notions of "helping others" as suggested by Ms. Watson's statement.

Throughout this introduction, a question has reoccurred: how is subjectivity constituted through and in acts of representation for all of the actors? The textual relationship of anthropologist and subject has been written on many times and continues to evolve (Behar [1996], Behar and Gordon [1995], Briggs [1996], Clifford and Marcus [1986], Geertz [1973], hooks [1992], Trinh T. Mihn-Ha [1989]); and some work has emerged regarding positionality and representative practices in the public sector (including: Bendix and Welz [1999], Baron [1999], Cantwell [1993]). In acts of representative practice, including ethnography, production, and exhibition, how does one

[23] I sent an inquiry to PUBLORE on November 10, 2006, a listserve that links many folklorists involved with public sector work, asking help in learning more about this particular quote. When I asked, I only had the name Lilly Walker and the quote as written above. Amber Gallup, a former National Organizer with the United Students Against Sweatshops organization, wrote to provide the name Lilla Watson, which further research indicates is the more likely correct name. She writes that, "when I was working for USAS (the organization that uses the quote on its materials...like a trademark) a few years ago, they were actually attributing it to an 'unknown aboriginal sister'. That's how it was listed on the t-shirts! For at least a few years, and then, sometime after I left in 2002, somebody figured it out and attributed it." Bill Westerman also responded, and provided the following information, "While attending the 1985 UN Decade for Women Conference in Nairobi, her first international experience, she heard Australian aboriginal artist Lilla Watson say: 'If you have come to help me, I don't need your help. But if you have come because your liberation is tied to mine, come let us work together'." His research also showed that "Lilla Watson" is a Murri woman who grew up mainly in Central Queensland who identifies strongly with her mother's Gangulu country in that area.

best negotiate the issues of "self" and "other" so that an "ethical" and "authentic" image may be reflected in the text(s)? This question includes the concepts of advocacy and voice. As the fields of folklore, anthropology, and other social sciences continue to work with communities and peoples, additional work concerning why we represent will need to be considered. Of course it is naïve to attempt re/presenting "authenticity" in most cases; yet it still informs practice despite the impossibility of exact mimicry. I also see a discussion of its cognate, "authenticating;" to understand how representation works with authenticating practice to further refine the many processes that contribute to representation. In what ways do representational acts create opportunities for authentication of not only the communities and cultures that are being represented through these acts, but also opportunities for the researcher to be authenticated? In other words, what is it to say that the person engaging with communities in acts of representation can also help themselves and find their own redemption through this work? I add to this debate by considering the media-celebrated portrait of the maverick who works in a vacuum created only by the activist's vision—a vision that uniquely identifies the activist as enlightened and empowered to make a difference[24].

The act of representing at all levels (be it a re/presentation of the first order [R^1], or further removed acts of representation as the act is studied or discussed or represented through additional media [R^3, R^4, R^5, etc.]) also enacts more subtle processes of interpretation that I attribute to the "analysis" as taken from the Greek *analysis* "a breaking up," or from *analyein* "unloose." Do all acts of representation (1st order on

[24] I think here of the many movies documenting the teacher in the "alternative" or "urban" school, who, against all odds, changes the lives of the students. This forms a significant part of my argument framing the third chapter on representational practices enacted through ethnographic programs in the school setting.

through further removed acts) participate in the breaking up of totalizing narratives that may otherwise erase subjective selves in insideous but unacknowledged whitewashing? I would argue that representation in and of itself enacts analysis by all the participants relative to their own subjectivity. By doing, one is creating, and in creating, one is participating in one level of discourse. The question that brings this full circle, then, is how to best understand the performance of these representations so as to better facilitate the emergent elaboration of subjective and empowered selves. Furthermore, to consider emergent practice within the context of traditional culture provides unique framing, or vocabulary, for understanding representational practice.

As I've noted, the collection of texts titled *Women Writing Culture* edited by Behar and Gordan works to understand the nuances of voice and representation in the post-colonial age of ethnography. The collection experiments with form and content in its attempt to understand the best way to write culture. The use of fiction, theatre, and creative non-fiction, reflect some of these new methods. Behar's *Translated Woman* exemplifies some of this spirit. Esperanza's story is entertaining at some points and heart breaking at others. Throughout the text, a creative element works to break down the barriers that normally distance the subject from the audience. The reader of the text is less likely to feel that he or she is politely reading the notes of a museum exhibit, for there is a vitality and agency that permeates from Esperanza's story as Behar tells it. Behar writes, "By using both a novelistic style and a dialogical style in this book, I've tried to keep Esperanza's voice at the center of the text while also showing my efforts to hear and understand her, efforts that led me, ultimately, *to my own voice*" (1993: 13-14, my emphasis). It is in the spirit of fair representation of another, then, that Behar

discovers herself. One implication of Behar's statement includes the notion that Esperanza's story may only be interesting and important to a larger etic audience, not for better understanding Esperanza, but for the selfish purpose of understanding the Self who wrote it and Self(s) who read it. This same sentiment can be observed when Behar notes that she hopes that her voice and her reflections upon the negotiations that occurred between her and Esperanza allow her to "provide a three-dimensional view of Esperanza as well as of the woman who became her biographer" (1993:14). Again this raises many questions, including: Where does this get her in terms of re-writing the mode of ethnography to expand notions of authority? How does this benefit the author? and Is her pervasive use and understanding of the Self another trick of mirrors that she cannot wrest her gaze from?

In Behar's training as an anthropologist, she read accounts that made her very aware of the possibilities of abusing her role as a translator of another's culture and story. Behar is aware that, like a serpent whose tongue must be cut as a means of protecting oneself from the evil it can talk, Esperanza's serpent story relates the warning that words of another can "kill" a self. She finds that the discipline of anthropology can be understood as having an "epistemological failing" in that "when you train as an anthropologist, you are not encouraged to think about the genderedness of the texts you read or the texts you will write, nor are you encouraged to see their embeddedness in racial and class contexts" (1993: 299). In looking at Behar's rendering of Esperanza's story and the methodology that she invokes, an argument could be made that she is moving from this imperialist mode to an anti-conquest narrative. Mary Louise Pratt defines the term "anti-conquest" as "the strategies of representation whereby European

bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony" (1993: 7). Whereas *testimonios*, such as Rigoberta Menchú's[25], may be considered autoethnography[26], Esperanza's story was one conceived of, and created by Behar as an "appropriate anthropological subject" for *el otro lado*. Behar needs to distance herself from the colonizing writing of history, yet she constantly thinks about the text in terms of its etic audience.

The explicit use of herself in the text to narrate her own story of innocence may contribute to this argument. Behar's intent is not one of malice, yet even in her first encounter with Esperanza she recognizes that it has the dynamics of their power relations inscribed within it:

> I think that many of the contradictions of my work with Esperanza were dramatized in that first encounter. I jumped on her as an alluring image of Mexican womanhood, ready to create my own exotic portrait of her, but the image turned around and spoke back to me, questioning my project and daring me to carry it out. (4)

In fact, it appears that the snake metaphor has been turned on its head, and that Esperanza has rejected the role of the serpent who traditionally has had its tongue cut and who has little opportunity to speak what she knows. Now Behar is not simply *allowing* her to speak, a term that is bound up in the baggage of colonialism and imperialism, but instead she is simply not *silencing* her as she speaks. The issue of voice and voicing becomes of paramount importance. The tongue is not silenced. The mirror does not only reflect, but

[25] I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala (Verso 1984) became an international text chronicling the hardships and injustices experienced by the indigenous people in Guatemala.
[26] "Autoethnography" is defined by Pratt as referring "to instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's own terms" (7). This is comparable to the Latin American genre of the *testimonio*, but it is widely accepted that the *testimonio* is not about the autobiographical self, it is about the community that the self writes from and for: "Unlike nostalgic autobiography of the first world, the [third world] testimonial's understanding of self-hood is based on collective identity, not individuality" (Gumm 1992-3: 164).

it also speaks. To consider the possible implications of this one can start with Gloria Anzaldúa, who vehemently argues that Mexican/Chicana women need to overcome the tradition of silence. Rather than "taming the wild tongue," she writes: "I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent's tongue—my woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence (59). To what extent, then, could Behar be writing for all Chicanas (a group to which she, too, belongs)[27]? In giving Esperanza a voice, has Behar used the tools of the academy to code and write some of her own past? To return to our earlier question, to what extent has Behar used and contained the image of Esperanza to better reflect who she (Behar) is; both as a woman and as an academic?

The world of work for justice—be it economic, legal, or social—is inextricably bound up in representational practice, yet those involved do not often acknowledge this practice. Nor are those actively committed to the work always trained to be aware of the implications of the re/presentations produced. Greater attention needs to be given to how the work of these fields contributes to creating dichotomies that tell of an "us" and a "them." Some questions that this study attempts to consider include: How do narratives constructed for the funding world—be it corporations, foundations, or individuals—frame and represent people and communities? Has a colonizing legacy prevailed in this work? And also, how can folklorists whose work intersects with social causes use their cultural tools to contribute in a positive and meaningful way to projects? These questions in their interdisciplinary and layered complexities necessitate nuance in answer and argument. As greater gains are made in addressing inequalities of class, race and gender

[27] Behar spends much of her final reflections analyzing her role in relation to this project as a person of Cuban heritage.

in the academy, I believe that greater gains will be made in addressing the corresponding inequalities in fieldwork and public presentations. Until groups marginalized in the academy are granted equal status, their work will reflect the issues that they must face. And until those people who do not feel marginalized understand the perspective of those who do, the cycle will limp forward creating more boundaries. While I do have hope that folklore will be on the forefront of what Anzaldúa calls the "rebellion-(r)evolution," we will need to know how to listen when the serpent talks. We'll see.

Chapter Two

Acting Real: Re/Presenting Identity and Culture on the Festival Stage

Introduction

"Some anthropologists in the museum world are making the shift from curating collections of objects to curating the systems, and the people, that produce them…. Rather than curate dead or captured specimens of a culture, curators are increasingly concerned with the living larger whole" writes Richard Kurin in his text *Reflections of a Culture Broker* (1997: 93). This optimistic view speaks to the disciplinary concerns that were increasingly getting attention through the late 20th century regarding the role of public presentations relative to the colonizing and dehumanizing practices that had dominated the process and interpretation of displaying culture for general audiences. Some of these concerns have been articulated by Deborah Root (1996), who has generally likened the museum and exhibition that presents cultural objects to a type of cultural cannibalism, which I also see as similar to bell hooks (1992) notion of "eating the other" (although Roots surprisingly does not make this connection explicit). In any case, Root makes the point that the objects collected from a culture for display raise uncomfortable questions of commodification and colonialization, invoking questions of power and politics relative to the representation created and interpreted:

> Museums are founded on several extremely eccentric and questionable assumptions about life and death and about the relation of these to representation. If we think the matter through carefully, the concept of

> museums—particularly ethnographic museums and museums of 'natural history' –quickly dissolves into strangeness and necrophilia. Museums can truly be thought of as cannibal institutions: large edifices containing stuffed animals and the paraphernalia of cultures believed to be dead or dying, all organized according to the current scientific theory. Here the process and display of consumption are played out in one of their purest forms, the consumption of culture supposedly taking place for lofty motives rather than for the market, at least according to the myths of science. (1996: 108)

This is echoed in James Boon's comment: "And the Smithsonian—who would deny it?—has also survived by juggling so-called science and so-called entertainment" (qtd. in Price and Price 1994:1). Paul Gardullo writes specifically about "African Voices," a permanent exhibition at the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian, claiming the display attempts to confront as well as dismantle stereotypes often reinforced by anthropological and natural history museum representations of Africa. He sees hope in an exhibit that privileges the living voices of the African people in all of their diversity and that acknowledges not only the things to celebrate, but also identifies challenges facing the continent. In his review, he is struck by the Temne proverb from Sierra Leone that the visitor reads as they leave the exhibition: "Unless you know the road you've come down, you cannot know where you are going" (qtd. in Gardullo 2004: 466). Clearly the quote can be interpreted in a variety of ways by a visitor. On the one hand it can be referring to the lives represented in the exhibition whose contemporary world cannot be understood without the historical frames of colonization, genocide, slavery, struggles for independence, etc. Yet he reads it and presents it in light of the larger question of exhibiting a people itself. This reading of the quote seems to be ironically reinforced due to the fact that this representation lives in a museum that is

largely dedicated to "natural history", still making implicit a link between non-Western people and theories of cultural evolution. Yet Gardullo embraces the quote, reading into it his desire that *African Voices* "may be a first step toward dismantling the master's house from within" (2004: 466). Resonating with Audre Lorde's (1981) words, the assertion provides one point of departure for the conversation that follows. Namely, it acknowledges past indiscretions and blatant racism, and follows with a close scrutiny of those societal structures that may be amplified and reinforced through the re/presenting event. Finally, the statement helps put into place a new vision of how re/presentations may allow for redefining identity, power, and politics for diverse groups and people.

Moving from museum to festival, collections of objects to demonstrations of culture, the questions being asked by critics do not significantly change. Richard and Sally Price include an epigraph by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in their discussion of Maroon tradition-bearers at the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife:

> Human displays teetertotter on a kind of semiotic seesaw, equipoised between the animate and inanimate, the living and the dead. The semiotic complexity of exhibits of people, particularly those of an ethnographic character, may be seen in reciprocities between exhibiting the dead as if they are alive and the living as if they are dead, reciprocities that hold as well for the art of the undertaker as they do for the art of the museum preparatory. Ethnographic displays are part of a larger history of human display, in which the themes of death, dissection, torture, and martyrdom are intermingled. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991; qtd in Price and Price 1994: vii)

The concern that the fields of folklore and anthropology may tend toward the necrophiliastic in design due to the legacy of "collect, classify, and analyze" as discussed in the first chapter begs the question, how well are curators of contemporary public

events doing in presenting a context that allows for the (often) messy reality of people and culture that are very much alive?

As a whole, this research project attempts to understand the larger cultural and social narratives that impact upon the museum exhibition, ethnographic performance, or festival stage program. It is interesting to read Root or Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's comments in light of the perspective written by Smithsonian Fellow Christina Kreps who acknowledged the embededness of museums within their social, historical, and cultural contexts. As a part of the "Theorizing Cultural Heritage" series, Kreps argued for understanding museums as being, therefore, "unique cultural expressions and forms of tangible and intangible culture" (2005: 6). She continues, "Through cross-cultural studies we are continuing to learn that just as museums are as diverse in character as the communities they represent, so too are the ways in which people perceive, value, care for, and transmit their heritage" (2005: 6-7). Increasingly, we find an expanding role for community scholars and cultural experts in the curation of cultural objects and heritage. We also find an increasing awareness of how the act of representing in a museum has resisted transparency in its methodologies, assumptions, and power relationships. By reading the museum exhibition or festival event as another social text that inscribes narratives of power and cultural identity, we locate an opportunity for addressing questions of social justice and empowerment.

This chapter looks at what I characterized as "optimism" in Richard Kurin's quote used earlier to introduce this topic. I consider this optimism in light of the conversations that may have provoked it and the implications it portends for the acts of representation that occur in the festival setting. It is not lost on this author that Kurin directs much of

the curation of the festival that will receive the most attention in this chapter, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. How much of the attitude found in the quote above must be informed by the needs of positive Public Relations for a festival event that is increasingly marketed as a tourist destination and a place where "positive image transfer" can occur for its corporate sponsors? How much of this speaks to new techniques of curation which privilege the aesthetics and voices of the communities that are participating?

In looking for further understanding of how the Self is elaborated through social and artistic practice, a guiding concern resides in the concept of designing empowerment; namely, the directional bias of representational practices within communities that are often marginalized due to class, ethnicity, geographic location, or other status. The jargon of folklorists has become increasingly loaded with economic metaphors, and those engaged in developing folklife policy and programming have been likened to brokers mediating between perceived sites of production and consumption (see especially Bendix and Welz 1999, Kurin 1997). In a market-driven era of increasing privatization and marked tightening of funding for arts and culture programming, many have recognized the need for intensified scrutiny of folklife programming models in terms of both perceived outcomes and expected returns. However, assessment value can be assigned through a variety of models. How can projects engaged in representational practice best account for and accordingly, assess, the aesthetics, needs, and goals of the people and communities being re/presented? Likewise, how does the presentation of the subject create meaning, as well as understanding, for the audience and how is this assessed?

This discussion requires, yet again, some analogies to contemporary museum studies. Dutch Museologist Peter Van Mensch defined three essential functions of the museum field: preservation, study, and communication (see Janes 2007). Stephen Weil then built upon this paradigm especially considering the role of communication and what that means for the contemporary professional in a museum. He outlined some of the significant questions that "communication" raised in his 1990 article:

> We need to be able to define the purposes for which a museum deals with its public in far finer and more precise ways than we thus far have. Acknowledging how greatly the answers might differ from one museum to another, or even at different times within the history of any single museum, we must be able to say just what a museum would like the outcome of its public program to be. Should this outcome impact a visitor's life in some significant way? If so, in what dimensions, when, how greatly, and how often? Do we believe that this outcome can come about wholly from our own exertions, or do we conceive of the visitor as a collaborator in this effort? Is the impact of the museum limited to its visitors or does its role--as an authority, as an arbiter--extend into the community generally? If so, in what ways, how far, and toward what ends? (qtd. in Janes 2007: np)

These questions echo folklorist Robert Cantwell whose 1993 text looked at many of these questions through the lens of representation and concluded that there is a new museology emerging, in which "the visitor has become the curator and which history itself can be understood only as the myth of the class that has fashioned it, an artifact of culture like any other" (78-79). Similarly, Christina Kreps finds that the object as central to the museum exhibition is diminishing in significance:

> Objects, once thought to be the defining feature of museums, have lost their centrality. Museums have shifted to emphasizing service to their public. The educational role of museums--the quest to provide visitors with varied opportunities for experiential learning--has in many cases taken over the primary place of objects in museums. Frequently, objects are no longer of exclusively intrinsic value--that is, collected, studied,

> preserved, and displayed for their own sake. Instead, they are often used as a means to some other end. (Kreps 2003: np)

The role of visitor perception and reception vis-à-vis the ethnographic event forms the heart of much of this chapter. While this is not something that the curator may fully be able to anticipate and control, it is, nonetheless, an important part of the considerations that should inform the process of representing any culture.

Museum scholar Fiona Cameron (2003) reports that her research has clearly demonstrated that curators are very concerned about retaining their authority in interpreting and preserving the museum's collections. She notes that simultaneously a tension is evident, however, due to the changing ethos of interpretative strategies which privilege additional voices as authorities: "The museum's voice may nonetheless be qualified through devices--such as alternative voices, interpretive statements and links to policy statements--that contribute to a user's understanding of how meaning and value are formulated within the museum context. The supreme voice of the curator is thus potentially made open to dispute" (2003: np). The move away from one privileged voice to a more nuanced sense of multivocality provides one way of understanding where power may be found within the museum or festival space. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to think in terms of design and process as curators of many different cultures and backgrounds must work collaboratively to implement this kind of a project. It suggests that there are opportunities for not only empowering specific narratives of culture and people not always presented in official forums, but also the possibility exists for renegotiating relationships of cultures and communities. All of this suggests, as Heather Diamond and Richard Trimillos assert in the recent special issue of the *Journal*

of American Folklore, that the festival "merits serious critical attention as a cultural laboratory, a touristic phenomenon, and de facto cultural policy" (2008: 3).

Understanding the ways in which the theoretical debates outlined in the literature review of the first chapter intersect with the practice as outlined in the next two chapters reveals both challenges and opportunities for the field of folklore. It highlights the increasingly absurd dichotomy of "public sector" and "academic," suggesting that increasingly folklorists in the field need to employ nuanced research and fieldwork methodologies, and likewise, that the rapid advent of new technologies and politics of globalization (and subsequent challenges of access and use of what is being termed "intangible cultural heritage") make arm-chair philosophers increasingly archaic. Like my discussion of the ethnographic writer whose words and images represent people, culture, and traditions; the curator of a festival, exhibition, or other spectacle must engage with a variety of conventions of re/presentation to interface between participant, audience, and interpretation (be it text panel, presenter, etc.). Deborah Root writes that her text, *Cannibal Culture*, came out of her realization that "the universalist discourses of high theory were unable to account for or at times even recognize the subtleties of cultural difference and colonial representation" (1996:ix). She said that she turned away from the "big books" and looked to practice, but through time she acknowledges that it had "become necessary to recognize the limits of understanding: There are things about other cultures I will never quite grasp, histories I will never quite know, even if I have friends in these communities who are willing to explain nuances to me" (ix). So I begin with "necrophilia" as a metaphor for the legacy of representative practice, and then explore the possibility of best practices that emancipate and empower. In both of the

following chapters that look at practice, I find that the constructedness of social spaces and narratives impact the reception of cultural representations in a myriad of significant ways—a point whose importance is not lost when one considers the power of these master narratives. Clearly, the legacy of colonial narratives sustained through the practices of public presentations of culture—the fair, the museum, the festival, and the exhibition—all necessitate a look at the processes which inform the production values and interpretation.

"I just want to see them do their Indian thing": Understanding the role of Perception in Festival Reception

My title for this section is not original. It comes from a conversation that I overheard while working at an event programmed by a state folk arts program at their state capitol. Occurring on a somewhat regular basis, the event highlighted Master and Apprentice traditional arts teams through performances and demonstrations in the capitol rotunda. The purpose for the event is multiple: outreach, education, exposure for the traditional artforms, professional development in demonstrating for the artists (as well as another way to get a small honorarium to traditional artists), and so forth. The organizers of the event note that they hope that legislators will notice what worthwhile programs state monies are funding and therefore continue or increase support for the arts, but usually the audience is primarily school children on fieldtrips to the capitol and the state museum.

I was working with the program in the spring of 2005, when I overheard one boy comment to his friend as they left a master saddle maker who had entertained the students

by lassoing them, as they ran over to a talented Lakota who has been in the program many times for beadwork and quillwork, "Cool! An Indian! I want to see him do his Indian thing." Clearly, these school boys thought they were here to learn about "cowboys and Indians", and who could blame this perception? We were located in the State Museum that has, among other things, drawings on the display walls depicting early settlers and the natives they encountered in the wilderness west of the Mississippi. Perhaps the teacher, to encourage enthusiasm among her young charges even planted this imaginative and romantic idea and then, lo and behold, here at the museum were real people that seemed to be dressed for the part. They became a seamless extension of the museum exhibit. For most of the children there, these four master artists were not real people with real lives outside of the capitol, rather they were enactors of a history these children could claim as their own unique state history, securely containing them in a romantic past.

We might ask, then, to what extent the reception of the work done by either master was influenced by perception informed through stereotype and expectation? The other immediate question is whether it was a bad programming choice on our part to allow these stereotypes to so easily collude with the romantic ideal by programming traditional artists who do fit the "cowboy and Indian" motif? To what extent did the programming only reinforce concepts of Native people as a part of the nation's "natural history" that needed to be subdued and contained by lasso waving, heroic cowboys—all as part of our "social or civil history"? But a related question might be, what kind of programming can really impact this audience reception? As Charlie Camp noted in an interview with Robert Cantwell about his observations of visitors to the 1985

Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, "the need to identify the participants is urgent enough that it inspires almost immediate stereotyping, despite the efforts of texts and presenters to forestall stereotyping and the complex particularity of the performance designed to dispel it" (Cantwell 1993: 153). For the visitor, the need to make the unfamiliar something known is a complex process that relies on not only stereotype, but also requires those images perpetuated by popular culture and societal narratives (see Cantwell 1993, Morris 1995, Satterwhite 2008).

For the folklorist, there are no immediate or easy answers to these questions that necessarily relate perception with reception. This difficulty is also highlighted by Elizabeth Bird who researches "audience" in media studies, advocating an ethnographic approach to understanding the role audience plays in constituting meaning. She bemoans,

> Yes, as audiences we are (or can be) creative, taking images and ideas provided by the media, and doing many unexpected things with them. Yet we are also constrained by the boundaries placed around the meaning of those media products, and by the choices that are actually available to us. We must come to grips with the issues of power and control that often seem to play around the edges of audience research. (2003: 167)

In the case of the "cowboys and Indians" above, perhaps programming a newcomer group instead, such as the Sudanese Bola dancers would enhance and diversify the audience's understanding of this state's culture[28]. Perhaps eschewing the state museum and capitol complex as performance arena is needed because of the unspoken but clearly influencing contextual layer of meanings it adds. Or, (and I admit the problematic nature

[28] As a note, the folklorist that I worked with at "Tuesdays at the capitol" who shared my concerns about the 2005 program did, in fact, include newcomer artists in the event the next year. She felt like this kind of programming was appropriate and contributed to a more diverse understanding of that state's current communities.

of this assertion before I suggest it), perhaps the folklorist needs to work with the traditional artist to find ways in which they can represent themselves without reinforcing the expected. Should the folklorist work with the master so that he demonstrates not in buckskin loincloths and beaded vests, but in jeans and work shirts like we have seen him wear in his own home when he actually works on his projects? Again, it is not an easy question, and the answers may prove even more difficult. Part of what this chapter is also ultimately advocating speaks to Bird's point above: audiences may be constrained by the boundaries that have already been placed into social narratives about certain people, groups and traditions. In fact, while she may be speaking to "choice" above in terms of an audience having an over-saturated media market full of choices for them as audience consumers, I would also argue that there are choices that an audience is always making in terms of what narratives they choose to tune into when experiencing a public event. Accordingly, one important opportunity given to folklorists in the field is to continue to refine (redefine) the narratives that exist in public discourse. As Bird rightly suggests, power and control are central issues to this work; throughout these chapters I am attempting to name this power and control, rather than allowing it remain at the edges, but nevertheless, wield significant influence.

Taking from Susan Stewart (1999) and Walter Benjamin (1936 [2001]), I conceptualize "festival" in this chapter as a site where the temporality of experience becomes suspended through the moment of re\presentation (and likewise I would argue this for many exhibitions, performative spectacles, etc.).[29] While it can be educational,

[29] While there are many types of festivals that can be identified, I am primarily concerned here with the festival event as public spectacle, where the primary audience is not necessarily that of the culture or community being presented. However, I also draw upon theory derived from the study of community

entertaining, and/or historical—it never seamlessly continues a traditional practice. There is a disruption—in space, time, and context—but inherently, the act of re/presenting works to erase these disruptions for the audience. In fact, I would argue that the static "now" reinforces the authenticity of culture production for consumption. It is important to understand not only the "cult of authenticity," but also its implications. I would argue that there is a desire for the authentic in a world that many people perceive as being increasingly superficial or increasingly "pop-culture" in orientation. This desire drives a unique niche market that, capitalizing on the culture consumer, advertises authenticity as the determination of quality.[30] As J. Bau Graves notes, the ethnographic

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festival events such as the work of Bakhtin (1965 [1984]) and Handleman (1990). In fact, Don Handelman makes the point in his research on the "anthropology of public events" that to understand public phenomena in social life, one must consider how that event does and does not participate in certain forms. Since all of the events he discusses come out of a specific cultural community, it makes what I want to discuss in this project seemingly incongruous with his research. It is interesting, however, to consider how the public events presented through the Smithsonian festival, a school production, or a museum event participate in the forms he outlines of modeling, presentation, and re-presentation to the same ends. In fact, as I think about how he characterized the three forms specific to festivals and events produced within a cultural group for their cultural group I note that interesting arguments could be made regarding the terminology "cultural group." In many ways, one could argue that the Smithsonian Festival is produced by and for a specific cultural group. The ethnographically based high school production could also be argued even more convincingly that this is the case. When work done with a grassroots format, yet initiated by people outside of a particular culture, occurs, these forms become more blurred. Specifically, much of the work of folklorists doesn't fit into traditional models of public events produced by and/or for a cultural group because folklorists sometimes move across the lines of emic and etic. Sometimes an event is facilitated by a folklorist to empower the community, sometimes an event empowers a community but is also open to outsiders and it is this interaction that the community values, etc. To understand a public event in terms of how its form correlates with the forms of public events within communities constitutes one place to begin to understand how an emergent performative event constitutes meaning through its increasing self-consciousness and awareness of other projects that share its form of presentation. Handelman does indicate that no one event can only be constituted through one of these forms, and that the best diagram to represent his theory would be that of a triangle because all can impact upon each other to degrees (1990). The question that Handelman does not seem to answer but bears thought is if an event participates with one form over another will this determine how the audience will read that particular event?

[30] I draw from Bill Ivey's text *Arts, inc.* that argues that Americans have become "consumers, rather than makers, of art" (2008: 9) as well as James Clifford (1990) and later J. Bau Graves (2005) who use a schemata dominated by concepts of "authentic/inauthentic" and "masterpiece/artifact" to understand the relationship between commercialization and art/traditions.

when removed from its context and community, becomes an object that can be credentialed (found by experts to be "authentic") and commodified:

> It becomes a valued expression of cachet for consumption by the upwardly mobile, an exotic symbol of sophistication to hang on the wall or play on the phonograph. Because it has been certified as genuine, a piece of reality in a patently ersatz world, it takes on additional symbolic resonance, moving its disconnected audience in a fashion very different from any contemporary product. (1995:90)

This process of consumption is one replicated in the act of attending cultural events, ethnographic museums and displays, and other "pastimes" where the attention of the visitor is about seeing an Other for the purposes of education, entertainment, or both.

Similar to the problematic writing mode of the ethnographic present, the demonstration or festival is another form of representation that often requests a belief on the part of the audience that the value of the representation is in its authenticity. Susan Stewart critiques this assumption:

> We cannot assume the existence of a 'representative' aim independent of an ideological aim, for representation always strives, through manipulation and the forced emergence of detail, to create an ideal that is the 'real.' The continual use of an 'ethnographic present' in anthropological writing is a good example of this denial of the ongoingness of experience and the multivocality of points of view. It is not lived experience which literature describes, but the conventions for organizing and interpreting that experience. (1999:25)

In fact, I repeat the warning of Trinh Minh-ha: "his language . . . he wishes to render transparent, believing he could erase himself in his writing while clinging to the *author's* mastership" (1989:53), and similarly I wonder if the same is true of the programming organizer. Who stands behind the curtain? When an event, such as the folklife festival,

attempts to present "authenticity", there is a concomitant desire for transparency that ironically often serves to mask the greater issues inherent in this representational genre.

I was struck by Rhea Combs' note in the special issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* on the festival that considered the fashion tent at the 2002 Silk Road program at the Smithsonian (2008). In it, she discusses the conflict between the Japanese "avant-garde, international fashion" designers and the others at the festival—including the staff, visitors, and the other designers from Central Asia—that she was able to document as a participant-observer in that area. She noted that due to the demands made by the Japanese group called 1120, visitors felt as if that section of the festival was disconnected from the rest and did not fit with the "grassroots" feel and "historical" feel the other components had. Similarly, volunteers and other participants remarked amongst themselves and to Combs that 1120's changes to the design of their area—increasing the distance between themselves and visitors with tables and clothes racks, closing sight lines between themselves and the Central Asian tent—was isolationist. Combs concludes, however, that 1120 was being *consistent* with their own cultural ideals and philosophies. She notes that inherent in their personal sense of identity was a need to challenge "established notions of nationhood" (2008:118). Furthermore, "The cultural position taken by 1120 was emblematic of the fissures that normally occur among cultural groups. By asserting their values, they were resisting CFCH's [Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage] transnational, pan-Asian theme, with its specific ideas about how culture should be represented" (2008:118). The actions of 1120 seemed isolationist and inappropriate to some, but in what ways were they simply exposing the mechanisms that

create the aesthetic, ambiance, and, problematically, the perceived authenticity of the festival event?

Cantwell notes that almost any framing device used in the festival space lends itself to objectifying its content (1993). Within the conventions festival organizers use to "organize and interpret" the experience of the participants, is there a space for the participants to affirm their own agency? How can participants empower themselves through their own unique understanding of themselves as an "audience" whose eyes are trained to contain and consume? (Training reinforced in the traditional museum collection that typically contains, collects, and classifies objects with pinned labels for easy understanding and consumption by the public.) Cantwell offers the position that regardless of whether it is a museum or a festival on the National Mall, the folk festival represents "object as object, or the folk as folk" (1993:155) and, ultimately, the representation that the visitor walks away with is a sense of social privilege derived through a realization of what can be identified as "cultural capital". He notes that often it is documented that the artists do have a sense of both honor and/or legitimization through their participation in the Smithsonian Festival, and my own experience that I will outline further below bears this out. But Cantwell cautions, "In the Festival of American Folklife, the limits of museum display have been expanded, but in order to expand them it has been necessary to expand, too, perhaps, our willingness to objectify people socially 'below' us and to coax out their complicity in the process" (1993:155).

The belief that complicity also lies with the myriad of participants in the festival brings the argument to the interesting question: Is there a point where the return on participation makes some of the colonizing aspects seem less troubling, and that personal

display as “an other” becomes something to embrace? Does the master traditional artist who does Native American beadwork and quillwork know that he could, in fact, wear his “everyday” clothes to the re/presentation, but instead “dresses the part” in order to both legitimize his participation, but to also strengthen what he perceives as the reason he was asked to a place of power (the capitol) to share his knowledge (he frames his narrative as one of strength for him as a living American of Lakota heritage)? Deborah Root reminds her reader that it is not useful “to seek a pure or originary space from which to judge representations of culture, and it would be extremely difficult to locate uncommodified forms of culture, even assuming we wanted to do so” (1996: xiii). Rethinking the Lakota master artist and tradition bearer presents interesting support to this statement. Root continues by noting that “cultures have always been mixed and in flux, and to assume a pure space of resistance or authenticity is to refuse to recognize the extent to which we are all complicit with systems of power and authority, as we are all complicitly with the cannibal” (xiii). I believe there are expressions of culture and tradition that contribute an extraordinary amount of power and cultural wellbeing to specific communities, so my question resides in Root’s use of “we” above. Who actually can lay claim to the authority of that “we” as she uses it, and to what extent does “complicity with the cannibal” actually connote inherent power? I find it an interesting play on irony that the cannibal, here, is the one who is choosing, so to speak, who it shall “eat.” The control, albeit framed as a negative aspect, is on the side of the cannibal in Root’s statement. Has the era of colonialism in display given way to a consumerism that validates and empowers those who can better participate in the marketing, buying, and selling of cultural heritage and identities? What does this mean when participants, curators,

presenters, as well as audiences are all complicit in "feeding" this larger mechanism of society, buoyed by not only a free market system, but also by impulses that are still, problematically, coming out of a colonizing impulse and a need to identify "an other"?

This leads into another example that I would like to share which explores how some individuals within a particular cultural group attempt to influence the interactions they would have with visitors, and accordingly, influence the meaning-making process relative to representation for both themselves and the visitors at the 2005 Smithsonian Folklife Festival. For the first time in the history of the festival, and also the first time since the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, an Arab nation was featured at the festival—people from the country of Oman[31]. Included in the section were representatives from both the desert and from the city (the section was titled, "Desert, Oasis, Sea.") Careful instructions were given to all of the volunteers in terms of our dress and behavior when working closely with this particular section of the festival to help mitigate discomfort due to cultural difference on behalf of the participants. However, careful instruction was also given to those of us who were working as photographers for the 2005 festival to capture as much of the color and vibrancy of this section as possible—we were told that the Omani would provide some of the richest content for our shots. As Emily Satterwhite has noticed, "the trend in visitor desires, especially since the spectacular 2002 Silk Road program, is easy to trace: the more foreign, the better. The colorful flavor of difference had come to reside in the international" (2008:31). The photos that could best capture what the visitors wanted,

[31] The 2002 Silk Road program was the first program featuring communities from the Middle East, and Arab-Americans had also been featured previously.

and the photos that would subsequently be most useful for publications of the Smithsonian, would be in the Omani section.

That visitors believe they want the exotic was further demonstrated in an on-line chat hosted by the Washington Post, prior to the 2006 festival, where over half of the posts noted a disappointment with the thematic selection, noting that it wasn't as "broad," "exotic" or "interesting" as in years past. As one poster wrote, "I have to say that I'm a little mystified by this year's choices of themes. With apologies to my one very-excited Canadian friend, none of the selected topics really grab my interest. And wasn't Nuestra Musica on the agenda last year? Oman, Mali, Romania, the Silk Road... the themes of years past have had a much more exotic flavor" (Kurin 2006). Richard Kurin's response was interesting in how it succinctly addressed the desire for the exotic from the writer:

> Nuestra Musica -- Latino music is part of a multi-year project, and this year we are focusing on Chicago, which many people don't know much about. Exoticism raises an interesting question about how we present cultures on the Mall. We tend to try to show how seemingly exotic cultures are understandable -- that is we try to make them familiar -- and I think we usually succeed. Now sometimes when we have cultures that are similar to ours the challenge is to show how they are unique, different or particular in how they approach or express something. Its challenging. (2006)

There are a couple of things that I really like about this particular exchange. For one, I love that it existed in the first place. This points to a new kind of relationship between curator and public, where the public is able to ask questions of the curator and have immediate feedback. This kind of access helps demystify the process in a way that is responsive to audience perspectives and questions[32]. I also find it interesting how Kurin

[32] That only eight posts were listed perhaps suggests that this kind of program is not what the public believes it needs. I do not know how much or how well the chat was marketed.

is able to make in a concise and easily understood way the complex scholarly point regarding the role of the "exotic" in the festival. Kudos to him for attempting to make this point. But it does lead to the question that began this chapter, how can an audience abandon the legacy of colonizing narratives and narratives of the "exotic other" by participating in public events that feature cultures and traditions of diverse groups?

The Omani program in 2005 provided a challenge for Smithsonian staff in that popular media has spent more time politicizing and/or making exotic people from any Arab nation. To meet the goals of making Omani people and culture "familiar" and "understandable", a number of things were going to have to happen in terms of interpretation and representation during the festival. The Smithsonian website noted about the program:

> Arabs and Arab-Americans have participated in past Festivals but this program provided an opportunity to focus on Arab culture at a time when it is much misunderstood around the world. Audiences were able to meet Omani men and women face to face and with this contact the Oman program may be able to dispel many myths about the Arab world and certainly included a few surprises for even those knowledgeable of the region. (http://www.folklife.si.edu/festival/2005/Oman/index.html, accessed July 19, 2008)

The emphasis on meeting the men and women of Oman "face to face," as well as the statement that through this "contact" visitors may be able to dispel many myths about the Arab world is a very interesting statement that bears additional scrutiny in relation to both its implication of the *kind* of relationship visitor and participant were to have, as well as to the goal or objective of the presentation on the National Mall.

The statement about the Omani program is in line with the founding principles of the festival (as outlined by Ralph Rinzler in 1976 and reprinted in a 2003 *Talk Story*, the

newsletter of the Smithsonian Center of Folklife and Heritage). The bi-centennial program book essay was reprinted because "almost thirty years later, it draws attention with prescient precision to the transformative roles of festivals, tradition, culture, and community in the midst of homogenizing media trends and splintering global problems" (Early 2003: 8). Rinzler noted two types of audience experience that he advocated at the festival. One was for those who shared the cultural background of those participating in the festival. He asked these visitors to contribute to this "re-creation of context": "You may know the language, dialect, songs, dances, and familiar ways of relating to the performance. For example, when a Black preacher is 'borne up' by a congregation in a church setting on the Mall, the hymns are sung by hundreds instead of dozens. If you know a song or dance, join in, and the barrier between audience and performer will disappear" (2003 8-9). He then continues to address those visitors who may not share that particular tradition or heritage:

> Others who don't know, will learn and join. The artistic level of performance rises as the audience demonstrates through participation that two-way communication has been established. The event forges a community out of a passel of strangers. As a festival should, it affirms a sense of communitas. Formerly, this experience of sharing and participating in traditional celebrations or work practices of an in-group has been the privilege of field workers in the social sciences. The Festival, avoiding an entertainment approach to culture, seeks to serve as a window into community. (1976 [2003]:8-9)

This is especially interesting in light of something that I had personally noted as the festival went through its two week run. Through a variety of means, the Omani fashioned an impression for the public that defied many of my initial expectations of the kinds of relationships that would exist between visitor and participant.

For example, there was a tent dedicated to traditions of incense in Oman. Incense is important in many aspects of Omani culture, and as one participant told a festival visitor, it was like brushing your teeth; you would not leave home without bathing your body in the scent of its smoke. There was often a very large crowd at this tent as people were drawn by the exotic smells and women working with the incense. Personally, I was captivated by how so many parts of this summer's festival involved our olfactory senses. As a festival photographer, I was trying to get some close shots of people experiencing the smells of the tent. I noticed that usually people would approach the tent and then look at the baskets of scented waxes and oils with interest, sometimes bending over to guess the smell. Their questions were often impertinent with authority, "This is frankincense, isn't it?", if they bothered to ask the person working there outright. More often I saw them unconsciously see the Omani woman as either someone who was simply a part of the exhibit to be looked at, but not an expert to be asked; or as someone who may know an answer, but probably didn't speak English so they did not want to initiate an attempt at communication. Clearly festival visitors were anxious to keep an appropriate distance from the participants. Perhaps this is best characterized as a shyness born of ignorance of a culture and the people. Perhaps current negative media representations of Arab people and customs had indoctrinated these festival goers to the extent that they were unable to interact with them for ideological reasons. Or perhaps their semiotic experience of the festival event remained less complex when the objects of their gaze could remain two-dimensional; hence, they were unwilling to engage with the Arabs as three-dimensional people.

However, many festival goers were unable to keep this comfortable distance because of something the Omani woman would do in the tent. In one particular instance, I noticed that a woman was leaning over a mound of incense. She asked her husband (not the Omani woman) what he thought the scent was. The Omani woman reached out to the American woman and smiling, pulled out the woman's shirt from the bottom and began fanning the smoke from the incense into her top. The first time I witnessed this, I also saw simultaneously the interpreter/volunteer in the artists' tent reach out as if to stop her. Clearly, this is a clear violation of not only the personal bubble prized so highly by most Americans, but a violation of the expected distance between participant and visitor. Unexpectedly, however, other visitors began to ask for this treatment as well. And while one could see it as being akin to the popular henna demonstrations that I have seen at other festivals, what marked this as significant was the spontaneous action of the Omani woman to force the visitors to acknowledge her presence in the tent as more than a object, but to see her also as an acting subject. And unlike a henna tattoo that I see as a popular expression of primitivism in popular culture, wearing the scent was not the same public statement of being touched by exoticism. Rather, a more intimate sharing of private ritual between two women of different backgrounds emerged in this exchange.

The second example from the 2005 festival that also highlights an interesting case of the Omani self-representing through the festival genre occurred on the large stage. The song and dance would begin with the Omani men and women on the center stage, surrounded on four sides by a sizable crowd of visitors, perhaps intrigued by the wailing of the oboe or the sound of singing inside. After a demonstration by the Omani, a demonstration where the conventions of the stage were strictly kept despite the fact that it

had no proscenium arch or backstage, the Omani began to bring people from the audience to the stage to dance with them. Initially, there was great reluctance and shyness, excepting many children. However, eventually the stage would be overflowing with visitors. Each Omani would have two, three, even four charges with whom he or she would be dancing. Arms and hands would touch, feet attempted to mimic cultural steps, and almost everyone was full of smiles and laughter as the distance that was first expected melted through the shared communion of dance. It is plausible to argue that through these self-initiated choices the Omani presented both identity and culture as more complex, and by inviting participation gained more power in the dance. The political and social ramifications also go much deeper, however. Given the presentation of Arab people in our news, jokes, and rumors (see especially Langlois 2005), something larger is being enacted as both the physical and semiotic gaps between cultures dissolve in the festival arena. If we argue that reception can change perception, and that the event of re/presentation relies on more than the proverbial two-way street, the experience of the festival goes beyond a bifurcated event. Constant and multidirectional layerings of interpretation created by participant, visitor, context, folklorist, etc. constitute meaning. It is on-going, and similar to the Sartian Being who is transphenomenal, never fully realized or revealed in the totality of its manifestations. Comprehension of the Visitor-as-Self-Constituting-Meaning will vary from one visitor to another, meaning that there is no one conclusion of how the event constituted perception.

Thus far this model most clearly articulates the nexuses of meaning creation in the festival, yet I again turn to the role of perception relative to this model to point to the problematic role of individual perception. To briefly continue my example of Sarte's

Being, there can exist the visitor who would be best characterized as experiencing the phenomenon of the festival "inauthentically." In this case, the model breaks down to the point where there is only one stream of thought constituting the meaning of the experience, namely, the stream emanating from the visitor's perception onto the reception of the presentation. One example would be the visitor who briefly looks into a tent or at a stage, but quickly leaves, blowing off the presentation as "not anything more than I expected." They are unable to intuit through their experience anything that changes their preconceptions of what they are expecting because that would cause discomfort, uneasiness, or even distress. A specific case study that I observed involves an instance where perception influenced reception through keen inability to perceive alternative messages to the ones expected.

In February 2005 I traveled to Washington, D.C. to lobby with graduate students from a variety of disciplines for higher education legislation. Finding that we had one afternoon free, I went with two women to the Smithsonian's Museum of the Native American. It was a fascinating study in visitor perception and visitor reception. We walked into the foyer, and while I had not planned this as a "research event," I quickly realized that the two women with whom I had come understood their museum experience much differently than I, so I became quiet and simply followed them through the museum. I can most easily characterize their impressions of the museum as following this trajectory: confusion, disconcertion, assertions of superiority/authority, boredom. The trajectory would also fit in with the model I propose above in the following way: 1) They were confused when their expectations were not immediately met when they entered the museum. Where are the exhibits? The boxes? The labels? 2) As they

continued to “look” for “interesting Indian stuff,” they become increasingly agitated and disconcerted. 3) Not finding the museum matching their expectations, they responded by finding that this was a “failed experiment” on the part of the Smithsonian. Let me explain. We started our tour of the museum by taking the elevator to the fourth floor. When the doors opened, the women immediately walked over to a display of masks locked in display cases. It was the only thing that “looked” like what they anticipated finding in a museum. As they looked at the displayed artifacts, one woman commented to the other, “I expected more from a Smithsonian. Look at this! This mask is just made of garbage and it isn’t very old. I was alive when they made it!” 4) Finally, we are only halfway through the fourth floor, we have only been there 45 minutes, and they ask if we can go see the National Archives. I protested, but who could argue with their point, framed by their expectations—at least there you can see something that is “historically important” and a “national treasure.” And while I have become sarcastic, my point is that perception so overwhelmed these women that they could not perceive anything outside of their expectations.

Ultimately, to anticipate and dictate audience response to public events is on many levels not possible. The reality of this paralyzed my writing for months. But in those months I watched, absorbed, and listened at the many festivals and programming events I attended. In thinking about my own reception of events, influenced by my academic training and self-conscious awareness, and in writing about my understanding of others’ own reception of events relative to my understanding of their perception, a few themes began to emerge. It is tempting to assess festival as merely metaphor; to ignore the literal activities and theorize instead its function as an event which uses intersections

between cultures, borders, identities, and nostalgic impossibilities to assert control over not only a social, but physical environment—ritualizing dominion over nature, culture, gender, landscape, knowledge, and so forth. However, the reality of experience often demands attention, and while it supplements theoretical constructs of perception and reception, it cannot completely supplant it. So this chapter, while at times referring to the theory and always aware of its notions informing my descriptions and favoring certain images and memories over others, I ultimately come back to examples gathered from the field as a place to begin asking the important questions, the place to begin wondering about festival.

Charley Camp and Tim Lloyd wrote a paper over twenty years ago listing six reasons "not to produce a folk festival" (1980). They asserted that what happens at a festival is a replication of a behavior learned by the participant as being suitable for festival presentation, but "do not necessarily present anything more of community life than those things the audience, which has also absorbed the pattern, has come to expect" (68). Walter Benjamin, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," considers how replication has affected not only the artistic bearer, but also the audience response to the art. Taking from his theory, Susan Stewart writes that

> The authority of the object, the authority of the 'original,' is jeopardized, the object is detached from the domain of tradition, the work of art is emancipated from its dependence upon ritual, and, consequently, exhibition value begins to displace cult value, the increased mass of participants in the arts results in a new mode of participation: 'A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it…. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art'. (qtd in Stewart 1999:8)

The implications of this for the re/production of folklife in a festival setting are myriad, especially when considering identity production relative to tradition and ritual. When the

art is human—the art lives as an expression that implicitly requires the body to be the expression of art through ritual and tradition—one sees that as it is reproduced for the masses through a festival that due to the nature of being seen and absorbed as if simply a mechanism used to replicate a thing for entertainment renders the human part of the art mere thing-ness. Ultimately it is the replication, the thing-ness of the spectacle, that is consumed and "absorbed" by an audience that then creates an understanding of what is "real" due to the nature of the context. This points to other issues that need to be unpacked and examined more closely to understand not only the theory, but the nuts and bolts of what happens when re/presentations of traditional arts move from the high-context, intracultural ritual sphere to the low context, extracultural "edutainment" sphere.

Culture Production and Consumption

> *When I would dance for them, they would laugh and throw pennies. I did my war dances special.*
> *--Paute Elder 1968*
> ....
> *And do we lose the way home again?*
> *Lose the movements of the dance*
> *the door ajar, the sun slipped over*
> *the western brink by these lives*
> *linked with faceless pennies?*
> From "Dancing for the Whiteman," by Wendy Rose (1985)

> *We have come from a far country to a land where all men are white. If you will come to our country we will take pleasure in cutting your white throats.*
> Translation of Dahomeyan women's chants used to resist their exploitation by 1893 World Expo organizers (qtd. in Rydell 145)[33]

[33] Robert Rydell argues that while the promoters of the Dahomeyan Village at the 1893 World's Fair wanted to manipulate the representations of Africans to "serve" their own ideological ends, that through subtle coding such as the chant above (said in their own language while processing up and down the Midway Plaisance during the daily parade of "ethnological types"), it was clear that the organizers did not have complete control over the participants (1999: 145).

In 1993 Robert Cantwell published *Ethnomimesis*, a widely-read theoretical text considering the issues of representation, especially relative to the folk festival. The preface outlines his understanding of culture and folklife; namely, that they are firmly rooted in the Romantic tradition and are constructed concepts designed to help people mediate their existence. He explains: "The story belongs to that perennial fascination of the developed imagination in a complex civilization with the original principles and the fundamental forms of culture and society, whose ideality we invariably construct, psychologically, socially, politically, scientifically, and philosophically, in opposition to, but often in ways that affirm, the lives we actually lead and what the world actually is" (1993:xv). Therefore, while many understand culture as simply being something that is natural or something that necessarily happens, Cantwell argues that it is consciously and unconsciously produced through the process of ethnomimesis (6); a word he defines as being a term that further explicates "culture," making clear his argument that: "although [culture] is embedded in social practices, manifested in art, and reproduced by power, culture is essentially imaginative" (6). To understand any mediation that occurs between a Self and an Other, therefore, one must understand it relative to the imaginative power of ethnomimesis produced through specific social structures—including those of the museum and festival.

When I consider the nature of practice relative to these theoretical arguments of re/presentation, I hope that my argument will engage with important considerations for academic and public sector folklorists alike—challenging the seeming divide that exists between theory and practice, and begging the question, how has a more self-conscious

approach towards cultural mediation affected the actual practice of re/presentation on the folk festival stage today?[34] A related question asks whether the festival itself is as Dan Ben-Amos has characterized it, simply another version of the country show exhibiting "freaks of nature"[35] (1998:268), or as Emily Satterwhite echoes Ben-Amos' comment by taking from the 1993 American Bus Association's members magazine *Destinations:* "festival goers find a world in miniature on the National Mall—an international version of the county fair," and Satterwhite continues, "perhaps festival visitors came in the 1990s to see the world as their country—a miniature, manageable world" (2008: 22). On the other hand, can a festival experience offer a positive mediation between Self and Other, which includes those constructs that create identity difference such as gender, race, class, and so forth?

[34] This is not a new concern and has frequently come up in folklore discussions. Currently a debate is being waged concerning how theory generated by folklorists can best be applied to issues of intellectual property rights; especially as folklorists are being invited to participate on U.S. delegations to the WIPO conventions, but that the U.S. reports to the Secretariat continue to advocate for definitions of traditional knowledge that have an individual origin with communal adoption, which flies in the face of the theories advocated by folklorists for the past number of years. (See, for example, the *Journal of American Folklore* articles by Valdimar Hafstein [2004] and J. Sandford Rikoon [2004].) So while this concerns a distinctly different notion of representation, the example illustrates a reality that too often important theoretical discussions are not followed closely enough in practice. As a feminist scholar, I would also point out that these discussions of copyright and patenting have a very real gender bias; for (and I acknowledge the risk of essentializing) many women's arts often seem to come from the domestic arts and other arts that are assumed to be communally propagated and learned, while many of the arts practiced by males are more easily categorized as an individual effort—I would argue both because of the nature of the type of art, but also because men's art is more often associated with "high" art, and therefore attributable to individual creative efforts (think of the woman as cook vs. the man as chef)—thus, more often males are afforded creative protection under current international law then women.

[35] This comment came out of a debate regarding the discipline of folklore. He writes: "Within the public arena, folklore festivals have replaced the country shows that exhibited freaks of nature. Now the festivals put on display the oddities of modern societies…. Such festivals and public presentations do indeed marginalize folklore, making it a quaint curiosity" (1998:268). A more problematic component of this particular idea, however, that may not be immediately clear (nor directly intended on the part of Ben-Amos) is the notion that displays of "freaks" have been commercially viable enterprises throughout the ages. So I would offer that a real critique that needs to be examined is the relationship between commerce and re/presentation. Can business mix with culture in positive ways?

Contemporary museum experiences and museum theory is beginning to enact a new way of experiencing the museum. The exhibition now not only talks to you, but it is often not afraid of the direct address to "you". Furthermore, it asks you to answer it, play with it, become a part of it. Yet, Barthes' reading of the post-structuralist text is apt in terms of what it portends for the experience of the post- exhibition or post- festival: "The reduction of reading to a consumption is clearly responsible for the 'boredom' experienced by many in the face of the modern ('unreadable') text, the avant-garde film or painting: to be bored means that one cannot produce the text, open it out, *set it going*" (1971 [2001]: 1475). The ease and comfort of a visitor in actively creating meaning in the contemporary museum will have a direct influence on the ability of people to deal with a pluralism of meanings and alternative interpretations that resist easy categorization or stereotype. One challenge for the curator, arguably, lies in his/her ability to disrupt the desire on the part of the visitor to remain a "consumer" rather than a "producer." In fact, this point may have a number of ramifications as we see more emphasis on marketing museums and exhibitions as if they were IMAX or the latest blockbuster hit. It is telling, however, that while some museums and other cultural heritage sites try to pander to the visitor as consumer because this is what the marketplace appears to be demanding, attendance figures may indicate that this practice is indeed not productive in terms of market needs[36]. In fact, it may be in embracing the ways in which exhibitions can

[36] This claim is not an easy one to substantiate. Museum attendance figures are notoriously difficult to obtain and to corroborate. There are many variables that affect the ways in which museums report attendance figures, and there is not a recognized authority who gathers and distributes this statistical information. Robert Janes argues that attendance is declining or stagnate in his 2007 article published in *Curator* based upon three different studies: "research indicates that the museum sector is struggling to maintain its audiences, and that the visitor base in developed countries is stagnant, declining or increasing disproportionately less than the number of new and renovated museums (Burton and Scott 2003, 56-57; Cheney 2002; Hill Strategies Research Inc. 2003)" (Janes 2007: np). Yet, as Barbara Hoffman notes, true

participate in a world that increasingly expects hyperlinks and easy interactivity that curators can both met their missions, engage a visitor with their content, and create opportunities for learning that empower communities. This learning curve may be one that is not only targeted at the curator who may be very aware of these trends, but even more so to the boards and funders who may not have the same luxury of understanding the theoretical framework of relationships established through the consumption versus production of meaning by their visitors. As museologist Robert Janes notes:

> Irrespective of their demonstrated ability to generate social capital and be socially responsible, the value of museums is now measured in terms of consumption, including visitation, retail sales, food purchases, gallery rentals and so forth (Keene 2005, 159). While these services clearly provide essential operating revenues, the current preoccupation with them obscures the fact that they are the means to the end, not the end in themselves. By confusing these fundamentally different realities, museums are forsaking the opportunity to creatively rethink their purpose, and are instead embracing an increasingly fragile and unsustainable economic model based on fickle consumerism and showmanship. To attempt to improve the current situation by adopting the very same marketplace ideology that has reduced the level of public support for museums so dramatically over the past two decades could be ignored as wishful thinking or perhaps solipsism, if the implications were not so apparent. (2007: np)

Janes and his colleague Conaty elaborate further on this in their text *Looking Reality in the Eye: Museums and Social Responsibility* where they warn, "It is no longer tenable to ignore the undesirable consequences of our apparently unthinking adherence to

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numbers are difficult and that many museums report growth because this is what they need to be able to report for funders, grants, and board members (2006:421). The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, along with numerous strategic partners has participated recently in what is call the "Pennsylvania Cultural Data Project," recognizing the need for good data about arts and culture in the state. The survey has released its 2006 reports and found that arts and cultural organizations in the Philadelphia area report over 12 million visits per year, which is, as they point out, over 3 visits for every man, woman, and child in Southeastern Pennsylvania (http://www.philaculture.org/portfolio/findings.htm, accessed August 26, 2008). This finding and others that come from the deep survey indicate that the impact of arts organizations and artists in the area is significant, but that simultaneously, these organizations run on, in their own words, very "lean budgets."

marketplace ideology, with its sole emphasis on individual and corporate autonomy. Make no mistake, it is an ideology. It is an integrated set of assumptions, theories and aims that constitute a socio-political program and agenda. Worst of all, it is marked by the truculence of certainty" (2005: 10). This warning supports the argument also well-known to many folklorists, that many narratives masquerade as certain in society and the marketplace, and a part of our work in public programming and academic writing is to illuminate these narratives and expose them to discussion and debate. To understand the relationship of visitor to the constitution of meaning as also directly engaging in this process is significant in shaping much of my writing which follows.

My introductory chapter helped outline the ways in which constructs of culture and their representation(s) are embedded in power relations and social practices—including how some practices continue to reinforce unexamined and unchallenged norms of gender, class, ethnicity, and so on. The festival poses an interesting proving ground for not only some of the theoretical discussion, but in terms of impacting larger questions of policy and social narrative. Heather Diamond and Ricard Trimillos recently were guest editors of a special edition of the *Journal of American Folklore* presenting research and perspectives on the Smithsonian Folklife Festival (SFF). In their introduction they cite Richard Kurin, noting that festival organizers see the SFF as "an intervention in cultural homogenization and as a subversive enactment of American democratic ideals designed to challenge cultural intolerance" (2008:5). They note, however,

> At the same time, the SFF is subject to corporate funding, directives of local governments, special interest groups, and the whims of changing administrations as they impact arts and museum funding. This tension permeates the SFF. Many cultural groups and practices that are otherwise undervalued are valorized at the SFF, but if visitors do not get below the

> celebratory SFF surface, diversity can be artifacted as benign, cohesive, and depoliticized, qualities that belie the actual histories and socioeconomic circumstances of many of the groups whose experiences are presented and performed. (2008: 5)

As Diamond and Trimillos note, the celebratory surface of the festival is a force to be considered when looking at its roles relative to representation. When you add that corporate sponsors seek positive image transfer for their sponsorship of an event, the questions facing curators grow. As Ann Prior notes in her review of the 2005 Food Culture USA Smithsonian Festival program, it was difficult for some entrepreneurs to resist the urge to use the festival as a marketing opportunity, posing a unique challenge for folklorists working with corporate partners. As she wrote: "Festival staff can encourage participants to focus on the cultural dimensions of their trade, but ultimately the participants speak for themselves" (2007:246).

Folklorists engaged in festival production do fieldwork with many different foci and agendas to locate the artists who will be showcased in each festival. At the same time, the Smithsonian staff need to think about their brand for the festival and create marketing on their website and in other forums that will attract visitors to the festival. Since being renamed the Smithsonian Folklife Festival from the Festival of American Folklife in 1998, the festival typically highlights one country, one occupation, and one state or region each year. In 2004 the three topic areas presented included: Haiti: Freedom and Creativity: From the Mountains to the Sea; Water Ways: The Past, Present, and Future of Maritime Communities in the Mid-Atlantic; and Music in Latino Culture: *Nuestra Música*. The descriptions of each of these areas of presentation on the website are interesting for what they highlight to frame the festival experience for a visitor in this

particular year. For example, “The [Haiti] program will celebrate and highlight the cultural creativity of the Haitian people that continues to sustain them,” and “Water Ways: The Past, Present, and Future of Maritime Communities in the Mid-Atlantic will celebrate the region stretching from Long Island, New York, to the Outer Banks of North Carolina, bringing together maritime workers and artisans from a number of communities to demonstrate their skills and share their stories, with Festival visitors and one another” (Smithsonian 2004). A common word that emerges is celebration. Are there ways that participants retrofit this celebratory frame used for marketing to empower their own agendas and issues? How can an understanding of the larger discourses that construct the festival experience foster a greater understanding of how an event such as a festival could function to subvert and critique these same social relations? Can the participants find ways to engage an audience and others into producing alternative narratives that enhance and disrupt the obviously celebratory frame that visitors are given? Arguably, celebratory events are easier for an audience to “consume,” and therefore perhaps the effect that many visitors experience in their attempt to quickly digest the festival as if it were an artifact in the National Archives or Museum of Natural History. What opportunities exist for the curator and the participant to impact this reception for other audience members?

Following the 2004 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Robert Wieland wrote an editorial that was published in the Washington Post. He opened his piece on oyster over-harvesting with the following story: “At this year's Smithsonian Folklife Festival, I wandered around the mid-Atlantic maritime exhibits in search of any report that the oysters that spawned the industry that built the boats on display are, lately, gone. I

eventually found a small sheet showing recent harvest trends (from 2.5 million bushels of oysters in 1974 to 25,000 bushels in the past year). Unfortunately, there was no one around to discuss this gloomy report" (Wieland 2004: B08). This article sparked a short exchange of emails on Publore, asking about the significance of a person who walks through the festival in a day and what kind of impressions and ideas they will walk away with. Amy Skillman was one presenter who worked with the Waterways section as a presenter, and she responded to the original posting, noting that it was problematic and something for a curator to think about that a walk-through visitor would not understand any of the tough issues facing watermen today. However, she also noted the following:

> From my perspective as a presenter, one of the most powerful things I saw happening at the festival was the connections being made between watermen from different parts of the region. They were finding ways to work together beyond the festival to help each other overcome some of the pressures and restrictions placed on them by differing state-based legislation, depleting environmental resources, and the ever-present development. Liabilities in one state quickly became assets in another.
>
> Also, one of the guys who was most hesitant to come because he was afraid his concerns wouldn't be welcomed or respected once he verbalized them, ended up wanting to come back for the second week. And this also meant losing a week on the water. That spoke volumes to me. (publore email July 28, 2004)

Kelly Feltault also joined the conversation asking the question: "If a one day shot only conveys celebratory impressions, then how do you convey the broader issues that situate these people, their occupations, and their culture within broader political, economic, and global processes? What other formats outside of a narrative stage can be employed? Who else needs to be on those narrative stages--environmental economists, seafood importers, trade associations, watermen's associations,--other non-folk artists ????"

(publore email July 28, 2004). Then, specifically speaking to one visitor's experience, her father-in-law's, she noted: "Discussing the effects of global flexible capital on local industries is difficult to frame in a festival presentation, yet without it visitors get the impression that my father-in-law did, 'the industry is thriving'." If one thing was clear throughout the email exchanges, it was that there are not any clear answers or golden elixirs to simplify the issues surrounding representation and visitor reception of the content.

Perhaps it is for this reason that I continue to emphasize the aspect of social narratives writ large through the representative event. I find that this challenge can be deemed an important one for this research, for the very nature of festival production is the business of "authentic" presentations of culture and identity, which ultimately participates in codifying and authenticating relations of production within cultures. Therefore, my argument will ultimately function to call attention to some of the current theoretical debates regarding the paradigms of re/presentation and observe specific instances where marginalization continues to be reinforced by these same paradigms. This chapter contributes to the larger topic of representation as an effort to identify how festivals and exhibitions, where curators are fully cognizant that they are participating in acts of representation, serve as an informed critique of current practice and pose important questions that illuminate the relationship between theory and practice.

I begin with the assumption that the core of festival production is the business of "authentic" presentations of culture and identity, which ultimately participates in codifying and authenticating these relations of production within cultures. Through decoding the rhetoric of the festival as a family reunion and placing it within the frame of

culture brokerage, I want to consider how festivals (such as the Smithsonian's) foster relationships between the powerful structures of "official" culture and those re/presented on the stages. While there is a distinct possibility of empowerment offered when the microphone is passed to those not ordinarily given voice in public discourse, the containment of that same microphone's amplification and location needs to be continually reassessed in terms of the actual nature of the encounter being mediated by those who feel the authority to offer the microphone in the first place. Similarly, the participants need to "find" the voice that will best represent their group in the festival context.

The Rhetoric and Nostalgia of a National Family Reunion[37]

The Smithsonian Folklife Festival characterizes itself on its website with the following observation: "The Smithsonian Folklife Festival is a national, even international, family reunion asserting the ability of people to converse with and understand each other. At the Festival, tradition bearers, local scholars, and Smithsonian curators speak for themselves, with each other, and to the public" (Smithsonian 2004). Simply starting with this introductory statement, a clear starting point for analysis becomes clear. The key thematic concepts of family, cross-cultural understanding, and communication are clearly articulated. But what does the nature of a national family event entail? What guides the conduits of communication between participant and

[37] It should be noted, however, that there is also a National Folk Festival started by Sarah Gertrude Knott in 1934 whose history predates the Smithsonian festival, inaugurated in 1967 (Whisnant 1983:185). While the National Festival travels to a variety of cities throughout the nation, the Smithsonian is always held on the national mall, perhaps lending additional credence to its popular conception as the "national" festival.

audience, self and other? Why would the rhetoric of "family" be articulated in an event that celebrates not only the local, but simultaneously enriches the perspective with national and global scope?

Lauren Berlant offers a number of useful observations on the nature of the citizen in America and characterizes the rhetorics constructing national identity since the Reagan era as the view that "the intimacy of citizenship is something scarce and sacred, private and proper, and only for members of families" (1997:3), fostering the conclusion that as a conservative ideology it has "convinced a citizenry that the core context of politics should be the sphere of private life" (3). Consider the immediate relation the festival has to these notions: It is a public event that celebrates the everyday and private lives of the often marginalized citizens who are granted this mediated place to contribute to national discussion. It also functions as a "family reunion" that is characterized by distant "cousins" coming together as one national family, where for a time differences can be celebrated with a pluralistic idealism. And just as Berlant argues that the ends of this privatization of citizenship has included the manipulation of relations between the systems of class, race, and gender; the advent of the Smithsonian festival in 1967 seems timely for the conservative contributions it makes producing notions of national identity through the rhetoric of the family (perhaps a response to the growing feminist movement) and the rhetoric of carefully contained and presented difference (perhaps a response to the civil rights movement). In fact, it is here that I must disagree with a premise of Berlant's argument; specifically, that "there is no public sphere in the contemporary United States, no context of communication and debate that makes ordinary citizens feel that they have a common public culture, or influence on a state that holds itself

accountable to their opinions, critical or otherwise" (1997: 3).[38] Clearly, the Folklife Festival, as constructed, challenges this position on a number of levels. But what is interesting about this observation is what will inform much of my argument; namely, that although the festival would seem to present a public forum that liberally works to foster empowerment for disenfranchised "ordinary citizens," in fact, it may only act to reify current structures and safely contain and exhibit "others". In fact, festival may function to make the "ordinary citizens *feel* that they have a common public culture," (my emphasis), but this is only to ensure a larger degree of unifying control over the many competing discourses vying for attention relative to the ideology of the ruling system powers.

Historically, the years leading up to 1967 were ones of unrest throughout the nation, and the established hierarchies were all being challenged through a variety of mediums—violent and otherwise. While there were important grassroots movements that used the folk festival and other folklife to subvert the dominant societal paradigms,[39] the advent of a "national festival" begs interrogation. It seems significant that the characterization of a national "family reunion" is not used to designate other significant national gatherings or pastimes (be it entertainment, sports, or others), but rather the folklife festival is celebratory while it presents idealized portraits of identity. As Kate Millet points out in her "Theory of Sexual Politics" published not long after the advent of the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, "Patriarchy's chief institution is the family. It is both a

[38] Berlant adds the note that her term "ordinary citizens" denotes those "without wealth and structural access to brokers of power" (1997:3). Considering that a later section of my paper considers the problematic nature of what has been termed as "culture brokering," the significance of this economic language of power will be further addressed.

[39] I think especially of the folksong revival and publications such as the Broadside Magazine, started in 1962, which published songs considered "too critical, too raw, and too dangerous for the mass media" (Seeger 2000:9).

mirror of and a connection with the larger society; a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole. *Mediating between the individual and the social structure, the family effects control and conformity where political and other authorities are insufficient*" ([1970] 2000:129, emphasis mine). One way in which the family asserts the affective control that it does is in reinforcing specific roles that are defined through the common language of a family and understood through this particular nomenclature. The conservative nature of tradition works as an effective rhetoric for governmental powers looking for established paths of subjugation to ensure its own continued legitimacy. In celebrating the familial nature of the festival, the argument can be made that this also functions to preserve the hierarchical relationship that the citizen shares with its government and the nature of those wielding power and those subjugated to it.

Cantwell, in describing the participants of the meeting preceding the Smithsonian festival, writes that what he sees is a "tiny cosmopolis of marginal people, society turned inside out, with the margins drawn to the center, like the swearing-in ceremonies of naturalized Americans" (1993:143). The notion of margins drawn to the center—an inversion of order—illustrates through another lens the complexity of the festival experience. Drawing upon Bakhtinian notions of the carnival spectacle, it becomes clear that the nature of the folk festival permits a duality of experience to exist in a mediated space: that of the "official" world and that of the individual lived life. In essence, two very real "realities" exist in a space designed to make this look "natural" and unproblematic. But what becomes clear as we seek to theorize the very nature of this space that is produced to appear natural, there exists an appeal to an aesthetic dictated by notions of nostalgia and authenticity, as well as clear dictates of "self" and "other" that

may ultimately function to reinforce rather than appropriate or subvert the dominant paradigms of official society. Bahktin argues in the introduction to his text that while the carnival of the Middle Ages provides a "second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance" (9), the official feasts soon appropriated the festival and its function now served to reinforce the dominant societal norms: "[official feasts] did not lead the people out of the existing world order and created no second life. On the contrary, they sanctioned the existing pattern of things and reinforced it…. The official feast looked back at the past and used the past to consecrate the present" (9). So while Bahktin writes of another time period, theoretically his notions of center and margins, self and other, reinforcement and subversiveness all provide a space from which a critique can emerge of the folk festival. For clearly, to understand the construction and mimesis of cultural structures of a festival, one must understand the nature of interaction involving audience, participant, and staff/administrator.

Bakhtin writes that, "As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal" (1965 (1984): 10). Don Handelman did an "anthropology of public events," studying the community festival in a number of different types of iterations: "events are important phenomena because they constitute dense concentrations of symbols and their associations that are of relevance to a particular people. It is in various public occasions that cultural codes—usually diffused, attenuated, and submerged in the mundane order of

things—lie closest to the behavioral surface" (Handelman 1990:9). In other words, the performance of culture creates an opportunity to reify and, perhaps, make more powerful the everyday.

While the emphasis on family seems to connote certain assumptions regarding the nature of the relationship the American public is supposed to have with national identity, the body politic is also being trained to recognize value in ways and places that may celebrate the distinctly pre-modern and that share a nostalgic concern for the authentic daily life. When reading the 1935 memoirs of John Powell, a composer-pianist who was an integral part of the White Top Folk Festival organized in the mid-1930's, his nostalgic language shines clear: "Every visitor becomes instantly part of all that goes on…. Thoughts fly back to Pioneer days, to sailing ships bearing immigrants from England to the New World…. Through the music…we are put into contact with our own lives in a mysterious and electrifying fashion…. There is a sense that we are a folk and that in that fact lies some of the secret of the Golden Age" (qtd. in Whisnant 1983:199). While this contrasts nicely with the Smithsonian's characterization of the Festival as "a national and international model of a research-based presentation of contemporary living cultural traditions" (Smithsonian 2004), clearly a sense of nostalgia is still embodied in its presentation of folklife. In fact, it may be in the desire of a homogenizing force that constructs a "national family" that nostalgia may most clearly be implicated. The question that needs to be considered as we note the working of nostalgia relative to re/presenting identity at the Festival is whether the festival participates in the hegemonic processes creating the uber-American who accepts her/his defined roles relative to the established hierarchy or alternately, in presenting the voices that disrupt and/or stand

outside of this Identity (with a capital "I"), does it work from the Left in presenting alternative identities that can provide empowerment for those who participate in the process?

I take the title of this chapter, "Acting Real," from Rena Fraden's *Imagining Medea*. Here Fraden explores the relationship between audience and performer, "real life" and "performed" life narratives, and "fact-making vs. fiction-making." In attempting to represent authentic lives to make important points, there was an awareness that the presentation needed to "discipline" their audience, and that "The eye of every beholder is not disciplined" (2001:118), which implicates the audience in reinforcing oppressive systems that organize the way reality is understood (constructed). The ironic juxtaposition of "acting" and "real" highlights for me the constructedness of our many realities—that much of our "reality" is in fact carefully presented to us through many different outlets: media, entertainment, museums (and other educational arenas), etc., but that there is also a clear compliance on the part of the audience[40]. In fact, while this chapter considers the ramifications of the festival experience, it seems the ethnomimesis

[40] It is interesting to consider this in light of the decisions made by the Los Angeles Festival of the Arts as described by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in her text *Destination Culture* (1998). The organizers of the festival acknowledged the lack of preparedness their audiences would bring to the festival to see ethnographic displays of dance and music, and rather than assume that "an expert" could help explicate the display, they instead wanted to leave the audience no opportunity to assume that they could understand meanings that were so culturally specific and defined. In fact, they made the argument that because the "signifiers float free" they were able to remove the elitism that comes from making experts through means not available to all communities (235). Instead, audiences were to experience the ethnographic display as avant-garde art that asks its audience to only respond to this art as something "different", "foreign", and ultimately, just as "art." Kirshenblatt-Gimblett worries that this effort at mitigating audience response is rather naïve, and that these "cultural quotations," in fact are still playing with the ethnographic: "Indeed, the ethnographic survived as the hidden term in the festival equation, where disavowal helped to create a lexical minefield. Having stripped the performances of ethnographic labels—it's all just art—the terminology dance began anew, only this time the preferred terms were 'tradition,' 'heritage,' and 'multicultural'" (1998:243). This acts as subterfuge and hides other agendas—agendas that imply that this public event has not truly moved very far from the older forms of representation, and in fact, may be even more racist and colonizing in its elaboration for the ways that it uses the narratives of Other relative to art.

of the festival is not confined to its own space. To understand re/presented culture as a form of imitative play is to understand that the same presentation of roles, assumptions, and available responses guides much of societal life. In the roles that are reinforced by the rhetorics accompanying the marketing of the festival, one can easily see that to "act real" is in fact a notion that applies to the roles that many cultural communities must assume to navigate societal expectations and the public and private spaces they call theirs. In a represented real (i.e., real^{2}), a deconstruction of belief regarding the real^{1} can occur, thereby allowing a space to discipline an audience as to the process of construction within the real^{1}. So while many folklorists may use the current well-meaning and socially aware theories when constructing the Smithsonian festival, the re/presentation becomes lost in a tangled web of discourses produced by location, time, and society's need for defined relationships.

For the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, understood as the "national" folklife festival held on the national mall, questions of nationalism and self-identification abound. Billed as a the largest "cultural event," the website also makes clear its intention as a tourist destination, writing: "As the largest annual cultural event in the U.S. capital, the Festival receives considerable publicity, typically reaching 40 million readers and viewers through print and electronic media. In the past, the Festival was named the Top Event in the U.S. by the American Bus Association as a result of a survey of regional tourist bureaus—thus joining previous winners that include the Olympics and the World Expo" (Smithsonian 2004). The intersection of tourism with culture and heritage produces a complex layering of agendas, discourses, and power systems.

Berlant identified the production of "honorary icons" as a societal way of noting marginalized groups and cultures (and therefore appearing to grant them a place of importance in the larger societal hierarchy) without having to specifically delegate any specific empowerment to them within this same hierarchy. To grant marginalized groups a place on the national mall to become a major tourist attraction is to enact a commodification of difference, thereby neutralizing their agency in enacting a national, public self that is viable (at least for the duration of the festival). Berlant explains,

> As *iconic* minority subjects, these luminaries allow the hegemonic consuming public to feel that it has already achieved intimacy and equality with the marginal mass population; as minority exceptions, they represent heroic autonomy from their very "people"; as 'impersonations" of minority identity, they embody the very ordinary conditions of subjective distortion that characterize stereotypic marginality. (1997:104)

Festival makes minorities consumable, creates impersonations that can be commodified, and identifies safer entities that are now "understood" and contained. As Robert Rydell asserts about the nature of presenting Africans on stage in early world expositions: "If 'savage' Africans existed only to amuse or instruct, there was no need for Americans to consider the fullness of their humanity or the complexity of their cultures, and there certainly was no need to accord Africans control over their destiny, much less over their natural and cultural resources" (1999: 150). Echoing Susan Stewarts's concern above with nostalgic displacements of history and context, bell hooks also notes that "Currently, the commodification of difference promotes paradigms of consumption wherein whatever difference the Other inhabits is eradicated, *via* exchange, by a consumer cannibalism that not only displaces the Other but denies the significance of that Other's story through a process of decontextualization" (1992:31). All of these concerns point to the problematic

nature of using the language and tools of economic difference, not to mention funding from not uninterested parties, to present and represent difference on stage at the festival.

It is clear that many feel that the festival experience could be a very positive and motivating experience, opening the doors to better cultural communications. Andrea Graham argues that: "Artists and communities have used the space and time of festivals to shape their own creative expression in order to present what makes them unique and human. They make the event their own" (72). She also argues that festivals are as much for the artist as the audience. Bendix and Welz find that in many situations of cultural brokerage, a folklorist would "ideally not mollify or harmonize conflict, but rather empower individuals and groups to test new and emancipatory possibilities for constructing identities" (1999: 125). But there exist two trajectories that I believe are equally problematic when putting this theory to practice, especially when the event that is being "brokered" is a festival. First, I am concerned about what would constitute constructive and empowering ways to deal with conflict, especially when considering many cultures' "dangerous folklore"—particularly the racist, sexist, politically zealous (and also rebellious/defiant), nationalistically motivated, etc. folklore. As Joan Radner's preface to *Feminist Messages* warns, folklorists, in focusing upon small groups and cultures, can too easily ignore the need to also stand outside of the situation and offer a critique. In looking to celebrate the cultures of feature groups being presented and represented, too often other, more undesirable, components of a culture may be allowed to operate and even be promoted or given greater legitimacy under the rubric of multicultural pluralism and authenticity. Looking to other feminist theorists, Radner argues that folklorists need to understand how these theories from a multitude of

disciplines may offer "models of understanding social relations as (gendered) relationships of power, constructed both within the folk group and also—crucially—in the larger surrounding culture" (1993:ix).

For example, the Smithsonian festival presented three sections on the music of the Latino culture over the course of three years. The culture of *machismo*, however, is very real in many of these Hispanic oral traditions, and many of the sentiments found in *corridos* or *las canciones rancheras* are very degrading toward women and credit women with little agency or ability to empower themselves. Within the context of the festival environment, how can these very "authentic" and "traditional" songs (therefore very appropriate items for presentation at a folk festival) be presented in a way that avoids not only reproducing the problematic representations of female identity, but sanctify and codify social misogyny in their very presence on the stage at the national mall.[41] What should be done if the identity constructed (one that may even present some notion of empowerment for certain members of their culture) is a sexist one (as many cultures are)?

The second issue directly speaks to the actual presentation itself and the role women play in this presentation. I volunteered for many years at the Big Muddy Folk Festival, held annually in Boonville, Missouri. One year as I was working on this research, I noticed something interesting. The first part of the program was the presentation of the material folk art of two Master/Apprentice teams who received funding during that fiscal year in Missouri. Both teams that year happened to feature

[41] A tangential issue that this raises has to do with audience. While doing fieldwork recently in Kansas City, I interviewed a Mexican immigrant Jaime, (61), collecting songs, corridos, proverbs, sayings, etc. along with another woman and man. I noticed in the course of the interview, that while singing the corridos (which are usually historical and/or political) he would sing them to the male in our group, but while singing los canciones del amor, he would self-select (seemingly unconsciously) a female audience. Theorizing the implications of this audience selection to a larger setting, I am curious about the nature of the presentation and how the changing, diverse audience would affect the performance of the songs.

husband and wife teams, and in one case the woman was with her husband who was on the grant as the "Master" artist, but who (it became clear) also was a master in her own right, and in the other she was an "Apprentice." In each case, only the male did the talking, while the women either modeled the artifact (a ceremonial Native American breastplate) or demonstrated the art (caning chairs). Interestingly, both men presented themselves very humbly ("Well, I don't have much experience talking to an audience like this…"), yet held the microphone and did not offer it to their wives, who both, in fact, mimed a great discomfort with the idea of holding the microphone when Debbie Bailey, the folk arts coordinator and presenter, attempted to hand one to them. As the presentation went on, it was also very interesting to note that especially in the case of the chair caners (where the woman was the "master"), the female "master" would continually interrupt her husband as he spoke to correct him and to elaborate on the presentation that he made. When he did ask her (framed as a joke, albeit) if she wanted the microphone, however, she was immediately demure and made a comment to the effect that she didn't know what to do with that thing and that people could hear her "just fine" without it. This exchange reinforces my concerns that even if some people of a cultural group feel like their voices are being heard in meaningful ways while participating in a festival, I am not sure how *all* the specific participants of a culture will find empowerment through the festival paradigm, especially because so many cultures in their own traditions and sex/gender systems reinforce roles that are often only empowering for one half of the population. I see this ultimately continuing to reinforce sexist roles.

In an interview that folklorist Gregory Hansen conducted with folklorist Richard Bauman, Hansen asks Bauman whether or not he felt it was possible to do applied work

(specifically activist and social work) within the structural paradigms currently informing folklorists' work. Bauman replies, "I'm doubtful…. I think this folk festival model has had such a dominant influences on so-called public sector stuff… partly because that's where the money and the jobs and the action and the funds to do talent-scouting come from. Those things had a long reach. It has set up a frame of reference that I think is politically problematic and functionally dubious—what Nick Spitzer characterized as 'Have a Nice Day' folklife—a mush liberal pluralism" (Hansen 2000b:78). This disparage of the festival format is also seen in Hansen's interview with folklorist Henry Glassie who comments that "Whatever regime is in power is being reinforced by the existence of the Folklife Festival on the Mall. That's the truth of it" (Hansen 2000a:94). Moreover, Glassie also notes that with festivals and museum exhibits, a celebratory position must often be taken, but "if our goal is pure celebration, in fact, we become complicit in the consolidation of a certain political power" (94). This poses the question of how the staging of culture can illuminate the "real" staging of culture that happens off of the festival grounds. In other words, to avoid being "complicit in the consolidation of certain political power," it seems as if a conscious effort must be made to expose this very ethnomimesis that guides the replication of culture and power in society. Perhaps in unmasking the cult of authenticity, a festival can actually illuminate the power of those often on the margins of dominant systems to use their folk traditions in empowering ways, such as the ways in which Skillman argued that the watermen were empowered through their participation in the folklife festival.

I worked as a presenter in the 2006 Smithsonian Folklife Festival in the Nuestra Musica: Latino Chicago section. I had participated as a fieldworker in Chicago—

especially in the predominately Mexican neighborhood of Pilsen. My role throughout was different from any of the other staffers—almost all of the other fieldworkers in the project were from Chicago and/or were Latino. I came to the project with the tools of a fieldworker, but not the expertise of a local. Juan Dies, formerly of the Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago, was the lead local curator. There were numerous challenges throughout the process of fieldwork, curation, design, development, and ultimately presentation. I will only focus on one aspect here, what happened after the presentation, to highlight the ways in which some of my themes throughout this chapter resonated during the Latino Chicago program.

The participants in the Latino Chicago program were largely very excited about the opportunity to be a part of the festival participation. In numerous conversations, muralists, musicians, and dancers told me that they saw this as an amazing opportunity to teach more people about their culture and a great way to bring honor to their communities. The artists and art forms identified through fieldwork gave a rich and deep pool of traditional arts appropriate for the Smithsonian—artists and artforms that celebrate in a loud and vibrant way a slice of "authentic" Latino Chicago. As presenters, there were three main questions that we were supposed to use as guides to our conversations on the stage: 1) How does the art form practiced by the artists help to build community? 2) How does the art form relate to the immigrant and/or minority experience in this country? How do arts shape, and are they shaped by, community and identity? And, 3) what characterizes Chicago's Latino community as unique and distinct from other Latino communities elsewhere? Is there a Chicago Style? The participants were excited to talk about these qualities—they knew that there was a wealth of artistry

that defined not only their communities, but their cultural and personal identities. Similarly, they knew that many people did not have a picture of Chicago when they imagined Latinos in the United States—thinking more often of places in New York, California, or Texas instead. This enthusiasm was slightly tempered by the knowledge of how little they could actually show and how sparse their area would be compared to the other sections of the festival that had much deeper pockets due to better financial sponsorship: Alberta and Basketry of the Native Americans.[42] In many ways, though, being the underdogs appealed to the group who vowed to be so loud, fun, and passionate that festival-goers and other participants would not overlook them (much to the chagrin of some of the more quiet members of other groups). At the same time, some expressed more quietly that this, in fact, best reflected their cultural reality. They were always the underdog and were always forced to find ways to do more with less. That their section would not be as big, or have as many decorations, or as many participants who could be paid in comparison with those from Alberta being financed with oil money was not a shock. In Latino Chicago, there was not enough funding for artists to stay the full two weeks, so the artists were divided into two groups, one half came the first week and the remainder came the second week.

As the two weeks of presentations went on, the participants had a number of rewarding and amazing encounters with the public. The Aragón Ballroom was often

[42] Nuestra Musica was supported by the Smithsonian Latino Initiatives Fund and the Music Performance Fund. Some artists were specifically supported by the Illinois Arts Council. This contrasts with the sponsors list of the Basketry section which included the National Museum of the American Indian, the W.LK. Kellogg Foundation, the Institute for Museum and Library Services, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Smithsonian Women's Committee on the occasion of its 40th anniversary. Alberta has an even longer list of sponsors that I won't list here, but includes the Government of Alberta, the City of Calgary, and the City of Edmonton. 10 other corporate sponsors were listed as providing major support, and 7 others listed as providing in-kind or collaborative support—many of these 17 included energy and oil companies who benefit from the rich tar fields of Alberta (Smithsonian 2006: 100-103).

packed with people listening, dancing, and enjoying the different groups on stage. And the other stages often had a small group of people who stayed to listen and enjoy the bi-lingual conversations. Hard questions came up about gentrification in their neighborhoods and the role that reggaetón has had in transforming traditional sounds and values in Latino culture. As these conversations started on the stage, they often continued off-stage in the participant areas of the festival and in the hotel later in the evening during the "socials" where festival participants from all the programs would interact. Some of the spirit of the socials later also informed the festival performances, as Mexican cajon and Puerto Rican congas joined the young hip-hop freestylers, or Mexican Sones brought in ceremonial flute and whistles of the Aztec. Participants' enthusiasm for collaboration continued to grow across the traditional boundaries—boundaries that a few wondered aloud if they were the very boundaries and social narratives that those in power manipulated to diffuse their power as a larger, unified, community—a community that cut across lines of Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Colombian. As the first week ended, participants were sad when they realized that they were going home. It had been a rewarding experience, many articulated, because they had been able to bring what they do to the mall and people enjoyed it, requested more of it, and had bought their CDs in the marketplace. As Paola Aleman wrote to the group:

> I personally feel very proud to have participated and such a wonderful festival. Everyone was united and working together to make this festival a success. I felt like "Celia Cruz or Gloria Estefan" as everyone made us feel important. The other thing I wanted to comment was regarding the "Socials", the unity we were able to accomplished between all the wonderful musicians was great. We were able to share our music and our stories and we became good friends. (Personal email correspondence, August 17, 2006)

Nelson Sosa, Paola's father, also commented: "After all these years I had to travel 900 miles to realize that all my sacrifices coming to and living in this country and my work as a musician had been worth it… This indeed has been one of the best experiences of my life" (qtd. in Carrerra 2006: 13). No one felt ready to go back home after just one week, and perhaps this truncated experience for the performers was a significant part of the energy and passion that they felt about their experience that led to the next phase. Namely, participants shared emails and contact information, vowing that they would stage a reunion in Chicago with the same performers.[43]

This follow-though is significant for many reasons. First and foremost is that the participants felt like being a community at the festival was important enough that they wanted to find a way to foster this spirit back in Chicago, a city known (perhaps infamously) for its very well-defined and segregated neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are important in terms of many ethnic groups maintaining cultural traditions and reinforcing identity, yet they can also foster isolationism and distrust about neighboring groups they do not have to interact with on a more frequent basis. As Juan Dies notes:

> [In Chicago] Latino neighborhoods continue to be ports of entry where many new arrivals can feel right at home…. Because there is such a strong neighborhood identity and presence, it is possible for individuals to remain close to their traditions, food music, language, religion, and other practices for their whole lives. However, those who leave the relative familiarity of the neighborhood and interact with people from other

[43] A reunion was staged in October 2006. Many of the performers returned and the evening was one of reconnecting, remember, and looking ahead to the difficult work of maintaining a sense of community now that they were back in Chicago. The listserve has been an important part of this, and as of August 2008, I still receive emails on it almost monthly. Sometimes it is just an update, but other times it is participants of the festival inviting others to come to their neighborhood for an art event, or a posting of a relevant news item or political issue that they wanted the group to know about or offer advice relative to the issue.

> cultures can also explore multiple identities and add to the diversity of the community. (Smithsonian 2006: 72-73)

As I noted above, at the 2006 festival, Nuestra Musica brought together a full diversity of Latinos from many different neighborhoods of the city. In particular, Pilsen, Little Village, and Humboldt Park were represented—the first two being primarily Mexican and the later largely Puerto Rican. As participants talked to visitors about issues in their communities, they realized a commonality of experience and learned of resources that they had never considered.

Radio Arte, WRTE 90.5, is the youth-operated radio station that operated under the fiscal management of the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum—the largest Latino cultural institution in the country (Smithsonian 2006: 72). It is an important media outlet for community-based programming, as past station manager Jorge Valdivia noted in an interview, "the station went from playing "cool rock *en espanol*" to a "program that trains youth to become communicators, to mobilize and talk about issues" (qtd in Smithsonian 2006: 72). Silvia Rivera, the new general manager of WRTE who joined us on the Mall saw the potential for community building based upon what was happening at the festival. In the months following, Rivera began broadcasting the interviews taped live on the festival mall for Chicago audiences. Puerto Ricans, Peruvians, and others became new voices heard on the Mexican radio station broadcast in the Mexican neighborhood. The philosophy and mission of the radio was being met in new ways due to the alliances forged at the festival in Washington D.C.—a neutral ground that allowed for conversations and friendships that were unlikely to have begun on home turf in Chicago. Rivera also noted in an email to the group on the Latino Chicago listserve (that began in

response to participants need to continue the feeling of community they shared at the festival) that she had some good news to share. WRTE would be starting a new programming block focusing on local Chicago music, and that they were inviting musicians from across the city to submit material in all genres for inclusion in the bilingual show (personal email correspondence, August 24, 2006).

Mary Hufford's provocative article "Working in the Cracks: Public Space, Ecological Crisis, and the Folklorist," challenges folklorists working in the public sector to consider how their efforts can work to patently disrupt the hegemonic master narrative national rhetoric often promotes. Throughout the article, she builds upon a metaphor derived from Michel de Certeau of: "poaching in the cracks of the planned world as a paramount modern practice" (1999:158). In examining the work of folklorists and the field of folkloristics, she recognizes that often professionals looking at the "space on the side of the road"[44] can discern "cracks" where alternative worlds form outside the "grid of official institutions" and the official narrative of progress (159). In so doing, folklorists are able to illuminate the very nature of the official narrative, which is too often simply assumed as transparent and therefore deemed "natural," unchallengeable, and the default.

She writes: "Folklore doesn't fit on the grid because it is not about the *building* of knowledge, but about illuminating what Foucault terms the 'insurrection of subjugated knowledges.'" She continues with the warning, "This insurrection is always at risk of being constrained, miniaturized, domesticated, and marginalized by a status as folklore,

[44] This emerges from Kathleen Stewart's important text, *A Space on the Side of the Road* (1996), which considers the lives and voices excluded from mainstream discourse and theorizes the disruption in the "American Way" that purports to be more seamless than it perhaps is.

particularly where folklore is allowed to become the province of a narrowly defined and defended profession" (1999:158). An interesting and complex understanding of the role of folklore begins to emerge here. Clearly, Hufford is attmpting to retrofit the tension between the popular understandings of folklore as nostalgic and contained with attention to the subject of folklore and the actual dynamic function it can have within society.[45] I am reminded here of Susan Stewart writing on the miniature in *On Longing*:

> The amusement park and the historical reconstruction often promise to bring history to life, and it is here that we must pay particular attention once more to the relation between miniature and narrative. For the function of the miniature here is to bring historical events 'to life,' to immediacy, and thereby to erase their history, to lose us within their presentness. The transcendence presented by the miniature is a spatial transcendence, a transcendence which erases the productive possibilities of understanding through time. Its locus is thereby the nostalgic. The miniature here erases not only labor but causality and effect. Understanding is sacrificed to being in context. (1993:60)

While I have quoted at length above, I think that to bring in the notion of both the touristic and the nostalgic in relation to the subject of the festival nicely problematizes what Hufford argues. Hufford finds that folklorists doing public sector work such as producing a festival can see their role as activists: "Ultimately the subjugation of knowledge and skills that sustain the commons amounts to the suppression of alternative ideas in what is supposed to be a free market system. Folklorists and other culture workers in some instances have brokered such knowledge back into the marketplace of cultural ideas" (1999:166); whereas, by introducing the notion that to broker culture may

[45] This speaks to the "paradox" of folklore noted in an early article by William Bascom. Namely, that "while [folklore] plays a vital role in transmitting and maintaining the institutions of a culture and in forcing the individual to conform to them, at the same time it provides socially approved outlets for the repressions which these same institutions impose upon them" (1954:349).

also participate in processes that are distinctly nostalgic and therefore ultimately conservative in their agenda is to reconsider how these processes interact in real practice.

Gisela Welz responds to Hufford's paper in the special issue on Cultural Brokerage of the *Journal of Folklore Research*, and I found that her point is especially relevant for our question; namely, she asserts that the folklorist can be characterized as having a dual identity—that there is a gap between what folklorists understand they do in theory and in practice, and what the public thinks folklorists do. Welz makes the very interesting observation that "Public sector folklore tactically profits from an image of affirming the ideology of the nation-state, and by extension, of the market economy. It is under the cover of that image that folklorists gain admission to public sector work, then stealthily pursue other goals in the state's time and money, namely, to assist 'subaltern publics' and to 'recast "tradition"' as the stuff of which alternative modernities could be made" (1999:167-8). This mis-casting, she argues, allows a space for the public folklorist to work in a way that straddles both the institutional world and the world that is created in the spaces, the cracks, of that official world. However, further complicating the issue is how the intersection of tourism with culture and heritage produces a complex layering of agendas, discourses, and power systems. The relationship of the folklorist to that of culture broker must be considered next to the question that asks if the festival site as a marketplace can, in fact, function as a site of resistance or a site of complicity.

Regina Bendix and Gisela Welz write in their introduction to a special issue of *Journal of Folklore Research* dedicated to issues of cultural brokerage: "The concept of cultural brokerage prompts reflection of the extent to which such terminological usage is simply an analogy to marketplace language and to what extent it is evidence of the

market's influence in structuring inquiry and public service" (1999:112). When considering how the festival is marketed, our gaze necessarily turns to how the participants (who represent the commodity) are presented and packaged for the eager tourist. As Bendix and Welz find, "Folklorists never merely present, but also invent culture, and their function is productive and not merely reproductive" (120). While this observation is nothing new in folklore studies, to frame this issue not only in terms of authenticity and identity politics, but also in the issues of economics, globalization/glocalization, and the identity of the *folklorist* who must straddle the worlds of administration and government that funds her and the groups for whom she feels herself a sort of advocate begs the question: To what extent can the advocate truly affect change, and through what insight can the advocate assume to have the "answers?" When the idea that folklorists are bound up in "brokering" "knowledge production" the economic ramifications and the politically situated ramifications cannot be ignored.

In the end, it has become clear that this is research project is about more than the acts of representation in a festival or exhibition, but it has also become a social analysis of the ways in which discourse participates in sexism and racism to contain (and maintain) the hierarchical nature of society (which does want to appear to be "natural" at any cost). To use culture as an item of exchange and commodity on the marketplace and to indulge in nostalgia, which appropriates the traditional language of the "natural" social structures, indicates that not only are master narratives being reinforced and replicated on the stage proper in the name of education and authenticity, but that these same systems are sustaining the notions constructing the festival experience itself and are being used in the marketing and maintenance of these public events. Too often, it appears, the festival

exploits the functions of social structures and systems to re-create a social space that acts real, thereby constructing a new sense of "real" outside of the festival gates.

Rather than end this section on a cynical note, however, I would argue that ultimately this is pointing to the future for the production of public events that are ethnographic. Rena Fraden writes about Rhodessa Jones' Medea Project in her text *Imaging Medea*. In her project, incarcerated women tell their stories using theatrical conventions as one way to begin to identify and understand the narratives that have been informing their lives and decisions. Fraden writes:

> The pedagogical process is centered around conversation and critical thinking, the sharing of information, of what is real, what seems real, and what are the myths we live by…. The public productions are really only a rehearsal, a practice, opportunities to play around with rigid and oppressive notions of reality. The trajectory of this project refuses any of us a passing grade. Our education should just be beginning. If the project is successful, we leave the public performance needing to know more about the particular people and about the kinds of institutions and institutionalization that construct our reality. (2001:119)

This kind of a representational project will be discussed further in the following chapter, but it is significant here because it is empowering women, many who have expressed helplessness in creating a different story for their lives, to become actors—persons with agency—in their own stories. In creating their story for an audience that is not from their community, the women can both imagine roles for themselves that are different, as well as explore the stories that shaped their perspectives thus far in life. Folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett wrote about the Los Angeles Festival, a public event where audiences were invited to freely construct meaning to their experience of the event. Festival planners wished to avoid the colonizing impulse found in many interpretative

programs. However, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett found that in giving audience reception a wholly constitutive role that "there are unexplored asymmetries here between performances that are coherent in [the cultural artists'] home contexts and the planned anarchy of their reception by Los Angeles audiences" (1998: 248). She argued convincingly that this lead to audiences appropriating the performance, making it more like theatrical entertainment than a thoughtful re/presentation of tradition and culture. Following her submission of her critique to festival curators, changes were made to its format in the following year. Also, arguably, exhibitions like *African Voices* are bringing new viewpoints from margin to center in the heart of a museum holding problematic premises. Likewise, festival participants such as the Omani woman in the incense tent and the watermen of the Mid-Atlantic maritime exhibition are finding ways of empowerment and meaning through the public-ness of the event. All of this suggests that there is not only room for folklorists in working with public programming of many types, but that there is a need for folklorists who can thoughtfully navigate the politics of power and identity found in these same events.

Chapter three

"…back when lunch was lunch and not so complicated": (Re)Presenting school culture through an alternative tale[46]

Hollywood and Urban Schools: Considering the "Master Narrative"

The scene opens with the light music of *I've Got Rhythm*, and we see a White, well-heeled man adjusting his tux in his nicely-appointed apartment. We see next a White girl, dressed in the elegance of a ballroom gown with her hair up, putting on her sparkling bracelet. The eye of the camera moves in and out, setting scene and context with outside shots of the condo buildings, the New York taxi cabs, and more indoor shots of the variety of (White) people preparing for an evening out. However, a few shots come into the mix that don't seem to fit: a stark white stand-alone industrial bathroom sink with a red shirt on it, a Black girl holding a baby, a Latina teen in her bedroom, and so on. The camera does not linger on these oddly juxtaposed shots as it does in the world that sets a context of more affluence. As we see the man of the first scene checking his appearance in the mirror, the eye of the camera then moves through the wall suggesting that the audience is now breaking into the parallel universe whose undercurrent bubbled through into some of the short shots of the opening scene. An *I've Got Rhythm* remix begins as we see a Latina teenager putting on big gold earrings with her name spelled in script, and we watch a Black teen trying to get dressed for a night out sharing a bathroom

[46] Some ideas and research reported here were developed with support from the Institute for Cultural Partnerships and the Harrisburg Institute of Messiah College. The positions taken here are of course not necessarily those of the organizations.

with his dad who is vomiting into the toilet. This remix of *I've Got Rhythm* favors bass, and the rhythm gains more intensity than the usual light and pop-y popular version. The opening montage continues to alternately follow these two worlds as the characters move from private to public spaces, as the audience realizes that the characters of both "worlds" are going to their own dance competitions and social events for the evening. The audience also intuits that, although parallel and in the same city, these two worlds are separate and alien to each other.

This opening sequence sets the stage for the story of *Take the Lead*, a 2006 film inspired by "Dancing Classrooms," a public school program created by Pierre Dulaine in New York City. The montage provides one entrée into the themes and a glimpse at some of the master narratives that exist of inner-city youth and the contemporary classroom. There exists a whole genre of "teacher/student" films with stories of teachers and their students "based upon" or "inspired by" "true events," and many have predictable scripts. As a subset of popular culture, these films perpetuate images that subsequently can be understood as signifiers of urban youth and their relationship to teachers. My concerns as a folklorist working in an educational setting about the implications of these images are vast—especially the implied role of the urban teacher as a missionary rescuer of children from themselves. Many start as this chapter began, with the "portrait" of the embattled, harsh living environment where many youth in urban areas of the United States of America grow up. The story line of many of these films follows an expected trajectory:

1. New teacher is idealistic about what changes they can make in the lives of "these kids";

2. Fight or major disruption occurs on first day of school, and another teacher/administrator witnesses the teacher's defeat in classroom;
3. Teacher begins to question his/her decision to try to teach "these kids;"
4. Teacher finds "hook," usually by inviting the students to bring something from their world into the teacher's world/classroom;
5. Teacher appears to have "gone native;"
6. Final test that proves teacher's ability and success, making the teacher a hero and allowing the teacher credibility back into "their world" (i.e. they revoke their "native" status);
7. Conclusion of the film story, which often includes text relating where the "real" students and teacher ended up following the timeframe of the film.

I will refer back to these seven elements as I consider the roles of representation and today's urban public schools throughout this next chapter.

These films are often very formulaic, and therefore provide interesting insight into what narratives exist in popular culture about school and students in urban areas. Looking at how teacher/student films were "named" by those who posted the Internet Movie Database message boards provides one quick measure of how to characterize these narratives: "'teacher turns rotten kids into good kids' genre" (bluecat60, posted January 15, 2008), "movies about kids in highschool (sic) getting along despite their race under the guidance of an amazing teacher" (patty-sparrow, posted January 14, 2008), "'really bad students become angels because of one caring teacher' theme" (bluecat60[47], posted January 15, 2006), "'teacher comes in and changes everything' type of movies"

[47] Second comment from bluecat60, but added to different message board thread.

(Kato_Collins, posted October 20, 2007), "the 'Intelligent white teacher goes to a school with Black people and Hispanics who listen to hip hop and are involved in crime and eventually manages to educate them even though they diss him at first' genre" (tFighterPilot, posted December 30, 2007), "'stranger-comes-in-to-lives-of-troubled-inner-city-youths-and changes-them-for-the-better' variety" (kath_leener, posted September 3, 2006), and so on.[48] Paul Farber and Gunilla Holm analyzed this genre of film and specifically the role of the "educator-hero" in sixty-eight films from the 1980's, and found that "In virtually every case… we see a man, some sort of renegade or outsider, enter hostile territory, find a way to earn the trust and respect of students, and build bonds with them which make some tangible victory possible" (qtd. in Bauer 1998: 303). I should note that many posts to the message boards also simply allude to this "genre" or this "cliché" type of movie, and did not go into the detail that those copied above did because there was an assumption that most readers would immediately recognize and understand what they meant by "*this* genre" of movie. In other words, there are enough references to these themes in popular culture and media that it does not take a lot of prompting for someone to immediately grasp what the characters are usually like, as well as the type of school, the expected plot development, etc.

As I read these descriptions made specifically in reference to *Take the Lead* (2006) and another recent film *Freedom Writers* (2007), interesting assumptions emerge and provide my first points for discussion about the role of representation relative to urban education systems today and public perception. The first point is obvious, but has

[48] All of the following comments were accessed January 19, 2008 from the Internet Movie Database Message Board for *Take the Lead,* (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0463998/board/threads/) and *Freedom Writers* (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0446046/board/threads/).

interesting implications when closely examined: Every popular description of this type of movie presents it as having two distinct characters or roles—a teacher and the students. I would argue that all other characters (almost always also formulaic) that occur in this type of movie support the development of the two central figures of teacher and student.[49] The teacher and student descriptions are also noteworthy for the adjectives ascribed to them. The teacher as stranger (outsider) also means that the teacher is usually White, and always intelligent, caring, amazing, and visionary (can affect change/transformation). The teacher is seen as having agency, and as also being above or outside of prevailing systems (and therefore sometimes also characterized as a "renegade" or "maverick"). The student, on the other hand is characterized as local, and also as usually being "rotten" or "bad", ethnicity other than White (Black, Hispanic), criminal, troubled, and unable to positively affect their own futures.

Defining "Ethnographic" as a film "category which describes relations between a spectator posited as Western, White, and urbanized, and a subject people portrayed as being somewhere nearer to the beginning on the spectrum of human evolution" (1996: 8), post-colonial film critic Fatimah Tobing Rony notes that "the episteme of the Ethnographic is still alive and well, especially in popular media" (197). She notes that the legacy of ethnographic films in Hollywood representation can be critiqued in films such as *Dances with Wolves* (1990), *Congo* (1995), or science fiction representations such as the Ewoks in *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (1983) (1996: 197). I would add to

[49] For example, there is the administrative person who is skeptical that "these kids" can learn, or that this type of program is appropriate for "their kids." Examples include the head of the English department in *Freedom Writers* who tells teacher Erin Gruwell "Don't give them homework" and "They can't read this" (2007). There is also the "Other Teachers," who are upset with the maverick teacher's pedagogy. For example, there is the math teacher in *Taking the Lead* who comments "This [ballroom dancing] is about wasting time with something totally impractical" (2006). Both of these roles usually reinforce and support the characteristics of the two main roles of the film, that of the teacher and the student.

the argument that the teacher/student films also reproduce representations of the Ethnographic. Looking specifically at *Take the Lead* (2006) and *Freedom Writers* (2007), and generally many other movies including *Dangerous Minds* (1995) and *Stand and Deliver* (1988), my own survey of this film genre supports the theory that there is a prevalence of narratives that adhere to the storyline above, and that these narratives engage with representations that could be characterized as Ethnographic.

The implications of these films playing with both the "Ethnographic", (as used by Tobing Rony), as well as the conventionally defined "ethnographic," literally meaning the study of a people or culture, include creating precarious notions of "truth" and "realism" through the films' stories. Adding to the problematic realism of the films is the fact that most teacher/student films are based upon or inspired by "true" stories (element seven above). Although it is Hollywood derived, the audience is asked to engage with the characters and story of the film as representations of a reality. The usual tensions between fiction and reality are suspended, and the audience is led to comfortably assume that their screened experience is not only more real, but that their ideas about what "these schools," "these neighborhoods," and "these youth" must be like are validated. I use the term "validated" deliberately, for this insistence on the part of the cinematic text of "truth" reinforces the "truth" of master narratives, or dominant cultural texts that exist about urban youth[50] (Bauer 1998, Bettis 1996, Britzman 1992, Cook-Sather 2006, Robertson 1997, Trier 2001, Weis and Fine 2000). Relying on arguments by Cameron McCarthy, James Trier notes that "television and popular film fulfill 'a certain bardic

[50] Of course the terminology "urban youth" has itself become a loaded term that means beyond its dictionary definition. It has come to signify minority and poor youth, as well as youth who are largely disaffected from dominant social systems, including especially the educational system.

function' in society, singing back to white America lullabies that maintain the suburban myth of security and economic plenitude, while simultaneously creating 'the most poignantly sordid fantasies of inner-city degeneracy and moral decrepitude'" (2001: np). As legitimization strategies for the preservation of the status quo with regard to power relations and difference in general (whether racial, economic, etc.), master narratives have been made more visible (and by extension weakened) by postmodern and feminist thought; yet, as sociocultural forms of interpretation, they continue to invisibly (or sometimes more overtly) inform much of the public's perceptions of people and places (Bhabba 1989 [2001]; Butler 1990; hooks 1990 [2001]; Lanser 1993; Lawless 2001; Lorde 1981; Mascia-Lees, et al 1989; Trinh T. Minh-ha 1989). Going back to our list of adjectives ascribed the two character types of teacher and student in these films, it becomes clear what are some of the master narratives that surround the profession of teaching (especially in urban or "alternative" schools), as well as how the narratives construct student identities who come from urban areas or are in "alternative" education environments. Looking at both the representations of student and teacher, this chapter probes the "ethnographic" nature of the teacher/student film to extrapolate ways in which representation interfaces with pedagogy and educational programming. In other words, by noting the master narratives writ large through cine-texts, theoretical and practical concerns can be brought to bear upon to a folklife in education program that will inform the latter part of this chapter.

The teacher-hero and the exception/al student: Representing roles and identity

Similar to *Take the Lead*, *Freedom Writers* opens with a montage. In this case, the montage uses actual film footage shot during the Los Angeles race riots and voiceovers of police reports. Juxtaposed with these images of violence is a home scene depicting a White, middle-class couple making dinner. Notably, the use of footage taken from actual news stories further connotes the "authenticity" of the cine-text. The parallel worlds established so clearly in *Take the Lead* are not exactly replicated—the audience is not asked to compare the *difference* between ostensibly the same routine acts of preparing for a night out of dancing—but instead, two very different sets of social spaces are screened, with the only implied relationship being geographic. In fact, because of the absence of easy parallelism, the film establishes a greater distance between the two worlds as if noting that there are few things that they would share in common. There is the world on the streets characterized as violent, controlled by "natural" forces, and not White; while the domestic world is White, comfortable (affluent), and civilized. The master narratives being enacted, reinforced, and retold through the both films are narratives that have a clear directional bias of power hierarchies, and are based not only upon race and economic status, but also age, geographic location, and cultural knowledges. In relation to these dichotomies, educator Sol Cohen notes that:

> Films can potentially carry ideas and information with more power...and more effectively than the written word. Thus, some school films capture the daily life, the personal relationships, the lived encounters of classrooms, in ways our written histories do not. They reveal things that we...cannot see (or choose not to see) or cannot see well, or see but not tell as well. [School films] provide encounters with teachers, parents, and adolescents and a thick description of ..schools that histories of education cannot even approximate. We have not begun to exploit the possibilities of film. There is a rich archive waiting for historians of education to explore in film. (qtd in Trier 2001: np)

While there are some significant problematic aspects to finding historical records of today's schools in what Cohen calls "school films," (a broader category than teacher/student films), it does point to the ways in which these films' narratives or "thick descriptions" of school environments and their larger socio- and geographical contexts correlate in significant ways with reality. To be clear, this should not be confused with acquiescence on my part that these films "truthfully" tell a specific story, but rather that these films tell us something about the social constructs of the times.

Working with theories generated from Foucault and Durkheim, educational sociologists Cameron McCarthy and Greg Dimitriadis argue that "modern power struggles are also to be located in the deeply contested arena of the popular, the domain of struggles over social conduct, popular commitments, anxieties and desires, and ultimately, the disciplining of populations" (2000:171). They question the work of education research that only looks at popular culture as an "autonomous set of affectively-invested texts that exert repressive power on young people" (171), noting that missing from this research "is a sense of how different sites—for example, popular culture, educational policy, classroom practices—mutually inform each other in ways that help reproduce contingent state imperatives" (172). Bringing the theoretical constructs of the "nation state" to bear on the local heterogeneity of the everyday found in popular culture and public education opens a space to craft an argument relative to representational practices vis-à-vis educational systems. Namely, this suggests the question: To what extent do the narratives found in the teacher/student films not only reinforce power structures, but reproduce them due to the representations screened through this medium? Similarly, how do folklore in education and arts in education

programs with their classroom policy and practice interface with these power structures and the roles represented?

Some inferences, given the popularity of the teacher/student movie, may be made regarding the implications of the roles represented through this media. Using the critical tools of literature and folklore studies noted in the first chapter, I would argue that my decision to begin with the teacher/student film to explore the dominant representations of urban youth and their schools provides unique insights into how representation can become a process of subjugation or empowerment. In my research, I was not surprised to read the analysis by McCarthy and Dimitriadis who note that:

> Television, film, radio and the internet are now the most powerful sites for educating about difference and the production of resentment[[51]]. We live in a time when 'psuedo-events' fomented in media-driven representations have usurped any relic of reality beyond that which is staged or performed, drivng, it is crucial to note, incredibly deep, and perhaps permanent, wedges of difference between the world of the suburban dweller and his/her inner-city counterpart. (2000: 173)

These "wedges of difference" inform narratives that construct cultural identities and that affect student's self-perception of their own communities, and accordingly, their ability to affect change or assert agency relative to their socio-geo-political "reality." Interestingly, it is a conflict defined by *representation* that McCarthy and Dimitriadis illuminate, raising questions regarding the roles of curriculum in the urban school that engage with representational practices. To meaningfully impact student learning, to help facilitate opportunities for that student to understand themselves, and to address the growing perceptions of "difference", folklore in education curriculum must be thoughtful and deliberate about its relation to other socio-cultural processes informing the

[51] They define resentment as used by Nietzsche: "a technology of truth that is generated within the reciprocal relationship between the state the body politic" (qtd in McCarthy and Dimitriadis 2000:172).

environment of the student both in and out of the classroom setting. An awareness of current research, school education trends, and popular culture messages all must inform and help determine the design and implementation of the programming.

At the core of an effective folklore in education program are the students and an understanding of how they need to be active participants in bringing information to bear on their own educational experience. Bruce L. Wilson and H. Dickson Corbett are independent educational researchers who conducted extensive research in the Philadelphia Public Schools, assessing its "Children Achieving" program targeting inner-city schools and their students. Their conclusion simply states that reform projects must happen with, and not for, students. They noted that students are not often considered to be important actors in any reforms, and that students would be better served as "participants" in change, rather than "beneficiaries" (2001:126). They quote M. Fullan at length, emphasizing his points that:

> Educational change, above all, is a people-related phenomenon for each and every individual. Students, even little ones, are people too. Unless they have some meaningful (to them) role in the enterprise, most educational change, indeed most education, will fail. I ask the reader not to think of students as running the school, but to entertain the following questions: What would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered in the introduction and implementation of reform in schools? (qtd. in Wilson and Corbett 2001: 127)

Wilson and Corbett's concluding sentences stand as a challenge to teachers and administrators, noting what they think would happen if this paradigm shifted: "[Teachers] would understand that students desire to be educated as much as, if not more than, the adults want them to be. They would find out that they have invaluable partners in the educational enterprise—if only students had the chance" (2001: 128). The

narratives found in the teacher/student films bear out this argument regarding Wilson and Corbett's recommendation of "best practice". Based on a "true" story where effective change happened in the classroom, the story's plot is able to develop to its climax and heartwarming dénouement because the teacher usually finds some way to bring the students' culture, art forms, and voices into the classroom. I want to critique this act of bringing students as subjects into the class as a moment where representations are practiced and created/enforced through pedagogy, and also look at the way this message becomes writ large through the cine-text for the public audience. Molefi Kete Asante points out that in many classrooms that the African-American child sees the African people being "actively decentered, dislocated, and made into a nonperson," and that there needs to be a way for the student to alternatively see themselves as "the subjects rather than the objects of education… [so that] African-American students come to see themselves not merely as seekers of knowledge but as integral participants in it" (1991: 340). I start with the cine-text to consider the ways in which this moment of creating a space for voice can be adapted in ways that only strengthen the role of the teacher and the cultural values that they symbolically represent. Later, I will consider methods that may allow for the development of a critical consciousness of the student through the insertion of these elements into the classroom through a folklore-informed program.

In both *Take the Lead* and *Freedom Writers*, the teacher is forced to acknowledge early on that they do not and cannot know the world that their students come from. As one students tells teacher Erin Gruwell in the *Freedom Writers*, "I ain't explaining it to you—you don't know shit" (2007), or a student who, after teacher Pierre Dulaine asserts "what I teach has value," retorts: "Not where I live" (2006). The trust that the teachers

must gain to affect transformation of the students comes from the teachers deliberately bringing some representation of the students' world into the space created by the teacher (element four). In *Freedom Writers*, teacher Gruwell's hook consisted first through her creation of the "Line Game" in the class. In this exercise, she drew a line on the floor and had students line up on either side. As she moved through the scene, she had students move towards and away from the line as she asked questions that quickly moved to the difficult topics of gangs, drugs, and violence. As a pedagogical tool, this presented a creative opportunity for the students to begin, in a non-threatening way, to recognize that they are not alone in their personal struggles and that violence, drugs, and gangs in their communities affect all of them in negative ways. It also asked them to actively participate and begin to assert their personal voice in the classroom. The line provided an opportunity for them to represent their cultural lives in the classroom, but within the confines of the questions asked.

In this film following the "Line Game" activity, the viewer begins to see Ms. Gruwell become more involved with the students and their "world". She has found a way to help them see themselves as being both in their street culture and the school culture, and she uses the information they bring from the street to work with them and better understand where they are coming from. She also personally goes to their streets and their homes, breaking down the unspoken boundary that usually exists between teachers and students. Her actions deliberately work to connect the personal with the scholastic persona. As she moves through the scenes, however, a parallel story also unfolds about how she is losing a grip on her own personal life reality. Namely, as she spends more time moving towards the student's personal worlds and streets, she begins to disconnect

from her own world and specifically, her husband. The separation of Ms. Gruwell from her husband becomes the metaphorical element that connotes for the audience not only that Ms. Gruwell has become very personally invested in the wellbeing of the students, but that she has rejected her own sphere of middle-class "utopia" to embrace the students and their world (element five). As the camera pans over the physical space that created the sense of contrast to the "Other" in the opening montage, it is now empty of her husband's personal things and now has only become a thin shell for Ms. Gruwell. No longer a safe cocoon, it becomes visual evidence that she has sacrificed all (or left the more "civilized") to learn about a particular group and that group's culture, a motivation that drives the cinematic moment of crises. In fact, there is a suggestion as the film continues that the love and fulfillment that she needs in her life will now be best borne through her relationship with the students. Similarly, in *Take the Lead* Mr. Dulaine demonstrates this fifth element when he brings a male student to his home to stay on the couch and again, when he brings his inner-city students to his dance studio to rehearse, resulting in tension with others in his studio. By referencing the two spaces or worlds in the opening montage, but now blurring and eliminating the boundaries that held them as separate spaces, the teacher's role is identified as one who sacrifices those things they held dear in their "other" lives in order to be accepted and make a difference for the students.

This representation of the dedicated school teacher presents a role that arguably influences our perception of what it means to be a teacher. Judith Robertson, an educator concerned especially with the training and education of new teachers, finds that popular culture narratives such as those above serve as constructing narratives that affect teacher

socialization for preservice teachers. She notes that, "Beginning teachers use images of teaching from popular culture (including cine-texts) to help form their identities in complex and unexpected ways" (1997: 124). Specifically, she noted that many preservice teachers had "fantasies of love"—that is, a belief that their students would recognize their brilliance and dedication in the classroom, and therefore praise the teacher for "saving" them and moving them to bigger and greater things in their now available futures. She writes:

> My research points to the need for further enquiry that explores whether and how seemingly innocent dreams of love may clear the way for unmindful participation in structures of racialization, sexualization, and engenderment in schooling situations, where 'the one who knows' is the White teacher, and the 'other' (Blacks, girls and women, or children) is understood as impoverished in his or her marked ignorance. Fantasies of love may provide legitimacy for feelings of omnipotence over and against those who need 'raising-up' or 'salvation.' Tactically, the structure could help to consolidate a 'proper civility' in White female subjects who teach, who are enabled (in part by dreams of devotion) to keep the terms of their lease within projects of imperialism, colonization, and patriarchy, and yet not be deadended by them. (1997: 136)

This is an argument that clearly needs to be unpacked relative to its implications for the contemporary teacher of the urban classroom, as well as for those who find themselves working within that school culture. The narratives I have identified in the teacher/student film seem to reinforce Robertson's argument; namely, that there are "civilized" and "not civilized" people in the cities of America and that it is up to the teacher to assume that "burden" or "destiny" to teach those who are still unenlightened. Am I laying on the rhetoric too thickly? Deliberately, I connect this "master narrative" of the teacher who must enter the Other's culture to save the Other and, at the same time, themselves, to the narratives of colonialism. Similar to the anti-conquest narrative, the

preservice teacher's desire to be seen as the teacher-hero operates using discourses deliberately invoked to cloak the colonizing nature of relationships in the classroom setting[52]. As Dale Bauer has also noted: "For movie teachers, there is never a clear boundary between private and public life, because movie teachers role-model life. Their teaching is always commitment without content, passion without purpose (or so large and vague a purpose as 'saving' students from drugs, gangs, apathy)" (1998: 303). While vague, the need to save students from their "inevitable cultural selves" creates the moments of feel-good cinema and reinforce the representations of both inner-city and those called to teach. As one of Erin Gruwell's students noted in *Freedom Writers* when the students and teacher were faced with the fact that next year they would be moving on to a new English teacher as they matriculate into the 11th grade: "My teacher is the only one who gives me hope" (2007). This reinforces not only the teacher as activist-hero, but secures the representation of these youth as not possessing cultural resources strong or powerful enough to exert the same social power as that which an outsider teacher can give them.

This brings us back to element six above of the teacher/student film; that a teacher will ultimately be able to claim hero status and gain credibility back in "their" own world. Not unlike the captivity narratives found in early colonial period writing[53], the teachers

[52] I take this from Louise Pratt's text "Imperial Eyes" (1992). See my reference to this in chapter one of this dissertation.

[53] I refer to stories such Mary Rowlandson's, one of the most developed and most well known tales of a young Puritan mother captured by natives and forced to walk with them over many years and miles (Vaughn and Clark 1981). Alden T. Vaughn and Edward W. Clark note that an important psychological process is evident in most captivity narratives. Namely, it is the process that could be described as a "rite of passage" or "initiation process" where the captives demonstrate changes of perception relative to the relationship of their culture and those cultures deemed "Other" (1981: 11). This process Vaughn and Clark explain using anthropologist Victor Turner's three broad stages of "separation, margin (or *limen*, explained by Turner to be the threshold between fixed points of classification…), and reaggregation" (1981: 11). As

find ways to validate their citizenship within the cultural world they left. In *Freedom Writers* I point to one obvious symbol that can be understood to metaphorically stand for the culture of Ms. Gruwell: her white pearl necklace. On the first day that Ms. Gruwell is in the school and talking with her department head, the "seasoned veteran" of the school suggests that she leave her pearls at home. The students also specifically note the pearls and throughout the film the camera lingers on them as she continues to wear them despite the message that she is getting from others. This acts as a visual marker of cultural identity for Ms. Gruwell—for her to remove the pearls and enter the school environment is to lose her own sense of self. The fact that she never does leave them at home indicates for the audience that although she seems to have gone native, she in fact retains her "rights" to her own cultural world and identity which remains separate and different from the world of her students.

Arguing for an Afrocentric approach in education, Molefi Kete Asante asserts that the dominance of Eurocentric ideas in many American classrooms presents the concept of the White as universal and applies "to the human condition in general," while all others, those who are non-White, are "viewed as group-specific and therefore not human" (1991: 340). As teachers engage with education curricula that attempt to move from this hierarchical paradigm, they must also find ways to understand their own socialization in

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a result of the captivity, the least changed person will exhibit little outward change in their community interactions after their return to their natal life, but they will remain changed on the inside. Others will be able to return to their natal life, but remain more empathetic towards Indian ways. Still others will demonstrate difficulty readjusting to their own communities again after returning. The group that is seen as demonstrating the greatest change are those for whom no captivity narratives are attributed because this is the group who never returned and lived the rest of their life in their adopted Indian culture (1981: 14-16). The narrator of their captivity tale wishes to use the text to regain acceptance and re-assimilate into their natal cultures and therefore must demonstrate throughout the texts that they did not "go native" in their time away from the rest of their respective communities. Therefore, the stage of reaggregation in Turner's rite of passage plays very specific part in these captivity narratives because it is often due to the narrator's wish to return and re-assimilate that the narratives are written.

the school system. They must locate ways to navigate their own sense of cultural identity vis-à-vis the same urban classroom that students inhabit while retaining their personal space at the same time. Tobing Rony notes that the Ethnographic is the subject as object, and its construction "was always ambivalent, for the Ethnographic was not only viewed as Savage but also was seen alternatively authentic, macho, pure, spiritual, and an antidote to the ills of modern, industrialized capitalism, a myth embodied in the image of the Noble Savage" (1996: 194). This brings the interesting point that is lost in the easy characterizations found in this film genre; namely, that the teacher never remains unchanged by the experience either; that the exchange of information is two-way; and that what informs some of the tension of the film is the ever-present possibility of "going native." The urban school may in fact prove the best stage for the action of the teacher-hero scenario and its larger implications because its space is noted as being liminal, to apply Victor Turner's concept and terminology. Turner asserted that a liminal space is "a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise" because "the cognitive schemata that give sense and order to everyday life no longer apply but are, as it were, suspended" (qtd in Cook-Sather 120). Sociologist Pamela Bettis notes that "liminality captures this postmodern urban complexity: the fragmentation, loss of community, and deindustrialization of cities, along with the postindustrial plethora of images, focus on consumption, and changes in types of employment" (1996: 107).

The urban school itself has become invested with multiple representations that inform and reflect larger social phenomenon. Taking this further, I would argue that we could understand that space as liminal, which gives rise to both opportunities and challenges for the population inhabiting that space. It is the urban school that can be seen

as a both a meeting and a testing ground, where students bring their stories of inner-city communities and families broken by sub-standard infrastructure and economic realities. At the same time, and teachers bring cultural identities that are made insecure by the tests of a new environment. The tension wrought by the dissolution of an individual's belief in a hegemonic cultural status quo presents opportunities for growth, both on the side of the student and teacher. Invoking the taboo of "going native"—of losing a grounded sense of cultural identity—may help illuminate my case further.

In anthropology the taboo is linked to concerns of not only appropriation, but also critical objectivity. Yet, anthropologist Katherine Ewing notes in her essay that "by creating a blind spot, by placing a taboo around the possibility of belief, anthropologists have prevented themselves from transcending the contradictions embedded in a situation in which the imposition of one's own mode of discourse interferes with the project of representation" (1994:572). In essence, this concern of maintaining a self that can record events as an outsider may only be limiting the potential to "see" something more clearly. Yet this taboo remains, and the teacher/student movie uses the climatic drama available from the character that seems to be violating the taboo. The movie must resolve the plot, offering evidence that the teacher has been restored to his/her own cultural community. But how can knowledge of the *positive* transformative, i.e. the reciprocity that can exist in learning between all those within the urban school environment, inform curriculum reform and development?

Nancy Barnes is a cultural anthropologist whose research focuses on participatory teacher-research projects and asks how ethnography can support progressive urban school reform. She notes that there is an epistemological concern when looking at how new

teachers "know" the spaces and relationships of different classrooms (2000: 204). Her work asks: how do teachers mediate their own personal experiences, values, and culture to understand and be able to engage with the multiple relationships, cultures, and expectations that everyone brings to a classroom? Barnes notes that Sara, a White student of teaching who was placed in a predominately Latino and African-American school, wrote in one of her fieldnote entries:

> How can I ever fit in? *What can I as a White woman possibly contribute to a tight-knit community that does not validate me, or my culture, at all?* This recognition shows me that I need to look deep into my own racism, my own fears, and my own assumptions. It didn't occur to me that I had a culture to impose on anyone. When I tried to see my own culture, it looked 'transparent' to me. I had never thought about how it feels to exist within an unfamiliar culture, to be asked to learn within (and from) an unfamiliar culture…. Somehow my own self could get erased by the out-of-place feeling I get when I am at the school. (2000: 206, emphasis hers)

The concern with erasure relates to this discussion of re/presentation on multiple levels: When experiencing a liminal state, one becomes more vulnerable and decisions made have the additional weight of affecting one's cultural moorings. Education professor Michael Marker's article on "Going Native in the Academy" brings an interesting point to the discussion of urban youth and teacher/student movies through his critique of the phenomenon of white-middle class teachers who bring Native American ceremony, cultural practices, and rituals into their classroom believing them to be pedagogically sound practices. He points out that the truly progressive professors are not those who appropriate traditions, but rather those who "find ways to make culture visible in critical context" (1998: 477). Specifically, Marker notes that White students do not often see themselves as having culture and therefore often avoid critical examination of "how their sources of family, class, and ethnic privilege intersect with the historic circumstances of

Indian people (477). This parallels Deborah Britzman's research that considers how the "larger social circumstances of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of social and structural discrimination live in the contexts of school knowledge and in the social practices of students and teachers" (1992: 252). Britzman continues, "To begin with questions of theory and practice in this way require a second look at how the dynamics of domination and subordination become lived experience in academic socialization" (252). As we move from a discussion of the cine-text and its reification of master narratives understood in the representations of specific school roles to a discussion of classroom practices that intersect with these representations, the ramifications of not being aware of the cultural points of tension that exist in a school class becomes evident. This process of socialization includes not only an interrogation of the ways we know and how we know, but the beliefs which exist about how to locate sites of knowledge production and consumption.

One question that may frame our conversation includes, how are the personal experiences of teachers relevant to the classroom experience? Is it as Barnes argues, that claiming personal experience as a pedagogical tool in the classroom may be one means for claiming identity as the grounds for authority and centering (privileging) personal cultural constructs? She argues that student (teachers) must face their fears of "being erased" and that the practicum may construct an "analytical scaffolding that is simultaneously subtler and more expansive than the students' self-referenced, experience-based view of the world" (2000:206). But I would contrast this with the other side of the same complicated coin of cultural identities meeting in the classroom: how does one work to acknowledge the multiple voices without appropriating or silencing any of them?

Implicit in these arguments is that students of color not only have an awareness of their own cultural identities, but that they can critically and actively engage with these constructs. To what extent is this only further reinforcing the Ethnographic bias already ascribed to the youth? What happens when a teacher brings rap, hip hop fashion, or something else commonly used to stand as Ur-symbol of urban youth culture into the classroom without considering the ways in which popular culture and media have appropriated these representations? While these art forms have a basis in traditions that offered empowerment and strengthened cultural identity, my readings of the teacher/student films support the argument that the teachers' use of students' art forms such as rap do not disrupt master narratives and offer empowerment. Instead, they enable the outsider teacher to better transform the students into the subjects that support the cinematic storyline featuring the teacher as hero. When these traditions are brought into the classroom, they become a prop to tell a story about the "visionary" and "inspiring" teacher (element six). Teacher Erin Gruwell notes in *Freedom Writers* that "When I'm helping these kids make sense of their lives, my life makes sense to me" (2007). In the end, the story is about the teacher as activist-hero and her values, rather than the student whose only transformation is recognition that urban youth are exceptional, but never empowered. When thinking about folklife in education programming, especially in urban school environments, one relevant question may include: How can working with tradition and folklife offer both teachers and students opportunities to identify the master narratives that construct identity? The follow up question is, how can a school curriculum use these identified narratives and demand a more complex praxis that brings about agency and alternative representations? In other words, in order to challenge

master narratives and contemporary discourse surrounding representations of the teacher and student, what curriculum will engage with *representations* of "inner-city", "urban", "disaffected" youth in a way that highlights discourses of empowerment or containment?

In the narrative plots of the teacher/student film, these representations must remain intact for the teacher as hero to maintain its raison d'être. The prevalence of narratives perpetuated by teacher/student movies and the lack of critical ethnographic tools provided to preservice teachers to understand their own cultural identities have created an interesting reality for anyone engaging in alternative education or inner-city education today. The role of the teacher-hero is often portrayed as a largely individual-guided process that is created by the activist's vision—a vision that uniquely identifies the teacher as enlightened and empowered to make a difference. Robertson notes in particular that "Hollywood historically portrays schools and school systems either as active opponents of idealized characters or as drab stages on which teachers' heroics are performed. Heroism thrives on individuality" (140). Thus, it is the individual agency of the teacher that must be reinforced through the cinematic portrayal to make believable the role of teacher-hero. And the teacher-hero herself is about more than a feel-good story with the youth-is-saved ending:

> The fantasy of the love letter provides insight into how the desire for mastery and domination becomes woven into the fabric of selfhood as teacher, and how investments in love in fact obstruct the work of education. The process is buttressed by semiotic provocations (.i.e., cultural images and stories) that possess beginning teachers in purposeful ways to create versions of selfhood that are recognizable and acclaimed within a particular interpretive community, a community of teachers. In this way, psychic and social selfhood is always negotiating its blind intentionality through and with one another. (Robertson 1997: 136)

The individualism of the teacher as hero and teacher as maverick also impact the very cultural community of teachers alluded to above. The Hollywood story is not only reflecting extant narratives, but affecting pedagogical choices. Specifically, in the case study outlined below, representation will be considered in light of the damage the representation can do in preventing community among teachers. When working in a stressful environment determined by a lack of resources, deteriorating facilities, and bureaucratic hoops, a teaching community can bring empowerment to individual teachers through small acts of solidarity and/or resistance. Likewise, by creating a community within a classroom, the goal is that *many* can be empowered to assert agency over their educational space.

Bauer is concerned with how these Hollywood representations of teachers are affecting pedagogy, and that no useful alternative models of teachers in society are replacing those of the big screen. He identifies a need for a commitment on the part of teachers to actively replace this image:

> The intellectual style I am suggesting involves the obligation to persuade our students about both content and commitment, about purpose as well as passion. *This is rhetorical intimacy: it means teaching an allegiance to the community in the classroom, not to the teacher. As a model of intellectual, even disciplinary commitment, this new calling does not offer the gratification of primary narcissism, where we measure success by our students' love for us.* This is no Whitmanesque celebration of ourselves, as *Dead Poets Society* has depicted it. Since content is missing in these movies and replaced by personality, we will need to persuade our students that we love the content we teach, that our investments are in our subjects as well as our students. No lofty pedagogical prescription, my response is a reaction to the missing content of our intellectual commitments in films about teaching. This pedagogical transformation means redeeming our own images from the trivialization they suffer on film…. Good teaching turns the primary desire to be liked, or loved, into the recognition of social needs within the classroom: the value of communal work, discipline, even a "calling" or commitment to change. Rhetorical intimacy works by

> eschewing primary narcissism: teachers must get over making students—either from vanity or as compensation—"like" them (in both senses of the term)…. It also means relinquishing the personal for the political, since the equation of the personal and the political has unfortunately been translated onto the screen as erotic or disciplinary intimacy. (1998: 315-16, emphasis mine)

Jan Reeder notes in her article exploring educational leadership and policy that "Every time any sort of 'exceptional' kid walks through my door, I try to remember … that I don't [have to] take it all too seriously and think that I'm going to save someone's world for the time he spends in my classroom. Instead I attempt to be a little 'exceptional' myself by simply understanding that there's no formula, no guarantee for success, and that 'exceptional' is a relative term" (2003:56). As a teacher, the way to understand one's relationship with the students is constantly intersecting with multiple layers of socialization, curriculum, and cultural perspectives; however, this teacher/student cultural script has become so well known that for some, it becomes the expectation to be reinforced, rather than critiqued.

Richard Miller teaches composition pedagogy to graduate students, and notes that the discussions in his classroom inevitably turn to the relationships that are forged between teacher and student:

> We had watched the film *Dangerous Minds* and critiqued Hollywood's fascination with producing classroom narratives of conversion and redemption; we had noted the prevalence of this narrative at our own conferences and in our journals where, as one student put it, after some initial difficulties, the teacher-hero gets down to the business of 'liberating right, left, and center.' Critiquing the master narrative was easy enough; the challenge lay in figuring out how to work within and against its constraints simultaneously, acknowledging but not overstating the influence of past teachers and one's own work in the classroom. (1998: 26)

How does the hero activist motif affect the self-representation of those working in the alternative school setting? What pedagogical choices must be made to account for and work with the cultural expectations that inform the urban school environment? Folklorists working in education projects understand the dilemma, and can offer interesting answers to the practical questions at hand. Similarly, actual teachers and students bring their own unique and significant ways for understanding the workings of the educational system that do not fit in the narratives of the teacher/student movie. Miller begins to offer some of his own suggestions regarding the practical application of the knowledge that he and his students acquire through a critical engagement with the representations of students and teachers through cinetext. He notes that teachers have the capacity to bring empowerment through the social capital they can provide through education:

> Specifically, we can teach them how to work within and against discursive constraints simultaneously, thereby helping them to experience the mediated access to 'authenticity' that social action allows. Having our students develop this kind of discursive versatility won't serve to knock down or permanently remove the barrier that will always separate the public and the hidden transcripts, nor will it necessarily produce supports of the kind of social justice Freire envisions. Rather, the more modest goal of the pragmatic pedagogy I've outlined here is to provide our students with the opportunity to speak, read, and write in a wider range of discursive contexts than is available to them when they labor under the codes of silence and manufactured consent that serve to define the lived experience of subordinates in the culture of schooling. If, through this process, the students learn how to register their reservations about academic practice in ways that can be heard as reasoned arguments rather than dismissed as the plaintive beating of sheep, if they learn to pose their questions about the work before them in ways that invite response, and if, finally, they learn how to listen to and learn from the responses they receive, they may well be in a better position to negotiate the complex social and intellectual experiences that await them just beyond the

> classroom's walls…. *It is only the polemical rhetoric that surrounds the discussion of the pedagogical practice that would lead us to expect that any more definite outcome could be guaranteed*." (1998: 27, emphasis mine)

This managing of expectations—this managing of *representations*—informs my argument that teaching pedagogies and public programming engagement are inherently representational in practice. In fact, public programming for the folklorist often intersects with educational systems—whether it is in a school, developing curriculum resources, or using the festival or museum venue as an educational forum. Offering content expertise on specific cultures and communities, bringing teaching artists and their art forms to a classroom, or proposing projects that ask students to use ethnographic methodologies to document their communities all engage on different levels with the representational praxis. At the same time, the ethnographic sensibility that a folklorist brings to a project can inform new perspectives to the research already conducted on outcomes from arts in education programming.

The Art of Many Voices: A Case Study

The students named the assemblage "Parentless Generation". It is striking, filling up the room with images that seem to evoke childhood—a teddy bear, Mickey Mouse, basketball—images that chillingly contrast with the texts, written as if they were graffiti—"free dem South Side Savages", "R.I.P. Quarter", "Lost-Neverfound". Standing at nine feet tall, 12 feet wide, and composed of multiple stand-alone pieces, the

structure demands attention and evokes contemplation. One part of the interpretative text that accompanies it is written by Kayla[54], a student whose story is included in the art:

> *Parentless Generation is the theme of my art. You see the people being burned by the fire. You see crack, weed, guns, cars, rims—these are the things that corrupt the minds of today's youth.*
>
> *Every kid wants to have money, but instead of getting a job, they start selling drugs. They get caught up in it; cuz there wasn't anybody there to tell them that there is a different way of life.*
>
> *All that God has done is burned by the fire, so we turn to the streets cuz the streets show us love, the streets become our family, the crack heads are our aunts and uncles, they show us love. If you're not getting what you want, the streets got whatever you want or need.*
>
> *The kids are being burned by the fire. Getting sucked up by the streets. Kids are killing each other. There are a lot of young people who are in eternal life because of something stupid.*
>
> *Nowadays, you can get killed for no reason. There are too many young people locked up or dead for no reason. I say it's the 70's generation's fault. This is what is going on in the streets of Harrisburg. I know. I grew up in the streets of Harrisburg.*

This student work is the centerpiece at an end-of-the-year open house hosted by students in a small program of William Penn High School, the alternative education high school in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. It acts as a showcase for the program *The Art of Many Voices,* an ethnographically based arts residency and mentoring program designed by two folklorists, Amy Skillman and myself, at the Institute for Cultural Partnerships (ICP) to work with at-risk teens to increase academic achievement. A small number of parents attended. Student invitations had also brought one television station, the local newspaper, the district Superintendent, and the Director of Alternative Education. In his

[54] All student names have been changed throughout this chapter.

remarks, the Superintendent looked at the students and said, “I want to let you know that what I see here has really touched me.” He asserted that he was very proud of the students for the work that they had done to get to this point. Many staff and faculty joined us from the local community college, including a woman who coordinates the art gallery at the college and had worked with our students during a fieldtrip there to see an exhibition. She pulled me aside after the program on Monday and expressed how amazed she was at the discernable difference between the students she had met and the students she saw today at the open house. She noted that in March she saw students who could not be engaged, who did not know how to have a conversation with an adult, and who were generally hostile. In their art and their presentations today, she noted that she saw a level of engagement that she would have never imagined. The fact that the students would engage with the audience and public to answer their questions was a really wonderful example of some of the growth the students exhibited. Part of what had stunned her was an unscripted moment that I transcribed from our video, Kayla spoke about the project:

> I mean, I learned a lot, [students nod their heads, some say “I did too”], just from this right here, and working with the teachers and working and being up at William Penn. … I am so proud of this. I am so proud to be with you all and to be able to say that I did this, that I’ve got something that I can show and put on display. Like, when this goes on display, I’m everywhere this goes, because we don’t get opportunities to do this because we are in alternative ed. Because they look at us—well, they label us—as behavior and education students. I mean they label us, they put a stereotype on us. So, like, if we brought this up to [the district high school], or someplace like that (Another student: [the principal] would be mad) Yeah, [she] would be mad, you know what I mean, because this is basically everybody who she kicked out, you know? I mean, [she] never really gave me a chance… She told me that I wasn’t going to finish school… She told me that I was dysfunctional and all this other stuff. But to see this [pointing to the mural, other students nod their head in

> agreement, they have essentially elected this student as their spokesperson] I know what I am capable of. I'm just proud, and I represent alternative ed and I don't think nothing's wrong with it. I really do. (Transcribed by myself from video of event, June 6, 2008)

All of the other students clap. When they realize that everyone there is also applauding *them* and their work, they all break out in wide smiles and congratulate each other. This powerful articulation from one of the students involved demonstrated the transformative power that comes from using ethnographic tools in the classroom to elaborate a critical consciousness—VOICE—among disengaged and oppressed student populations.

As program administrators we, at times, doubted parts of the process. Our insistence on making this more than a mural, or a piece of art that can be immediately taken home, or about just writing and poetry, meant that the students had to think about multiple steps and drafts to get to an end. It meant that the students had to engage with thematic content and connect other parts of their lives or education to this process in a new context. It meant that the students had to commit to additional time, sometimes coming in after school or on a Friday because they realized that they could be a part of something bigger than their individual self. While we knew how difficult it was to make the mural happen, the event helped underscore that the students were benefiting from our process. The pride that the students felt about completing a project was about both their individual component, but also how that piece complemented the larger mural and concept. I was especially proud of how the students were thoughtful about how they wanted certain pieces to be together, how they would complement or add to the meaning of the pieces, and how they could think about the mural as having a unified theme. All of this demonstrates a level of teamwork and collaboration that did not exist when we began

this project. At first, the students' only interest in their peer's work was to tag it. As Marcene commented aloud to us, "This looks better than anything we could have done alone!" For a moment, the inclination toward individual survival became superceded by their realization of the power of community.

Folklore and folklorists can bring something unique to the classroom, and this chapter describes how the *tools* of folklore[55] can participate in the difficult task of empowering and enabling students to engage with the narratives that inform the social constructs of their identities. Grounded in a model that resembles good fieldwork, the implementation of *The Art of Many Voices* in an alternative school setting meant that folklorists worked to understand youth culture critically within the structure of a school culture to enable students to tell their stories in their voices. The case study highlighted in this chapter uses the concepts and ethics of folklore to reveal the youth as a kind of folk group, capable of creating authentic expressive culture. I propose that the ethnographic sensibilities developed through a study of folklore supports an alternative vision of the educator working with urban youth; namely, an educator whose curriculum supports the youth finding their voice on their own terms and in ways that may disrupt, critique, and expose popular narratives that exist about urban youth.

~ ~ ~

In data from 2001, 96.9% of William Penn High School students fell below the poverty line, and only 24% graduated. By 2006 the school boasted a much higher graduation rate, yet students tested 75% and 98% below basic scores (reading and math

[55] Again, I am specifically referring to research through ethnographic methodologies, an understanding of narrative, attention to the processes of contemporary traditions and culture-making, and stern appreciation of ethical conduct in the field.

respectively) on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment tests (www.edportal.ed.state.pa.us, accessed February 2007). Specific data is hard to access, however, because the school program was renamed and therefore all culminating data has been erased from the state education site and certain scores are not reported (see http://www.paayp.com; the state's "adequate yearly progress" report cards)[56]. Before our team implemented the 2006-07 folklore and arts residency program with outside funding, all arts curriculum had been dropped from the school.[57] Resources are scarce for many activities, especially those seen as "extra curricular". In the fall of 2006, students worked on an oral history project; and in collecting these stories we discovered that many of the students had never been outside the city limits. When asked about their future goals, these same students could not imagine careers or going to school outside their neighborhoods. In a grant application for further funding, I then asked the question, "How will territorial neighborhood violence be addressed unless the youth who experience it can imagine the alternatives offered by a larger world?" This question was real, born of passion and belief in what we are doing through this effort. However, it also represents this population in very specific ways. In our grant narratives, we present the youth as passive. How does the representation of these youth in grant applications

[56] In attempting to access additional data and verify trends in October 2007, it was discovered that the William Penn High School and its ACTS (A Challenge to Succeed) program are no longer listed on any of the state's education sites. Rather, the "Career Technology Academy" (the vo-tech program of the William Penn School) is listed but this is the first year that this "school" has been tested and therefore the report card cannot indicate any trends or report graduation and attendance records. The students of William Penn in the ACTS program are no longer on the education "map" for the state or No Child Left Behind report cards. I will argue in the course of this chapter that the implications of this reflect an alarming attitude towards the students of this particular school.

[57] I will describe in greater detail below, but our core "team" who designed and implemented the curriculum for the 06-07 project included myself as principal investigator, folklorist Amy Skillman, teacher Louise Morgan, and artists Janet Bixler, Iya Isoke, Jason Moffitt, Nataki Bhatti, Nancy Mendes, and Raphael Xavier.

contribute to the same master narratives described above in the teacher/student film? Arguably, narratives defining and representing a "people" are reinforced not only through media, but also through the structures of funding proposals and the grantmaking culture. The narrative that seems to be perpetuated by these applications is most often defined by "lack." Building a case for what is represented as "lack," grants are written, programs are designed, and projects are announced. All of these activities imply a negative representation of this community.[58]

This section starts the case study with demographic statistics, quantifying the poverty and poor achievement, as many grant criteria and subsequent narratives also begin. Independent educational researchers Wilson and Corbett note that nationally a trend has been identified through multiple studies of a growing performance gap predicted by poverty (2001). Yet, drawing upon Jencks and Phillips' research into the Black-White test score gaps, Wilson and Corbett argue that "the performance gap can be reduced by paying much closer attention to the nature of students' classroom experiences. Dwelling on matters of heredity and background… is unproductive and, in fact, simply wrong" (2001: 63). Taking this argument to one logical end, it indicates that poverty is not exclusively and directly "causing" the achievement gap. Rather, various cultural constructs that surround students from poverty contribute to the gap. Katherine Magnuson and Greg Duncan reviewed research existing on achievement gaps and noted that some "obvious explanations" should be ruled out for growth in the gap. Citing four

[58] Notice that I am making an important distinction here, however, between "lack" and "need." This lack should not be confused with need. Many of the communities present very specific needs related to transportation, housing, schools, etc. These needs can result in violent and/or self defeating acts within the communities—adding to an urban decay. Needs can often been assessed through quantitative methods, i.e., crime statistics or unemployment numbers; lack within communities is often established through more qualitative methods.

studies in particular[59], they noted that "less than a third of the growth in the gaps is due to differences in school or class quality" (2006: np). They offer an alternative hypothesis, exploring two possibilities that they find particularly promising: "teachers' differential treatment of and expectations for Black and White students as well as the emergence of stereotype threat" (Magnuson and Duncan 2006: np). In other words, it isn't necessarily a question of physical features or curricular features, but rather how *cultural narratives* and subsequent cultural constructs inform the classroom experience.

A look at the culture of the classroom and how cultural assumptions inform teacher actions points to another hypothesis that may be drawn from the research of Wilson and Corbett; namely, the narratives that exist about "these students" are affecting the ways teachers teach *and* the ways that students learn. Magnuson and Duncan outline evidence for this claim, citing the three studies which conclude that teachers' "lower expectations for black students are likely to account for a portion of the gap," and that "children's awareness of cultural stereotypes increases during middle childhood, and that this elevated awareness was linked to the underperformance of minority children on challenging tests"[60] (Magnuson and Duncan 2006). Magnuson and Duncan (2006) call this "stereotype threat," noting that anxiety results from a student's fear of confirming cultural stereotypes. I would add that this also affirms the ways in which representations can dangerously inform and mediate pedagogy as it was reflected in *Freedom Writers* where the English department director at Erin Gruwell's school felt like the "best you can do is get them to obey; learn discipline" (2007), or as noted on the movie message boards

[59] Fryer and Levitt (2005), Murnane et al. (2006); Phillips, Crouse, & Ralph (1998); Todd & Wolpin (2005)
[60] The studies that Magnuson and Duncan cite include Ferguson (1998), Farkas (2003), and McKown and Wesintein (2003) (See Magnuson and Duncan 2006 for all).

where the comments were very much informed by representations of the students' background. In other words, the narrative about "these students" is already predicted and constructed by race, class, and geography. Likewise, that only an "outsider" may attempt to single-handedly "save" these kids, is also promoted in many of the narratives. Too often the granting process that funds many of these projects also perpetuates this problematic perspective, given their emphasis on working with "at risk" or "poverty" populations. Organizations that wish to work in this area often feel that there is a certain "story" about the population that they must relate in their grant to be successful. This presents a difficult situation, posing the question: how can the schools who most need funding and/or targeted assistance seek funding without becoming a part of the production and perpetuation of this particular narrative?

Additionally, the dilemma for the teacher who works in the urban classroom space today is to understand that their own space for agency is not confined to the glorified teacher-hero role found in the movies. The film narrative warns that for a teacher to enact pedagogy that resists dominant narratives implies banishment from the larger academic social community and jeopardizes her ability to work collaboratively. However, it is within the *culture* of the school that reform occurs—most teachers only have a group of students for one hour or less a school day. As Charles Payne notes in his forthcoming text *So Much Reform, So Little Change*, "The essential problem in our schools isn't children learning; it is adult learning" (2008:42). Pointing to the school culture, he notes the irony that reform efforts which ignore the school as a complex entity ignore research that has surfaced repeatedly since early school reform efforts in the 1960's and 70's:

> In 1971, Seymour Sarason (1996 [1971]), cautioned that we should expect little or nothing from school reform efforts because reformers so consistently failed to understand schools as organizations with their own cultures and their own power arrangements. In a recent retrospective, he notes that for fifteen years, he kept a file of letters from people who had mounted failed reform efforts. One of the strongest themes in those letters was that reformers "had vastly underestimated the force of existing power relationships and had vastly overestimated the willingness of school personnel to confront the implications of those relationships." (Payne 2008: 44)

Rather than expect the solo hero-teacher to change the world of students, the expectation needs to broaden, asking how a culture for learning can be created across disciplines, woven through multiple classroom settings, and implemented at many levels across administration and school bureaucracies.

Academic Year (AY) 2006-07, the Institute for Cultural Partnerships (ICP) received monies regranted through the Harrisburg Institute of Messiah College from the United States Department of Justice to implement an arts residency and mentoring program with "at-risk" teens to increase academic achievement.[61] Offered in both classroom and after-school settings, high school students could earn Humanities, English, or Social Studies credits as they worked with folklorists, folk and traditional artists, and other community members over the course of the school year. The program was driven by the goals found in the Institute for Cultural Partnerships' education strategy developed by Amy Skillman and myself:

- Students will learn ethnographic skills, including how to develop an interview protocol and the practical and ethical considerations of observation and interview practices;

[61] This project was supported by Messiah College (www.messiah.edu) and through Grant No. 2005-JL-FX-0183 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions expressed in the course of the project do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of Messiah College of or the U.S. Department of Justice. All evaluation efforts occurred in the course of the granting period.

- Students will bring their own research to bear in a variety of project-based activities;
- Students will recognize the characteristics and use of personal narrative stories, oral histories, and other spoken word traditions;
- Students will experience and practice art with recognized master artists;
- Students will value academic achievement as education standards are imbedded in the creative process of *Many Voices*; and
- Students will gain a better understanding of self, community, and social processes especially as expressed through the arts.

The way we characterized the project to teachers and administrators of the school in its first year was that students were going to be conducting a year-long research project into a topic that may seem disarmingly simple: *themselves*. In this program called *Arts' Voice*, theatre, dance, spoken word, oral histories, and visual arts become the conduits to developing appropriate and enriching interaction between core curriculum standards and the students' growing awareness of self and community. And while the program objectives are student-centered, the ICP program also includs professional development and opportunities for strategic buy-in for school teachers and staff. We later found the following "branding" very useful in helping teachers, administrators, and others understand our complex program more quickly, noting that we "DARE" students to engage with this program and use their stories to create new visions for the future[62]:

Discover: Use ethnographic process to observe and document community;

Assess: Reflect on information gathered, explore the important stories and issues;

Represent: Express student findings from research through art;

[62] My discussion below further explores this, but one lesson learned for those considering implementing a similar program was the importance of "branding" and "marketing" this program to students, teachers, and administrators. Without a recognizable brand, it was harder to be visible in the over-stimulated school marketplace and culture.

Engage: Provide form for discussion with public, create visions for future.

Knowing that the program would be more successful with teachers' support and buy-in, in Fall 2006 (our pilot year), we created a day-long retreat in a bucolic setting 15 miles from center city Harrisburg. We personally invited each teacher to the retreat site, ready to discuss the year and project. However, no teachers came; none, in fact, informed us that they would not be attending. The only exception was the one teacher with whom we worked to design the project narrative in the grant. We waited, wondering what had happened, but the teacher was not surprised. She noted that there was an extraordinary amount of resistance from the teachers for anything that seemed like a "new project" that would demand anything else from them in terms of time, training, or emotional energy. In retrospect we realized that our "retreat" would have been much more effective if we had been able to use scheduled planning time the teachers already had, not requiring additional commitment. It would have also been prudent to find a way to include an additional teacher in the actual planning of the retreat. We had assumed that this one teacher's infectious enthusiasm for the program correlated to some degree with the other staff. Unfortunately, this was not the case. In fact, we discovered it was one root of the tension that existed between different teachers and staff of the school team. Our strongest advocate also exhibited some of the characteristics of the maverick teacher as represented in the cine-texts above, contributing to the distrust of other teachers who saw themselves as needing community and just as significantly, structure. Quickly the *Arts' Voice* program personnel realized that the success of the program necessitated not only a student-centered program of high quality, but that we

needed to use our ethnographic skills to their fullest to better understand the school culture and those who were actors in it.

The first six weeks of the program Skillman and I visited students in their classrooms as guest teachers—connecting our program to the core subject we found ourselves. In English we worked with narrative, in social studies we worked with ethnographic processes, in math we explored graphing data, in science we looked at methods of inquiry and interview protocol, etc. Working this way we were able to meet every teacher of the team in their own classroom to introduce them to the goals of the project[63]. We were also able to meet every student on the team (we would repeat the program for four classes in one day in each subject area). Through this process, students began to explore their own personal stories and the stories that are important to their communities and neighborhoods. At the same time, Harold Steward and Janet Bixler began to introduce the art of creative dramatics to the students, encouraging them to imaginatively engage with their stories in a performative setting. Students met two times a week with teacher Louise Morgan to complete the necessary research and coursework that would go into the story of their production. Working with Ms. Morgan was very important in terms of recruiting students to fully participate in the program. She became a very important link between the students and our program, offering the students the

[63] We were able to implement this strategy by creating a schedule, going to each teacher one-by-one, and asking them if they would let us have their classes one designated morning. Many of the teachers seemed to welcome this as a break, which while not ideal, provided us an opportunity to get into their class, demonstrate our abilities, and "sell" our educational program. Also, while working in this personal basis was more time consuming for us, it was one of the most effective ways to begin to establish rapport with the teachers. We had to demonstrate that we were not associated with another teacher or a particular administrator, reinforcing that we were an independent program who happened to receive funding to work in their school. Politically, we had to remain unaffiliated.

credits they needed and giving *Arts' Voice* staff updates on students who would be good fits for the program.

Following this introduction, we began after school pizza clubs in each of the art forms being offered. In November, fifteen students began regularly attending these after school arts clubs. During the fall introductory classes, two additional teachers from the team agreed to be a part of the clubs, staying after school with the students to help supervise as well as advise. This support help provide continuity for the students' school day, connecting our program to its academic core and setting behavior expectations. This teacher support also contributed to Ms. Morgan being able to implement even more far-reaching initiatives with the students. These teachers also gave our program additional credibility, which helped to establish among the teachers who believed in this type of educational model greater community. At each club, students worked closely with an artist to understand how that particular art form could be a vehicle for expressing their stories. These residencies included drama with *Common Ground Theatre Center*, spoken word with Iya Isoke and Jason Moffitt, hip hop dance with Raphael Xavier of the *oLive Dance Theatre*, and visual arts with Nancy Mendes and Nataki Bhatti. All these art forms were integral to "Watzup," the ethnographic theatre piece developed and produced by the students for the public at the end of the year.

The funding continued into AY 2007-08, and while many of the foundational premises remained the same, the 2007-08 project, *The Art of Many Voices*, sought to provide students with the ethnographic tools to document their community in an effort to collect not only the students' own stories, but to contextualize those stories in a more deliberate project of the community. Similar to *Arts' Voice*, *The Art of Many Voices*

innovated on the artist-in-residency model to address education standards by engaging students first through an oral history project designed to document creative art that is on the street and the community stories that surround these art processes. This approach was then followed by intense work in documentation processes to find positive expression through the arts of the stories the students identified and collected. The documentation processes included working with film, audio, and photographic mediums.

The work of both *Voices* projects engages with multiple re/presentational practices from the art of securing funding, to the work of students presenting stories gathered in and from their communities, to the act of presenting the students and their final projects to the public. Through strategic community/artist/school partnerships, the *Voices* projects aimed to foster development of student skills, knowledge, and understanding of their communities and their own cultural identities through the process of research, documentation, and presentation of folklore and heritage arts. At their core, the *Voices* projects were about story and developing a critical consciousness among the student participants, addressing what Deborah Britzman, a leader in educational leadership and policy development, names as a "pedagogical dilemma":

> These students seem to be caught between the only versions of identity offered by dominant forms of culture: One is either educated or not educated. This selective criterion requires both a dismissal of the self and a dismissal of cultural politics. . . . *The pedagogical dilemma is how to create opportunities for students to make sense of the detours of representing oneself in contexts already overburdened with representations one may not choose but, nonetheless, must confront and transform*. (1992:254, emphasis mine)

As many of the students in our program have noted, the majority of news being broadcast about them and their neighborhood was bad news[64]. What is interesting, though, is that the students believe it. Their public presentations of themselves mimic the news being broadcast. When I asked if the news was right, and that this was the only news coming out of their neighborhood the immediate response was "Yeah." They warned me that if I went to their neighborhoods at night, I would probably be mugged, and had a good chance of being shot. I pressed further, asking if there wasn't any other stories that would be worth telling about their neighborhood. Jameshya responds, "The only story is that we are *poor*." She elaborated, telling us that everyone in her 'hood has a hustle and this is the only way to survive: "Because we poor. That's all there is to say. We poor." There is statistical truth to that statement. In information from the 2000 Census, 24.6% of the population of Harrisburg City is living below the poverty level,[65] and most of these students came from that 25%. Yet, her statement makes another interesting social comment—that the students are worried that the media is right. They worry that there are not any "good stories" that do or could come out of this neighborhood. They have come to believe the stereotype of "those kids."

This chapter opened with the argument that constructs devised by the larger national discourse of and about urban youth contribute to the representation of their cultural identities. The remainder of the chapter considers how attention to the local, through ethnographic processes, can elaborate representations differently among the

[64] Following this conversation I went to the on-line archive of the Harrisburg News Paper, www.pennlive.com, to see if there was evidence supporting what we felt like was true: that the majority of stories coming from these neighborhoods were negative—and many involved teens. Searching only for the key terms "Allison Hill" and "Uptown" in the title (the two distinct neighborhoods where most of these students live), I found 15 stories from the Spring 2007 archives and 10 of those stories involved negative topics of guns, drugs, or violence.

[65] http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/42/4232800.html, accessed July 11, 2008

students. Britzman reaffirms the argument that dominant representations of the urban youth promote narrow spaces for identity construction and restrict agency on part of the students. Yet, in what ways can a folklife in education program interact with this cynical position? Education researcher Maxine Greene reflecting on Paulo Freire's (1994) writing noted that there exists "surprising ways in which the 'culture of silence' can be broken when people begin analyzing the realities nearest at hand and move from there to national realties. Involved, trying to say everything that is on their minds, they find that their critical discourse on their own world is itself a way of remaking that world" (2000: 297). This emphasis on understanding how to consider the local in an attempt to participate on a larger stage is one core concept of the curriculum I developed with the help of other folklorists, teachers, and artists. In fact, I often start with this concept when speaking with education specialists, teachers, and administrators to craft the argument that ethnographic and place-based learning methodologies contribute in significant ways to the larger educational experience they desire in their classrooms.

Maxine Greene also argues, however, that to engage with the construct of cultural representations implies the luxury of thinking beyond oneself and immediate survival. As she notes, marginalized people have "little use" for metaphors that in the end only "enable people at the center to imagine what it is to be outside, enable the strong to imagine the weak" (2000: 295). Research has shown that those who are oppressed are intimately aware of oppressor's culture because it determines their ability to successfully live in, and offer up any resistance to, the social world (Anzaldúa 1987, Bakhtin 1965 [1984], hooks 1990 [2001], hooks 1992, Lorde 1981, Trinh Minh-ha 1989). This, in itself, is an act of survival. What kind of engagement and knowledge do youth who live

in oppressive social conditions have regarding understanding the state to which their own culture (over)determines their cultural identities? In other words, can these youth find perspective on their own culture and through this, a better understanding of how their cultural norms and identities are being constructed through larger social narratives? To ask inner-city youth to produce their story has already been done, and often to the ends of creating "that" image[66] for the teacher or for a public that yearns to learn more about a culture that they do not understand (Greene's case-in-point). Is it only cynicism that prompts a response from one young student when asked to describe some of the characteristics of her neighborhood in one of our first sessions with the students AY 2007-08 that replies with a smirk, "What do you want to know about, the drugs, the pimps, how dirty it is? I can tell you all about it. I used to sell crack because it was the only good money on our block 'til I saw a 14 year old girl using and then I said to myself, that's just wrong. That's just really wrong." How can this same production of stories work for empowerment, rather than contribute to mere voyeurism?

The students are not unaware of how their story can be co-opted and are wary of curious on-looking by outsiders who measure difference through the images of these stories. For example, as we began *The Art of Many Voices*, some of our first planned activities were scheduled walk-abouts. A walk-about is what we call a guided walk through a community with the students to introduce them to cultural survey work and documentation. We bring cameras, video recorders, and notepads. We encourage students to talk to people and shop owners who are willing to share some of their knowledge of the place. On the first day of our walk-abouts, students voiced their serious

[66] These images inform the master narratives already discussed: violence, drugs, broken homes, and the occasional exception of a person who can rise above the environment described.

concerns about the activity; namely, that they could not be seen going into their communities with a White person and a camera because they would be seen as snitches or worse. They claimed that they could be seriously hurt in retaliation. We sat down in their lounge and talked about what this meant. They admitted that this affected other aspects of their lives—this fear, the inability to feel like they can make a positive difference in their community without being hurt, and their feeling that their community is the way that it is and that they cannot change it. One student asked in the course of the discussion: "Why don't we go walk around in *your* neighborhood? I would rather see what is going on there than in my dirty ol' hood."

Education researchers Lois Weis and Michelle Fine note in their edited collection *Construction Sites* (2000), that urban students need and are constructing spaces "in which they engage in a kind of critical consciousness, challenging hegemonic beliefs about them, their perceived inadequacies, pathologies, and 'lacks' and restoring a sense of possibility for themselves and their peers, with and beyond narrow spaces of identity sustenance" (3). They also note that "there are no victims here [in these essays looking at student spaces], but there are lots of cultural critics" (2). Based upon extensive fieldwork, these essays provide alternative narratives and highlight discursive spaces that complicate those found in the teacher/student movie. After the Harrisburg students resisted and refused to go on the walkabouts, we reassessed and decided that the best way to move forward was to do some walk-abouts in a different section of town than where they lived so that they could begin to learn about the process, in the hopes that they would then be able to apply some of those tools to their own communities, but without it being a group activity or one where they were being accompanied by a teacher or White

person (both folklorists in this case are White). The day was a great success, and the students showed a greater level of engagement with the material and the process than we had seen from them yet in any other activity. These are the notes that I included in our daily evaluation from this walk-about which included a visit to the local marketplace:

> Initially, the students in my group were very shy. The teacher began the first interview at the Fischer meat stand. The students hung back, letting her talk. Jessyca took some notes, Keisha took pictures of the food, and Bill stood back even further, observing. Mr. Fischer was very accommodating, and asked Keisha if she wanted to take a picture of him, his wife, and son. She said yes and they posed while she set up and took their picture. The teacher thanked them, and then Keisha did as well. This is significant, because in the classroom most of the students demonstrate little regard for politeness in their conversations. As we walked to the next stand that the family recommended (their deli), we reflected on how the first interview went. We noted for the students that to show gratitude at the end of an interview was important because they are giving you the gift of their time and stories. We also noted that some questions were easier for the interviewee to answer than others. When we got to the deli, Keisha took pictures of the sign. It was much busier here, and I encouraged Jessyca to ask one of the customers at the end of the line why they chose to patronize this deli. She was hesitant, but then she and Keisha went over. They asked if the person minded talking and getting their picture taken, they asked one question, and then, said thank you. Progress. What happened next was a real indication to me that this process works and was the right thing to do with the students. We visited over 5 venders over the next hour. The teacher and I had to say very little at all. Jessyca asked questions and took notes. She was exceptionally polite, and showed critical thinking skills at work as she asked questions that followed up on interesting answers from the vender. Keisha took pictures of the stands and their signage during the interview, and then would politely ask if they minded her taking a picture of them. She was very good at making them feel at ease as she took the picture. Bill followed along, very shy. After Jessyca commented on how difficult it was to take notes and ask questions, Bill offered to take notes. He did this for the last two interviews, and did a really nice job, capturing details of the conversation.
>
> The other group went with Amy, and they spent the time talking especially to patrons about the upcoming elections. They also demonstrated the same growth patterns, recognizing how certain questions worked better first (to make people at ease), and demonstrating a capacity for adapting to

> each interview situation. They also showed increased awareness of important themes in the community, commenting to Amy especially that they had not realized what a historical year this was in the election with both Hilary Clinton and Barak Obama doing so well in the primaries. (Evaluation Submitted to the Harrisburg Institute, March, 2008, written by myself with input from Amy Skillman)

Another example of an introductory activity that created an opportunity for the students to bring their critical narratives and stories of their community into the classroom space came out of the visual arts class with our teaching artist Nataki Bhatti. Bhatti's activity involved the students starting a drawing on a blank sheet of paper. Each student, then, had to pass the drawing to the person seated to the right of them after a certain amount of time, forcing the students to be creative with the different designs that were morphing in front of them, adding their own personal touch to the work in progress. These early sessions are important for establishing trust, a safe space for working with tough questions, and protocol for how the information shared will be used. The activity presented some challenges: Half of the students used this opportunity to begin their drawing as simply a tag declaring their neighborhood affiliation (uptown, project girlz, 3rd Ward Souljah's, etc.). As soon as the other half of the class realized that this is what the students were doing, they all began tagging each others work—all except for one student. There were also many profanities on the pieces of paper by the end of the exercise. The students were definitely pushing, and trying to see how these yet untested adults would react and use these "paintings." Bhatti used these papers as an excellent entrée into a discussion about the different neighborhoods of Harrisburg, and the students began making observations about

the many characteristics, traditions, and challenges of their respective blocks. We asked about simple traditions that were easy for the students to "teach" us, such as the different hand signals that indicate which block you are from. This led to the students tackling more difficult issues. I transcribed some of the conversation that was led by one student in particular, but which also included other student voices who supported her statements or added their own perspectives. She began the conversation with an announcement: "We are all a part of a parentless generation." She then continued,

> We see all around us babies without parents. . . . Schools and education are getting pushed under the rug. People are more worried about economic development and building casinos than putting money into my education. People have money to make renovations and fix up buildings, but not for buying books or getting us teachers. (Fieldnotes, March 2008 written by myself)

Next she focused on her community: "The streets [of our hoods] will swallow you…. We live in a hell and are stuck in society. We just sit on the couch, not doing anything." She created a metaphor, noting that "Life is like a maze where cheese is the goal. But we don't know how to get to it. I see people in my hood trying to sell drugs and they try to fit in. You need to have a plan or you will get sucked in to this world…. You've got to want something, it all starts with desire or you won't make it out."[67]

A group of concerned teacher researchers from the Columbia University Teachers college noted with concern in the late 1990's that ambivalence about K-12 integration and access to quality education for all ethnicities had reached a crisis point: "At this

[67] These quotes all taken from evaluations submitted to the Harrisburg Institute of Messiah College, written by myself.

contentious moment in history, we write with the gall, the desire, and the sense of obligation to insist on public educational spaces that promise integration, offer democracy, and assure racial and class justice—before the bleach gets us all: (Fine et. al. 2000:162). Their article presents findings from a classroom that was attempting, through pedagogy, to create a space that allowed for students of all backgrounds to experience "honors" education. Michelle Fine found herself sitting daily in the class, noting that "Funneled through a lens of hierarchy and limited goods, standards, achievements, and excellence demand exclusivity. Michel Foucault (1977), Erika Apfelbaum (1979), and, most recently, Jean Anyon (1998) have argued in very different contexts that power is always in and around classrooms" (2000:171). I observed at this alternative school in both *Voices* projects. Specifically, I have noted that the most successful teachers were those who were also tying the learning to the local knowledge that the students could bring to the classroom. But often, there existed a culture clash and an inability for student, teacher, or administrator to understand the cultural constructs shaping so much of their school culture. Often the students exemplified what Maxine Green has recognized: "They may release their imaginations enough to project changes for themselves; but the damage they have suffered keeps them from coming together with others to share available space in such a way that the obstacles or the injustices they face are viewed as common concerns, not only to be resisted and escaped from but also to be transformed somehow and overcome" (Greene 2000:295). As with the other survival tactics recognized in this work, relying on oneself and distrusting the possibility of working in community affected the process in both *Voices* projects.

Taking from the final evaluation of the AY 2007-08 *Arts' Voice* project, I had noted that when we began this project, there was little desire on the part of the students to contribute to anything that was not going to benefit them personally. This sense of individualism and immediate gratification made early work difficult. If there was not a product for the student to be able to point to that they were making and that would be "done" at the end of the session, they were uninterested in participating and often would leave or be disrespectful during the program. I wrote in my evaluation,

> When I consider this as the starting point, and then note that the final production was entirely scripted, performed (memorized!), and rehearsed by these same students, the growth implied is substantial. Some audience members remarked that the student's performance was not as difficult as if they had performed some other script—that of a great known playwright, for example. However, it is especially in light of this goal that we can strongly disagree. The rhetoric and language that the students began to recognize as powerful; their beginning consciousness of being a medium to convey messages to an audience (a high-level curricular concept that is deceptive in its seeming simplicity); the discipline necessary to memorize lines; and the collaborative teamwork necessary to do a group presentation, all point to the student's beginning to work towards small goals and realize that there is a process necessary to realize greater projects—namely, projects that are bigger than themselves and bigger than their immediate need for survival. (Final Evaluation Submitted to the Harrisburg Institute June 2007, written by myself)

One moment that seems to best articulate this comes from an interview that I conducted with some of the students following their 2007 public performance. I asked Jennifer if she felt like her behaviors had changed at all, or if she felt like being a part of *Arts' Voice* had impacted any other part of her life. She responded, shy (and she is not known for shyness), that she didn't know. Jameshya, who was sitting further down the table and had not been actively participating in the feedback, couldn't resist and responded that Jennifer had actually changed quite a bit. Jameshya pointed out that at the

beginning of the year, Jennifer was always getting into trouble and starting incidents. Part of it, Jameshya reasoned, was that Jennifer always needed to be in the middle of everything and that she would make everyone else's business hers and that if someone else was getting attention that she would do what she could to make it focus on her. It was always just about her, and she had no room to concern herself with others or their needs. Jameshya paused and Jennifer verified with a grin, "yep, that sounds about right." Jameshya continued with her observations that on Saturday and in some of the rehearsals leading up to Saturday's performance, Jennifer had become a woman who was actually listening instead of always talking. She noticed that Jennifer was working to make sure that everyone, including herself, looked good when they were on the stage. When I asked Jennifer then what she thought about Jameshya's assessment, she smiled and said that it felt pretty good and that she was happy that Jameshya had noticed that about her (Personal Fieldnotes, May 2007).

Spoken Word artist Jason Moffitt also noted this in his evaluation, writing "All the students rolled with the technical mistakes that occurred; they never got flustered. They also helped and assisted one another throughout the production, picked each other up instead of taking the opportunity to tear someone down. There was growth in all the students on this day!" He also comments on the show, writing "I think the students did an outstanding job. The audience enjoyed the show. The students gained a sense of accomplishment. They were proud/felt good of/about what **they** had done." (Personal correspondence, June 2007)

The Role of Audience; The Importance of Critical Consciousness

The acknowledgement by Weis and Fine that many of these students "know" the narrative perpetuated about them especially by the media provides one entrée for a discussion of the process of developing a "critical consciousness." Critic bell hooks notes that "in relation to the post-modernist deconstruction of 'master' narratives, the yearning that wells in the hearts and minds of those whom such narratives have silenced is the longing for critical voice" (1990 [2001]: 2481). Hooks correlates the success of "rap" with its ability to afford this critical voice to the "underclasses." She quotes Lawrence Grossberg, who notes that appropriation of boasting through postmodern practices such as rap offers "forms of empowerment not only in the face of nihilism but precisely through the forms of nihilism itself: [making rap] an empowering nihilism, a moment of positivity through the production and structuring of affective relations" (qtd. in hooks 1990 [2001]: 2481-2). This resonates in interesting ways with McCarthy and Dimitriadis's argument (echoed in Trinh Minh-ha 1989) that "a sense of self, thus, is only possible through an annihilation or emptying out of the other. Indeed, while all processes of identity construction are relational, processes of resentment are explicitly nihilistic and reactive" (2000: 174). If through the processes of identity construction an Other has been created where the self as opposite is "good," it stands to good reason that this nihilism must be appropriated and used to restructure alternative identities.

One student, Jerry, participated in the program because a teacher knew that he was a rapper and encouraged him to come to our sessions. Jerry was the only student in the final hip-hop theatre production who did this as a volunteer for no school credit and

who had to come over from the other side of the building which housed a different alternative-education academic program. One of the teaching spoken word artists who worked with Jerry shared the following:

> [Jerry] entered this session with a 'I'm tired of doing this' attitude. He expressed the repetition of doing the piece was wearing him down, and he wanted to do something new… When we returned to the rest of the group [he] opened up and expressed some things that were going on in his life—things that in the beginning I don't believe he would share. A sense of trust has been built in this group that he felt comfortable enough to share those things with us. I feel there was a breakthrough with [Jerry] and his sharing was a cry for help or some direction to help him change his lifestyle. (Correspondence from teaching artist Jason Moffitt)

During the final public performance, Jerry's voice cracked as he was reciting his rap that used the hook, "My life is a nightmare, part of my life is showing no fear; For my family I care, responsibility, going to be there." As he continued, he describes working the streets and recognizing the needs and issues of others in his neighborhood and school: "Mothers crying for nothing, Until her son passed away then she's crying for something; So much pain, so much death, Little kids dying at the age of 6… It just ain't right, You can die in the morning, you can die at night, And you wonder why I'm the gangster type" (*Watzup.* 2007). This consideration of identity by Jerry asks the audience to understand what power the otherwise negative identity has for him. It is significant that at the beginning of the year, I could not understand anything that Jerry said because he mumbled and spoke quickly with his head and eyes down. As Jason's comments indicate, we continuously asked him to annunciate and repeat his raps until we could understand him. I believe that in the beginning he thought that a) he would be censored if we could hear what he was saying and b) that nobody really cared what he was saying. The power of his performance almost overwhelmed him at the production of Watzup. that

spring; his voice cracking as he worked through the hook brought together a year that was all about helping the students not only recognize that they have a voice, but that they can also have an audience for that voice.

In fact, one of the most important parts of the process was that of imagining, discovering a possibility for, and creating an audience for the students' voices. In order to understand how to move beyond Greene's critique of how stories of the marginalized are utilized in social contexts, I would argue that an understanding of audience for the student work needs to happen. In fact, if there is a "heart" or "core" to the argument that I hope this chapter makes about representation and folklife in education programming, it is that throughout this entire process it is an awareness of audience that needs to define and drive much of the work. That is not to say that the final product is valued over the process that students and teachers engage with in the program. However, being mindful of audience informs much of the work because as I am arguing, much of the work is inextricably bound up in the work of representation. Representation is elaborated in two interrelated, but distinct ways: Students finding their own voice and vision, and students using these tools to communicate their concerns, hopes, and fears about their neighborhoods and school to the larger community. By giving particular attention to the folklore and art forms that are culturally significant to the students and their communities, I believe that some students were able to create a vision of themselves as capable advocates for change and empowerment within their community and school contexts, as well as learn an appreciation for a diversity of arts and traditions. In fact, my realization that my research in folklife and education needed to be a part of this larger project interrogating re/presentational strategies in folklore work came out of my first year in the

school where it became obvious that it wasn't until the students became aware that they were engaging in a process of representation to an actual audience that we had more buy-in for the program. The very cynicism that students' expressed about sharing the stories and traditions of their neighborhoods to the interested teachers who lived on different blocks than they did began to evaporate when they began to believe that others would be listening and care about what they produced and said.

A powerful example of this came at a point three-fourths of the way through the first year. When we began our work in the school that fall, there were two sisters of Puerto Rican heritage who said very little to us in class. One teacher complained that the only things that they said in her math class was that they didn't understand or were unable to participate because they couldn't write English well enough. It became clear that they were using their language skills as an easy crutch to avoid having to really deal with the classroom and academic environment. We continued to work with them over the year, inviting them to participate, doing all Spanish dinners where they could teach *us* their language skills, etc. The first day of the spoken word club, they sat with their heads down and did not plan to participate. When the poets Iya and Jason came around to help individual students, Iya told them to go ahead and write in Spanish, she didn't care as long as they wrote. So they began to write about love and boyfriends, their brother in jail, their love of Puerto Rico… As the year continued, Iya asked them to start thinking about a piece that they could share in the final performance. Having recently seen a Def Poetry Jam video in the class, they decided that like the poetry duo *Yellow Rage* out of Philadelphia that they wanted to do a poem duet. We encouraged them to work on it, and

in the meantime realized that this was an opportunity to bring *Yellow Rage* to the class and lead a workshop.

We partnered with Nathaniel Gadsden of the Writers Wordshop at the Imani African Christian Church to host the event, giving the students another opportunity to see what resources exist in their own community for positive self-expression. Also, we wanted to invite the other poets so that they could act as models for our students in terms of how to act and behave at a poetry event and workshop, and also to have a slightly expanded audience for the students than what they were familiar with. The performance by Yellow Rage was dynamic and it was clear the students were interested in their work. We asked each of the students to get up and share the spoken word pieces they had been working on with us and Yellow Rage. Four students ended up sharing, including the sisters. When the two got in front of the small audience, they began to giggle and the older one said "I don't think that I can do this." They both started to back out, saying that they couldn't remember the words. We convinced them that we were all rooting for them and that they just needed to do their best. Quietly, but with increasing energy the girls performed their poem "Ricans don't play":

> Sister 1. *Estos cabrones gringos no saben que nosotros Puertoriqueno no jugamos*. Y'all wanna know what I just said, then maybe u should take some RICAN CLASSES. Then u know what I just said. Always trying to tell us what to do or what to say. We r fucking tired of the same shit,
> Both: "NO SPEAKING SPANISH PLEASE".
> Sister 2: You know after a while that shit gets annoying, [loud] always criticizing the way we dress, the way we walk and the way we speak. Just in case u forget Ricans counts as 2, while u count as one. Well, the reason I say that is because we have 2 languages, so what I'm trying to say is
> Both: "We are way smarter then u." … (First section of "Ricans Don't Play," taken from the *Watzup*. script as written by Kelley and Rayne)

Yellow Rage complemented them and encouraged them to continue their work. Then, one of the members of the Writers Wordshop came forward and introduced himself to the girls. He told them that he was Hispanic and that what their poem was about was really true and important. He finished the conversation noting that he was really glad that he was able to hear their work because other people need to hear their perspective. As I drove them home from the event that night, the older sister said to me, “our show is going to be really good because it is real. The issues and the stories are real.” She also commented that she could now see their stories actually making a difference. Kelley hadn't realized that there was another Hispanic in the audience; his comments really made her realize for the first time how they were being heard by others. I think that it was the first time that she connected the power of words to the fact that there was an *audience* who was going to be able to take something away from the performance that was really meaningful. She told me, "I think that our words can really make a difference...that we can start to change how people see us and how they think. This show is going to be really cool."

This comment heralded a change in attitude that affected the remainder of the work these girls did as a part of the production. Janet Bixler noted in her evaluation of the final event that “when [Kelley and Rayne] interacted with the audience and performed ***Ricans Don't Play*** with such intense power, volume, and ownership, I was floored. They stopped being hesitant students unaware of their strength to two young women that realize their ability to command an audience to listen to their opinions and feelings” (Personal correspondence, May 2007). They were the only two performers in the final piece that did NOT require a microphone. Also significant is the fact that when

one student did not show up to the final rehearsal, Kelley stepped forward and offered to read her part, working even to memorize it in the eventuality that she would have to perform it the next day. Given that she did not engage in the classroom at the beginning of the year and used language as an excuse not to participate, the fact that she now was commanding language as a tool of ownership and performance is one example of the power of this kind of work in the school.[68]

The student production that was presented to the larger public in May of 2007 presents many opportunities for us to understand the work and the power of the artforms in a school setting. Through rap and spoken word, visuals that include life-size self portraits and scenes of the high school lunch room, along with other theatrical conventions, students were asked to tell the story of who they are, how they got here, and

[68] Another example regarding the cultivation of the student's awareness of audience and their role as enacting representations, I take directly from a report that I wrote to the Harrisburg Institute in May 2007: "April has been a very busy and productive month as we have worked to craft and develop the production for May 19th. Of note are the two mini-performances where the students could share their work. The first was April 3rd at the HACC campus. Performing for the drama club in the Rose Lehrman black box theatre, [Tyra, Joseph, and Samone] had an opportunity to feel the pressure and work through the nerves to follow through and give a performance of the piece "Soul Gone Home." It should be noted that Joseph had chosen to not go to school this day. We called and told him that we were picking him up, and that he needed to perform with the others and not let them down. Samone was so nervous she kept walking around and saying that she didn't think that she was going to be able to do it. However, all three did perform and all three got more in to the piece as they went on—getting more comfortable with the performative aspect of the theatre. They all listened to the feedback following their performance and all three as they walked out of the theatre were more calm and there was a perceptible difference in their attitudes. We saw this as being a tremendous opportunity where they began to see how they needed to be accountable to each other, as well as where they began to sense how the *process* that they have been engaging with was getting them to these moments where real professional and social development could occur.

What is especially noteworthy is the difference that we noticed in these three in the next week immediately following this performance. The next day was the filming with a crew from CASA[a local art magnet school for high schoolers]. Again there was nervousness, but also a confidence inspired from their work the day before. They were able to joke around, but also get serious to make the art happen. After the filming we told them that they were free to stay or go—that the Arts' Voice staff were going to be staying around and having a meeting about the show and that we would love their input if they wanted to contribute. All three stayed and contributed in really meaningful ways to the very complex conversation about the direction of the show. We see this as an indication that they are beginning to take more ownership in the program. Their comments also indicated a better understanding of how planning is an integral part of making any larger project successful, a goal of our work."

where they are going. The opening spoken word piece set the scene of the high school lunch room, where Sarah remembered the stares she got from the other girls in her class when her pregnancy began to show, longing for the days when "lunch was just lunch, and not so complicated." In class and in after-school hours with artists, students wrote the script—a script that looked at their coming of age stories and traditions (or lack thereof). The students named the show *Watzup. Life Unpredictable.* As Janet Bixler noted in her program notes, "Watzup. No, it isn't a question. It is a statement of TRUTH." Culminating in a hip-hop theatre production for the larger community, the student project provides an opportunity for education and dialogue to mitigate the documented fear and distrust linked to class, race, and social conditions[69]. The process of developing this program, and some of the lessons learned, provides the entrée for my critical discussion regarding issues encountered in this type of work, including a critique of how the school itself acts as a culture that reinforces behaviors, thinking patterns, and certain assumptions of the students. (See Ritchhart et. al [2006]; Kodish and Wei [2002]; Winner and Hetland [2000]; Moonsammy [1991].)

Harvard's 40 year old "Project Zero" researches cognitive development and ways of learning by creating projects designed to consider, develop, and redefine educational curriculum and practice. One of these projects, "Artful thinking" has at its core a concern with "routine"—specifically routine thinking behaviors. They consider how these routines "promote the development of a student's thinking and the classroom culture" (Tishman and Palmer 2006:14). The connection between thinking and culture, as well as the relationship between creativity and a school or classroom as a community with

[69] See phrc.state.pa.us for statistics on elevated numbers of hate crime in the Central Pennsylvania region.

certain norms and taboos, resonates with our work at the alternative school. Often, my optimism and enthusiasm for the "power of arts in education" came face to face with a school that lacks adequate resources, teacher support, and student services.[70] Moreover, I became increasingly concerned that the "culture" of the school district was one that identified students at this "alternative" school as being already solely a behavior issue and therefore not one to be educated, but rather contained and herded through a process that does not see them as being an "investment" with the possibility of high returns.[71] As another member of the *Arts' Voice* team commented, "[The teacher] is desperate to create a sense of community spirit within the walls of William Penn. She sees the school as a wasteland of sorts—a place to dump kids that just can't cut it at a regular public school. She believes there's compassion for the students, but there is no positive, strong sense of

[70] Janet Bixler commented on this in one of her evaluation reports sent to me: "It is commonly heard that something is only as strong as its weakest link. Never before in my life has this sentiment been clearer. What was our weak link?...the overwhelmed school administration at William Penn high school. Not only did they not present a regular, supportive presence, but they also did not have a clear system of checks and balances regarding student accountability. This is [I believe] the primary reason why student attendance was so sporadic. Why were students continually coming to school on drugs? Why could the students say they were going to work or a job interview with no proof and then simply leave school? Why did the administration appear to place their work on the teachers thus preventing the teachers from undisturbed teaching? Why when during the one mid-year meeting where the administration attempted to build cohesiveness among the artists and teachers did they more clearly demonstrate their skill at commandeering? Why did the administration when having set edicts not follow-up and show appreciation when the "orders" where followed? Why did the administration not stay for the production's talk back session or take time to show their appreciation to the students and Arts' Voice team the following week?" (Personal correspondence, May 2007).

71 This is certainly corroborated in Tyra's comments below noting her boredom in this school due to poorly managed classes and curriculum. However, I am aware of the critical point that Payne makes regarding judgmental pronouncements and urban schools and hope that the argument I offer is nuanced in balanced in its assessment. Payne worries: "Just as teachers are too quick to conclude that nothing's going to work with these children, reformers come to think that the reforms they advocate are right, they will work, just not here, not in this school, not with this particular group of hard-headed teachers and untalented administrators. Just as teachers are always saying they could teach if someone gave them better students, reformers are always thinking they could implement their programs if someone would just give them better people to work with. The reform community, partly because of its sheer arrogance, its ideological rigidity, its inability to enter into genuine partnerships with school people, its ideological rigidity, has squandered much of the moral capital, much of the strategic positioning, that it held at the beginning of the 1990s" (2008: 50).

school morale. Without this, the students will remain disengaged with their education and potential" (Personal Correspondence from Janet Bixler, June 2007).

The Dauphin County Juvenile Probation office notes that youth crimes in Harrisburg City and the surrounding area have incrementally increased every year since 2000, and as of August 2007 there has been a 7.5% increase over 2006. The total number of youth received into the system had already increased 12.7% as of August 2007 (Suknaic, et. al. 2006 [2007]). The story that the staff at ICP has seen goes beyond the statistics, however. During our interactions with the students, it became clear that many did not have a connection to community support networks for opportunities and mentoring; many lacked motivation to seek out these opportunities. We also found tension between different ethnic groups expressed in a variety of appropriate and inappropriate ways. This was clearly expressed in "Ricans Don't Play" when Kelley and Rayne decided that the best way to start the poem for the final performance was to ask the audience to yell at them what they felt they heard in their school and their community every day: "English only!" and "Go back to Puerto Rico!" Other inappropriate expressions come out through graffiti tags, fights, and peer malice.

The work for a folklorist in this setting is immense and at the same time fitting. Armed with our toolbox that includes attention to the local and belief in the power of culture to shape narratives of places and people, there is a great need for our services. Yet, I also quickly acknowledge our shortfalls; namely, that most of us are not trained teachers nor do many of us, (and I emphatically include myself), wish to be in a classroom on an everyday basis. Almost 20 years ago at the 1988 American Folklore Society Annual Meetings, a panel was convened to consider the ways in which folk arts

in education could best adapt to the needs and trends of the educational systems[72]. There was an emphasis on trying to ride the wave of multiculturalism and all of its promise (Nusz 1991: 7). Now I would argue that educators are uneasy with the easy banality of multi-cultural work; "No Child Left Behind" has wrecked havoc on the arts and humanities in many school curricula—although "diversity" still has some cache, and there are a few special programs to go with the various ghetto-ized months of the school calendar. I propose that we shift this paradigm and reconsider what it is WE think is important about being a folklorist in the school. Is it about bringing diversity education to the work, or is it about strengthening the cultures of the students who attend that school? What if we don't see ourselves as experts who bring "stuff" to the educational drawing board, but instead we bring our tools for fieldwork, cultural surveys, and oral history collection to the classroom? How can our methodologies, rather than attempting to reinvent the scholastic models, provide alternatives that work congenially with or parallel to the current methodologies in the classroom?

As I consider the spaces in which many folklorists find themselves working, many are in the local and the public. Debora Kodish and Deborah Wei have noted that a link exists between cultural equity and educational equity, making public education an arena that intersects in multiple ways with other public sector work. They specifically consider the role of privatization in the Philadelphia school district and how that process mirrors other cultural phenomena being noted by folklorists: "As a folk arts agency, we see this disinvestment in local communities and the homogenization and disparaging of

[72] The group of folklorists who participated in this panel included Peggy Bulger, Gregory Hansen, Nancy Nusz, and Janis Rosenberg. A special issue of *Southern Folklore* (48[1]) was released in 1991 featuring papers that had come out of that panel and other solicited essays on folklife in education, edited by Nancy J. Nusz.

what counts as local, critical and community-based knowledge as parallel processes to those which have stripped our communities of skilled craftspeople and practitioners of meaningful collective art forms, replacing them with chain stores and shoddy mass-produced generica" (2002: np). I read this next to the work of social psychologist Michelle Fine, whose work in educational field settings presents an argument for what she calls a need for creating a "space of intentional interruption" in the classroom. The concept will be familiar to those who understand the power of narrative to create a space to create alternative stories that contest, disrupt, mask, etc. master narratives that had heretofore seemed impervious. While many of the students in any school, including at William Penn, have a number of narratives about themselves as a neighborhood, a generation, and an ethnicity, there are also narratives, or cultural constructs, of the school system that reinforce and prescribe attitude, behaviors, and learning aptitudes.

One significant issue relative to these acts of understanding the power of words and the acts of representation to which the students were reacting came about as we attempted to finalize the *Watzup.* script. Throughout the year we encouraged the students to simply express themselves. We did not censor. We invited conversations about the ways to best and most effectively convey their messages to a specific audience, recognizing that tone and register must change for different circumstances and scenarios. We found that most helpful in starting these conversations was doing work at a radio station operated by a local liberal arts college. While we did not want to censor the students in the school, the radio station presented a whole new set of rules dictated by the FCC. The broadcast signal did not extend pass the campus borders, but the Harrisburg students immediately understood that they were on the radio and that some number of

people, maybe a lot of people, were going to listen to what they had to say. They planned their discussions. They executed conversations without swear words. They gained confidence, working with young college students on the project and learning how to operate the microphones and other basic equipment.

As we moved closer to putting together a script for the final public performance, we asked the students to consider what they wanted to say to that live audience, and to create a production that would tell a public that consisted of family, community members, and strangers more about who they were and who they wanted to become. This was much more difficult than the radio shows, because it was asking them to imagine a live audience (many students had never experienced a play or show with a live audience), and it was asking them to plan for something that was still two months away—a task that seemed impossible to many of these students who were more comfortable with projects where they could immediately see results. Then, on April 4, 2007, as planning continued, Don Imus on a syndicated talk- show host caught the nation's attention with his comments which characterized the Rutgers girls basketball team using racially-charged jokes. A debate swelled among talk show commentators, national news anchors, and at the local level, as people wondered about the intersections of race and language, and if it was ever ok to use any of the terms, used derogatively or not, associated with different ethnicities. A meeting was called for the program staff, and we invited any students who were interested to participate. We needed to discuss the language that the students were writing into the play—especially the use of the word "Nigga."

As we began the meeting, we noted the debates we had been hearing and said that we weren't sure if we could move forward with a script that had the N-word throughout.

In a private conversation earlier, a teacher working with the team said that we needed to censor this word. I asked the students how they felt about this suggestion, and they got angry at the proposal. They noted that we "couldn't just come in here and change the rules. You said that these are our words and that you wouldn't censor." I responded that this was true, and asked them what solution they would like to propose. Tyra noted that she didn't even use that word anymore after hearing a poem by one of our artists, Iya Isoke, but that she wanted to leave it in her poem because that is how she wrote it and it reflects who she was when she wrote it.[73]

This statement by Tyra is rich in many ways. Most significantly, it points to her understanding that she is changing as a result of this process. She wanted to have some sort of a tangible reminder of who she was when we started, so that she would not forget. As she was continuing to change and assess her priorities, she did not want to lightly dismiss products that she had already created. Her friend Jameshya then came up with a plan. She said that we needed to stage a debate within the performance explaining this progression that we were talking about right now in the classroom. We agreed to that solution. Was it risky? Yes. But it was important to have the students feel that we would listen to their ideas, and that we personally believed their thoughts were brilliant,

[73]Excerpt from Tyra's poem:
" I have been here since 10:30-45 am today
I have been getting into trouble
I am really kind of hurt cuz I wasn't doin nuttin'
I got yelled at by 3 teachers
The whole time they are yellin'
I'm thinkin' of ways to get back at him
I'm thinkin' I'm going fuck dis nigga up
Dumb ass…" (First section of poem as written by Tyra in *Watzup.* script)

though still perhaps a little controversial for a high school play. Jameshya and Tyra worked together on the following script:

S: "Why can't you be more respectful and not use that negative word?..."

T: "Cause he's a nigga."

S: "But our great grandparents fought…"

T: "They fought to end the use of the word 'nigger,' not 'nigga'—it's different…"

S: "What's the difference…"

T: "one you use with friends… If you aren't my friend, you can't call me nigga"

S: "Can I ask you a question, are you a racist?"

Pause. Both are quiet.

Iya Isoke reads her poem, "Change Your Vernacular."

T: (To audience): What people don't know is that when you use a word like that you are empowering it. My own thinking has changed since I heard this poem by Iya. I realized that I need to get that word out of my vocabulary. My piece that we did earlier reflects a very real time in my life, but when I heard Iya's words, I changed my own thoughts on the subject. (*Watzup.* 2007)

The response that we had to the show was overwhelmingly positive. Roughly 55% of the audience at the final production were family members of the students. This success in getting family to the final show is a real testament to the importance that the students began to attach to their own work, as well as to some of the work that program staff had done to make sure parents knew about the upcoming event and why it was important for their student. In the talkback session following the presentation, many of

the parents were moved to tears—expressing their pride, love, and surprise in their students for the work that they had put in to the production. As Jason wrote in his final evaluation: "I think for the parents, family, and friends that attended the final production they have a new sense of the person they came to see" (Personal correspondence, May 2007). This speaks to the voices that the students were able to find and bring to the public and their families in the performance.[74] Community members were also profoundly affected. As one woman (a prominent state employee who works with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission) commented, what these students did was courageous, important, and worthwhile and needed to be commended. For the students to hear this was yet another important step in the process that this program is all about. For what is truly powerful about this work is that students have been equipped with the necessary tools to move forward. As Jason Moffit wrote for the *Watzup*. program essay: "We wanted to create a space that these young people could grow, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. We wanted them to develop skills that they can take far beyond what you will see today."

Next Steps: Finding Voice for the Future

[74]As teaching artist Iya Isoke wrote for the *Watzup*. program essay: "These students appearing in this program are no strangers to labels they have born the brunt of being slapped ferociously with them; wearing them like second skin. When Jason Moffitt and I walked into our first Spoken Word Session we felt a willingness to go the distance. Once we lifted the traditional classroom veil and allowed the students to freely speak life to their own lives...they became open and eager to express. During my time with these students, humbly guiding them in ways to effectively express their feelings I was NOT surprised to find bouquets of roses growing from the concrete. (Tupac). After this performance I'm sure there will be some who will still slap labels on these brilliantly progressive, striving, courageous students and we will continue to equip them to handle it. For now, this is their time to slap back."

Ultimately, I find that the student voices documented, expressed, and represented through this project reflect stories of lunch and love; maturity and growing up to fast; and community found and lost. The process of developing and articulating these stories reflects thoughtful curricula, dedicated collaboration, and flexibility. I end with the assertion that we need continued research, presenting both quantitative and qualitative assessments in folk arts in education initiatives, especially relative to alternative education models. At a planning meeting for AY 2007-08, folklorists, teachers, administrators, and key students who participated in the first year of the ICP program sat at a table and offered their insights about what they would consider were the most important aspects for an alternative education program for Harrisburg youth. Participants were asked to share their thoughts about education in general, and disengaged youth, and urban education, in particular. Teacher Louise Morgan asked that they frame their responses as "The most important things to consider in this curriculum" or, "This is what I know about teaching our students," and "My wish list for our students." The fact that all of us were included at the table implies the value that teachers and administration placed on the program AY 2006-07. The fact that no arts had been in the school except for Louise Morgan's individual efforts before the *Arts' Voice* project, and that now a group of teachers had met over the summer to design an entire arts curriculum is one example of anecdotal evidence that the program on this basic level was very successful.

Morgan began the process of answering the question above. She noted that in her experience, one-on-one interaction between students and teachers was a real key. She also noted that social and emotional needs must be addressed on an ongoing basis, that students need authentic relationships with caring adults, coaching toward interests and

skills, and that family involvement is important whenever possible. In terms of the students' education, academic gaps need to be identified and strategies must be created with all of the stakeholders—students, parents, and teachers—to close gaps. Students also need guidance toward meaningful work as well as expressive and performance activities to help with both social and academic skills, a "rich" environment that exposes them to new and interesting ideas and people, and, finally, students need to begin their learning where they are, with critical tools that help them understand their real life experiences whether it is about drugs, homelessness, conflicts, or other challenges. A real strength that I noted as I heard her recite her goals was her insistence on seeing students as active participants in what she sees as the transformative experience of education. There is a recognition that adults, including adults that do not come from the same social community as the students, can be useful guides, but only within relationships that ask students to define their needs and hopes for the mentoring relationship.

I would contrast this approach with that of one of the mentor specialists in the school. He stressed the importance of structure, consistency, positive interactions, developing coping skills such as anger management, as well as teaching students how to have positive relationships with parents, other students, and staff. His focus was on the *structure* of the classroom and behavior modifications. Much of his work focused on what he could bring to the class, rather than what the student could bring to the enterprise. I believe that because of the intense process the *Arts' Voice* team engaged in during AY06-07, and the subsequent evaluations that were produced, Louise was able to articulate a different model of education that relied more on creating critical

consciousness of the students through activity and curriculum rather than through behavior modification.

The student representative, Tyra, spoke last. The first thing that she noted was that she was often bored in school; she said she wanted something that she could actually look forward to and be challenged by. She specifically challenged the curriculum and classes she has had to take while a student at the alternative high school, noting that she has taken the exact same math class three years in a row. She asked us, "How am I supposed to get into college if I haven't even had a chance to learn anything pass Algebra? I tell the teachers that I already know this and they tell me 'good', that means you will do well in my class." She worried aloud that it was easier for the district and the teachers to not move her along in her courses or care about the kind of education that she was receiving then offer her challenging courses. Her next comment brought the realities that she faced at school parallel and face-to-face with her home life. She wondered why the school didn't realize that most of the students were also in charge of families at home, taking care of siblings or their own children. She said that it was ironic that they would try to hold "Parent-Teacher" conferences, and asked us in the room why they can't talk to *her* about her own education and hear her concerns about education. Instead, she told us that most teachers only give her "disrespect" and don't want to acknowledge that she has something to bring to the table too. "A teacher doesn't ask questions, she just starts telling me what to do, not even knowing what I already know," she said. Referencing the work that she did in *Arts' Voice*, she said "I expressed a lot that I didn't even know that I had, because you guys took the time to help me see all of that." Tyra's comments helped facilitate the rest of this discussion toward the new alternative program and its structure.

Her comments also indicated the growth that Tyra exhibited coming out of the previous year's program. She has found a way to get a space at the table where decisions were being made, and she began finding ways to get an audience to whom she could address her concerns about her own education and personal goals.

I include these notes from the conversation because I see this as contributing to the on-going evaluation that we are conducting of the program. Assessing the teacher and staff understanding of the relationship of curriculum and the ethnographic process provides a snapshot of evidence that can then be compared with teacher and staff perceptions at the close of the year. We do not have the funding or staff resources to create and implement a comprehensive quantitative evaluation model for the program. This is one of the weaker areas of much of this work. As Winner and Hetland note in their description of a special edition "Arts and Academic Achievement: What the evidence shows" in the *Journal of Aesthetic Education*: "What is needed are comparisons of academically strong vs. academically at-risk students taught the same subject matter with and without the arts as entry points. Can we identify students who first experience success in the art form, and subsequently go on to show heightened interest and effort in the academic subject matter? And do levels of interest and/or motivation predict later achievement in that subject matter?" (2000). The *Arts Voice* programs currently have not had access to a control group to understand in a larger and quantitative environment the impact and results of the program. However, I have used the analysis above as a qualitative assessment that all of the program participants contributed to throughout the year. By continuing to evaluate the progress of students

such as Tyra, we hope to assess longitudinally, as well as immediately, the impact of a program steeped in both art and ethnographic methods.

There are several important criteria to consider when reviewing program effectiveness, including evidence of meeting the established objectives, sustained effect, replication across multiple sites. Folklorists need to document and qualify, if not quantify, evidence that they are engaging with these criteria. In 2007 there was a discussion on Publore (a national listserve for folklorists) that was prompted by a question from Dale Johnson asking for quantitative or qualitative evidence of the development of student skills through the use of interviewing in the classroom (email sent 1/24/2007). A number of useful emails came in response—none of which could offer quantitative evidence, but many compiled anecdotal evidence to underscore the positive results of this process. Mark Wagler noted that

> Over [20] years I have seen outstanding student learning in two main curricular areas. First, students have developed deep skills in observing culture and seeing patterns, and gone beyond surfaces to profoundly change the ways they think about themselves and others…. Second, I have witnessed significant changes in language development when interviewing and other oral language skills are consciously taught and used. (email sent 1/25/2007)

Wagler concluded that "…I strongly doubt that the most important changes of teaching with interviewing can be observed quantitatively. When instruction is constructivist and project-based, many components combine to support student learning. When these components are isolated for quantitative study, as Wordsworth wrote, 'we murder to dissect'" (email sent 1/25/2007).

Another cautionary note regarding the use of traditional assessment with these projects comes from Winner and Hetland who note that non-arts outcomes should never

justify arts-based projects (2000). Too often program directors and teachers are quick to show that a program has contributed to rising test scores or academic achievement to the detriment of the intrinsic foundation of that very program. What is needed instead is greater attention to the ethnographic that can assert that by participating in these types of projects students are not only gaining valuable knowledge about themselves and their communities, but that they are also empowered to engage with the narratives of and about their cohort, creating moments for positive changes in other aspects of their lives and education. Arguing for theory-driven studies of art programs, Winner and Hetland write that "researchers need to carry out ethnographic studies of exemplary schools that grant the arts a serious role in the curriculum. What kinds of innovations have been made in these schools to foster excellence?" (2000: np). As we continue to move forward with folklife in education programming, we continue to build evidence of how the program not only interacts with the culture of the school and student, but how it allows for a space where students can engage with their own identity constructs as well as other factors that impact upon the learning process. While the program outlined above may not be the traditional folklife-in-education program that intends to expand awareness of and appreciation for the traditions that richly express cultural identity and community, it is a program uniquely guided by the discipline and methodology of folklore. By increasing awareness of the multiple acts of representation that are already inherently a part of the educational process and continuing to advocate for an ethnographic process as a pedagogically sound educational practice, folklorists have much to offer in the classroom.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Growing up I entertained multiple dreams of the kind of occupation that I would like to find myself in. One of my more romantic ideas was that of the bank robber, a la Robin Hood. It seemed challenging, a good opportunity to defeat the system, so to speak. As a youngster, I had tacked to my walls the Tom Robbins quote from *Still Life With Woodpecker* "Outlaws are the can openers in the supermarket of life." Is it any surprise, then, that my research interests look at the fabric of social life to see where opportunities for alternative voices and visions can be not only incorporated, but empowered? I harbor a vision of life that does look a bit like a supermarket—full of products that are artfully marketed to the consumer, sitting next products that are grown locally or produced by a family-owned business or ethnic-specific for recipes I cannot imagine but would love to learn about. At the risk of taking the metaphor too far, I would note that in this same supermarket in my mind I fantasize about not only opening its cans for more people to taste those things they may have been unsure of before, but also that foods of all variety will be a source of pride for the communities that prepare and eat them. I invite all consumers to join me in dismantling the current structure that carefully "brands" products, and find new ways to get the nutrients we need without the slick narratives of what "they" say we need. Through adaptation we can enact processes of production and consumption that prove to empower everyday practices.

I take the term "everyday practices" from Michel de Certeau, who argues that when one considers the representation of groups, one needs to consider not only modes of presentation and production, but also modes of use and behavior. de Certeau argues that another form of "production" within a social group is that of "consumption." This mode of use is "devious, it is dispersed, but it insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisibly, because it does not manifest itself through its own products, but rather through its *ways of using* the products imposed by a dominant economic order" (1984:xii-xiii). There are a number of implications for this statement, not the least of which is that as modes of representation are identified as being informed by "master narratives", we must think about what creates the interface between lived experience and the narratives for individuals and communities. DeCerteau notes that in order to understand representation as circulated by those with "power" in a system, "We must first analyze its manipulation by users who are not its makers. Only then can we gauge the difference or similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilization" (xiii). Just as the students in the alternative education program began to consider how the use of words such as "nigga" interface with representations that inform their lives, de Certeau's approach opens up a space in the social fabric that gives us a place to start talking about the things which are invisible only for the fact that they are unmarked in their articulations. As de Certeau writes, "[the marginalized group's] use of the dominant social order deflected its power, which they lacked the means to challenge; they escaped it without leaving it" (xiii). In other words, because the acts are ordinary, or expected, they are unremarkable in how they function for the doer. The articulated acts,

in their seeming complicity with the system of power, allow protestations of empowerment to flourish within the system.

All social systems exist in multi-layered contexts. Too often we are quick to look for the binary—those with power and those marginalized—as we begin to theorize the work that we practice daily in the field and in our own attempts to understand the relationships of people to traditions that are practiced and passed on through generations and serve as important representational markers of cultural identity. Since 2006 I have accompanied Dr. Juanamaria Cordones-Cook to Cuba, filming oral histories with Afro-Cuban writers and artists who came of age during the years of the revolution. Especially working with the medium of film, interesting opportunities to observe modes of representation present themselves. A visitor to Cuba may note the scarcity of resources and find the practices of everyday life exotic in their poverty and necessity, but in both the country of origin and its Diaspora, creative acts are defining a tradition that is often "unmarked," while powerful in its discursive abilities.

As I was doing some research to prepare for one of our trips, I came across an article by Megan Quinn who while studying organic and community farming methods in Cuba claimed to have often heard, "Necessity is the mother of invention," (www.globalpublicmedia.com/articles/657, accessed October 10, 2006). I would contrast this with the comment that I heard frequently in conversations doing research in Havana and Santiago de Cuba: "Es muy dificil/ It is very difficult." There was no stated "but," yet for the majority of people when they expressed this they were actually saying much more. Perhaps this is even what Ms. Quinn also heard and reinterpreted for her American audiences as a recognizable quip, but I think that it is very important to note the stark

difference between the American characterizations that I see in Quinn's and others' articles about specific practices causally linked to the "special period"[75]. In these characterizations, while lauding the ingenuity and cleverness of the Cuban poor subjected to a nation-state lacking infrastructure and hard currency, there is also a tone of passivity regarding the Cuban experience. These gardens were grown, these carts were modified, these books were crafted, etc. *because the Cuban people had no choice but to find alternatives for survival.* Two important things should be brought out of this insight: That these narratives are about producing power and that ultimately, they are about representational practices.

For the Cuban to say that things are difficult constitutes a representational act. There is the warning that one should not exoticize or romanticize the lack of available resources. There is also an acknowledgement that what they are doing is not easy. Their words serve as a critique of the societal world of which they are a part. The phrase is perhaps more distinctive for what it does not say. In simply saying that "it is difficult", the speaker is representing for their perceived audience that they still have choices, and that they are not only defined through identified needs. The phrase does not name that which is difficult. As a tool of representation it points to power, but does not clearly give or take that power. Many of the representations produced through creative practice within Cuba reproduce the asymmetrical power already seen between the societal institutions and the people. And this is the way it is supposed to be. In essence, the system of representation of the Cuban people would not work if those who are trying to make sense of what they saw or experienced while partaking in their food, art, music, etc.

[75] The "special period" refers to the difficult times in Cuba following the collapse of the Soviet communist state. This included extreme shortages of food and hard currency, as well as other basic staples of life.

deviated from the state-sanctioned notions of conformity. It would be dangerous for other representations to exist on a very practical level. "Es muy dificil" participates in all the superficial levels of maintaining boundaries, and at the same time works as a placeholder of self-representation that challenges the boundaries that are seemingly being upheld. Fernando Coronil finds that there is "no such thing as an immaculate representation. Since all representations are saturated with history, the issue is to recognize the implications of their involvement in history" (1996:73). While this clearly is speaking to the imperialistic gaze that Edward Said, Mary Louise Pratt, and others have noted, this is also true of the "production" of practices that can be read as auto-representational. In other words, the representation is produced by the subject through means which engage with the colonizer's own terms. Rather than bringing to the fore representational practices that call attention to themselves as representative, these representational practices live in the precarious world of code and stratagem.

And while this example uses the material and cultural trappings of Cuba as a point of departure for discussion, the larger question that I believe is very relevant to the field of folklore today is, what can a folklorist bring to the table in negotiating the roles of tourism, global markets, and political systems relative to the larger issue of self-representation? The question that remains for me to answer more directly and that has, implicitly, guided much of my work through these projects asks how a study of re/presenting traditions is relevant to my work in the field. A related question is, how does this kind of research impact the relevancy of the field of folklore? I detest the solipsistic rituals that seem to accompany many academic exercises and accordingly, throughout this work I have tried to resist the urge to simply get something on paper so

that this chapter of my young career could be complete. Instead, I look to the many brilliant minds that have shaped the theories and framework of the discipline; I consider the philosophers who muse about the ways things "mean" and constitute systems of belief and knowing; I look at the people who may or may not value their own everyday practices and beliefs informed by tradition; and I look at the future to how all of the dialog can continue to inform and improve practice in the field. I have begun with my own experiences in order to begin a critique because I value understanding how my own practice can be more thoughtful and grounded in the best and most innovative practices of our discipline.

As I conclude, I want to consider some of the specific ways in which this work has impacted my practice as a folklorist, and noting the things that I am continuing to work on and believe need additional attention in future study and work. This work has impacted my practice when I characterize what a folk and traditional artist or art form is to audiences when I give a talk. From the brief "elevator speech" to those who are curious about what a folklorist does, to the technical assistance I offer artists who are trying to decide if they should apply for certain grant applications, to the advocacy that I do with and on behalf of communities and their traditional art forms, to the grants I write for funding—all of these require that I represent people and/or cultural communities in careful and specific ways. If I am advocating for artists who are especially challenged by the digital divide and are negatively impacted by a funding agency to switch to an on-line grant format, I need to know how to best characterize that community's needs without negatively impacting their representation to that agency. If I have a project completed by urban youth about their communities, I need to characterize the youth and their work to a

press person whose story could choose to focus on the controversial language or content without the right kind of framing before they experience the art. While these acts are not happening in a museum or on a stage, they are all at the same time creating, influencing, and editing the narratives that exist about different folk and different cultural communities. All of these narratives are about identity, power, and politics.

At the same time, while I am much more invested in process, there often is a public product that accompanies my work when there is a museum, festival, or performance for a public. Currently, Amy Skillman and I are co-project directors developing a statewide traveling exhibition on contemporary folk and traditional arts in Pennsylvania. In 2007-2008 we obtained a planning grant to help facilitate meetings for a year to discover the right theme and content for the exhibition. Included in the meetings were representatives of different art forms and communities that we hoped to highlight in the exhibition. Two of the artists who participated in the planning process were people who had learned English as adults, having relocated to the United States as refugees or for better opportunities. This is significant because the educational programming that will be accompanying the exhibition is specifically targeted to the very underserved population of adult education learners, a group that includes English Language Learners[76] and those working on their Graduation Equivalency Degrees.

This collaborative planning process was a learning experience for me, because rather than immediately bringing insightful ways that their art forms and cultural communities could be thoughtfully and insightfully represented, most of the tradition-bearers present advocated traditional ideas of exhibition that were theoretically

[76] ELL is now the preferred term, replacing the term ESL (English as a Second Language).

problematic in terms of what I have articulated throughout this project. They could only visualize exhibits they had seen in the past; hence, there was a crisis of imagination about how to best represent themselves and other traditional artists. This experience helped me understand a part of what a folklorist can bring to the collaborative table in the process: the right questions to help those who don't engage with issues of public presentation on a regular basis. A folklorist can bring a sense of vision to begin discussions, and a healthy dose of humility so that after we provide some of these professional tools, we can listen as the artists and tradition bearers explain what they deem necessary given their own cultural aesthetics and needs. As Cristina Kreps noted, "If we think of curating as social practice it follows that change is a constant" (2003: np). For the folklorist, there often exists an aesthetic and sense of social practice informed by what could be characterized as regional and national perspectives. As an artist or tradition bearer, the macro-language and process of the exhibition or performance for public events may not be transparent, but given the right framework, their insights prove invaluable in terms of creating an empowering event for the community and artist that does not contain and confine, but rather empowers and enriches.

One point needs to be made to conclude this particular project: Folklore as a discipline is relevant. The work that I everyday do as a folklorist is relevant. While this research has presented many of the challenges inherent in the work of representation, I believe that the study of it has pointed to the ways in which our tools of ethnography and cultural survey, our theories of performance and the emergent event, and our ability to work across disciplines makes folklore as a field well-positioned to address contemporary needs and issues facing our many diverse communities today.

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Vita

Elizabeth (Lisa) Rathje grew up in Ankeny, Iowa. She received bachelor degrees in English and philosophy from Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa. Before starting her Masters degree at the University of Missouri, she served as an Americorps*VISTA volunteer in Columbia, Missouri, working on a tutoring program for at-risk youth. While a graduate student at Missouri she worked closely with the Missouri Folk Arts Program, assisting with archival work, fieldwork, grant panels, photography, as well as being an outside evaluator for their statewide Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program. Rathje taught university classes in ethnographic research methodologies and folklore studies, served as Assistant Editor for the Journal of American Folklore, and worked as the Assistant to the Director of the Center for Arts and Humanities. In 2005, she conducted cultural survey research for the Smithsonian's Latino Chicago folklife program, and worked as a presenter with "Nuestra Musica" at the 2006 Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

After completing her comprehensive exams, Rathje joined the staff of ICP in January of 2006 as the Arts and Heritage Specialist. She administers the Fellowships and Apprenticeships in Folk and Traditional Arts Program for Pennsylvania; including technical assistance, program management, site visits, and documentation. Rathje is also involved with multiple projects developing curriculum and youth programs using traditional arts and ethnographic process. In an ongoing research project, Lisa Rathje is assisting Dr. Juanamaria Cordones-Cook from the University of Missouri with a documentary film on Afro-Cuban artist Nancy Morejón and others of her generation.

Rathje's documentation through photos and film will form a part of the Nancy Morejón Afro-Romance Special Collection housed at the University of Missouri.

Lisa Rathje currently lives in midtown Harrisburg, Pennsylvania with her husband Rob, and their three cats, Chester, Luke, and Shadow.