Navajo Voices: Country Music and the Politics of Language and Belonging

by

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Aaron Fox

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Cultural Anthropology in the Graduate School of Duke University

2012
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates identity, citizenship, and belonging on the Navajo (Diné) Nation in Arizona and New Mexico through an ethnographic study of Navajo country western bands and the politics of Navajo language use. As the second largest tribe in the United States, the Navajo have often been portrayed by scholars as a singular and somewhat monolithic entity. But my dissertation tracks the ways that Navajos distinguish themselves from one another by dint of geographic location, physical appearance, linguistic abilities, degree of Navajo or Indian blood, class affiliations and musical taste. I focus on how a Navajo politics of sameness and difference indexes larger ideas and perceptions of “social authenticity” linked to the ability to speak, look and act “Navajo.” Based on 28 months of fieldwork, the dissertations draws on three types of qualitative data: 1) interviews with Navajo country music performers and Navajo language activists 2) participant observation that included playing with three Navajo country bands and living on the reservation 3) discourse analysis of musical performances, band rehearsals, Navajo newspaper articles and other media. The resulting study joins linguistic anthropology, the anthropology of music (ethnomusicology) and American Indian Studies to show how “being Navajo” is contested and debated, and, more broadly, to interrogate the complex ways that indigenous identities are negotiated across multiple, often-contradictory and crisscrossing axes.
Dedication

Díí she’awéé’ bá
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Acknowledgements

My entry into Navajo country music began, as for many Navajo, with an invitation. In 1997, as a seasonal ranger at Canyon de Chelly National Monument, I was invited to attend a country western dance at the old Chinle Community Center on the Arizona side of the Navajo reservation. The band, *Aces Wild*, was (and is still) a reservation favorite and my friends wanted to catch them while they were still in town. Years later, writing my Master’s thesis and then conducting dissertation fieldwork, I interviewed the members of this band for the local country music radio station, KTNN AM 660, and attended more of their dances as a fan. I then began playing with numerous bands myself, and thus began to learn about Navajo country music as a vibrant and active community of practice.

Although many members of the larger musical community contributed to my work in some way, there are a few families to whom I owe a special thanks. Shizhéé Tommy Bia, shimá Helen Bia, Arlondo Bia, LeAnder Bia, Eddie Mason, Sr., and extended members of the Bia family of Many Farms, AZ, welcomed me into their band, *Native Country*, their lives and their family. They showed me how music, humor and daily life inform one another and are thus inseparable. Members of the Craig family and *The Wranglers*—and especially shizhéé Carson Craig and shádí Candice Craig—provided a sense of family closer to “home” in Crownpoint, graciously included me in their family festivities and always welcomed me to join them on stage, however last minute the plan on my part. Musicians from the band,
Re-Coil, also invited me into their musical family, teased me with good humor, and generally made me welcome. I thank all the musicians who taught me how to listen not only to the music, but also to the conversation within the conversation.

On the language side of things, there are a few families to whom I also owe a special debt. The Kee Tom family of Rough Rock, AZ, welcomed me into their ceremonial hooghan, converting it into a cozy and livable space for me to stay in during the fall and winter months of 2009. Shimá Jane Tom, shicheii Kee Tom and shádí Karen Morgan in particular tolerated my faux pas with grace and humor, laughing when I thought I lost their sheep and got lost in a blizzard one mile from their house and patiently continuing to speak to me in Navajo throughout. Lorraine Begay-Manavi and Paul Platero of UNM, Albuquerque, provided excellent language instruction during my one semester there and generously gave me their time outside of class. At Canyon de Chelly, Wilson Hunter, Inez Paddock, William Yazzie, Kenneth Watchman and Kelvin Watchman all served as some of my first Navajo teachers on the reservation. Finally, Shimá Shirley Bowman and Navajo language teacher extraordinaire provided language tutelage, friendship, conversation, political commentary and extraordinary insight into the relationship between Navajo language and culture for the duration of my field research and beyond. I have been particularly fortunate to have her help in translations and Navajo orthography for the dissertation, although all final errors of course are my own. Her guidance, mentorship and continued friendship have truly been a gift and a blessing. Bina'nitin ayóó bągh ahee nisin.
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Crownpoint Chapter President, McGarrett Pablo, was enthusiastic about my project from the get-go and made Crownpoint feel like a welcoming home base from which to base my field research. Earl Tulley went out of his way to connect me with
anyone he knew and always had an encouraging word whenever I bumped into him at political events on the reservation. Former doctor at Chinle IHS, Charlotte Lin, introduced me to the members of Native Country and provided a safe and inviting place to stay when I was playing with the band in Chinle. Finally, I am especially grateful for the help and support of Ron Maldonado and the Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department (NNHPD). A Navajo-mandated IRB, the NNHPD provided me with my ethnographic research permit. Without their consent, any and all research on the reservation would have been null and void.

In conducting this research, I have been very fortunate to receive financial support from many institutions. Grants from the Jacob’s Research Fund of the Whatcom Museum, the Lynn Reyer Foundation, the Duke Graduate School, and an ASU Summer Enrichment Grant allowed me to travel to the reservation, purchase media equipment and pay my assistants. My primary sources of support, however, came from the Duke Department of Cultural Anthropology and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. This support enabled me to stay on the reservation for over two years and turned doing a second year of research from a strong desire into a reality.

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At Duke and elsewhere, mentors, colleagues and friends have also provided insightful critique, feedback and emotional support at crucial junctures. Doug MacDonald, Shauna Catania, Matthew Sakakeeny, Rosemary Hicks, Kristin Solli, Dana Powell, Kevin Sobel-Read, Louisa Lombard, Spencer Orey, Jagna Cyganik, Anthony Webster, Kimberley Marshall, Amber DeBardelaben, Courtney Lewis, Julie Reed, Jean Dennison and Tom Guthrie have been especially helpful in pushing me to think through central aspects of this dissertation and providing written feedback on various incarnations of this work. In addition, all principle interlocutors also had the opportunity to read drafts and provided important insight and critique which made the manuscript stronger. David Samuels generously read drafts and met with me to discuss everything from research methods and playing country music to learning Navajo and the politics of language research in Indian country. His scholarship and writing are an inspiration to me.

Finally, I am deeply indebted to the late David P. McAllester, Professor Emeritus of Wesleyan University. While still in high school, David introduced me to the Navajo language, tutored me in it free of charge for one year, and encouraged me to travel to the “Big Rez” in order to become a better speaker. Although it might sound overly sentimental to say so, things haven’t quite been the same since our paths first crossed. Ahehee’ lą́ą!

Lastly, I acknowledge my mother and father, my flute teachers—Jane Laning, Gro Sandvik and Sandra Miller—and the Music Department at the University of Vermont: thank you for instilling in me the love of music, teaching me the thrill of performance, and cultivating the craft that is making music with others. My mother,
Helen Moorefield, also provided crucial assistance in proofreading the dissertation.

Responsibility for any errors in what follows, of course, is mine alone.

Kristina M. Jacobsen, Duke University, 11/28/11
Introduction

Thursday, July 1st, 2010. An older Navajo lady stands in line in front of me at the Mustang gas station on the south side of Chinle, Arizona. In Navajo, she asks the teenage Navajo cashier for kerosene.¹ Not understanding her, the cashier shrugs his shoulders in embarrassment. The middle-aged lady in front of me intervenes, translating the older lady's request to the cashier. The older lady, finally realizing that the cashier doesn't understand Navajo, complains with obvious irritation: “Yáadi lá Diné!” [What kind of Navajo are you?]

(7/01/2010, Mustang Gas Station, Chinle, Arizona).

What does it mean to be authentically “Navajo,”¹ and who decides and by what criteria? How does an aggressively accusatory question like “Yáadi lá Diné!”² point to the expectation, for example, that those with Navajo “blood” should also speak the Navajo language? And what happens, in the case of the teenage cashier, when they don’t? How is Navajo belonging also parsed, judged, and debated in and through geography, generational differences, preservation politics, phenotype, gender and sound (specifically language and music), and what is at stake in such assessments within Navajo social spaces today? This dissertation takes up the themes of Navajo identity, difference and belonging. I seek to explore the points of friction about who is perceived as being more or less “indigenous” and how these

¹ Following local practice, I use the ethnonym “Diné” (singular) [pronounced “Di-neh"] or “Dine’é” (plural) and “Navajo” interchangeably.

² Please refer to the “Navajo Pronunciation Guide,” Appendix A.
tensions are continually negotiated through both linguistic and musical performance as well as in daily discourse. In tandem with this, I examine how Navajos negotiate different ideologies of authenticity in order to make claims to cultural belonging, national sovereignty, civic rights and resources. Through the lenses of language, geography, politics of commemoration, bloodedness and musical taste, I focus on the micro-politics of difference and authenticity as these are produced and reiterated within and beyond the borders of the Navajo Nation.

I also take up the larger structural forces that shape difference and belonging in this dissertation. Important here are economics, the government-to-government relationship between the Navajo Nation and the U.S. Nation, and the larger, if sometimes precarious, social fact of tribal economic, political and social sovereignty. Defined as a “bundle of inherent rights” but also as something that is “continually negotiated” (Lambert 2007: 210; 18), sovereignty’s influence is seen in Navajo public discourse in letters to the editor of The Navajo Times (the main weekly Navajo National newspaper), for example, that refer to leaving the reservation as “going stateside.” Such thinking reveals two crucial facts about contemporary Navajo political and social realities: first, the keen awareness of being a distinctive “nation within a nation” that informs Navajo ways of viewing the world and influences relations between the tribe, state and federal government. Second, and more specifically, the employment of the term “stateside” indexes the disproportionately high number of Navajos who volunteer in the United States.

3 For example, see a letter from tribal member André Leonard, Chinle, AZ in The Navajo Times, 6/03/2010: A7.
military, including the letter writer, Andre Leonard, and also many of the male musicians I played with while doing my fieldwork. Thus, rather than the homogenizing force it is often understood to be, military service becomes a way for Navajos to express cultural and political distinction as Navajos (Clevenger 2010: 9, 10). In this way, ideas of difference and belonging, Navajo nationalism, sovereignty and patriotism for the U.S. nation all converge in the shared sacrifice that is voluntary Navajo service in the United States armed forces.

As a non-Native, I seek to understand and analyze tensions and “foreign relations” between Navajos and their off-reservation, border town neighbors, including other Native tribes in the region and the racially dominant majority known as “Anglos” living in off-reservation towns such as Page, Winslow, AZ, and Gallup, NM and Cortez, CO. There is a long, on-going history of racial friction and discrimination against Native residents (including Navajos). As one response, the Navajo Nation has recently spearheaded a human rights commission (NNHRC) to investigate past and current conditions for residents and those who shop in these towns on weekends. I analyze how Navajo musicians today navigate this treacherous terrain through their own decisions of where to perform—for example, on-reservation versus off—what repertoire to play, whether to feature “stage banter” in Navajo, English or (sometimes) Spanish, all the while retaining their own senses of cultural and political distinction over and above these other stylistic and linguistic choices they performatively negotiate. In this way, I show how some expressions of Navajoness are flexible and negotiated, while others—an affective
attachment to place and the lived experience of being from what Supreme Court Justice John Marshall called a “domestic dependent nation,” for example—are private, non-negotiable and often not shared in public contexts such as bars and chapterhouses⁴ at all. Thus, through performances of language and music specifically, certain kinds of Navajoness—also sometimes parsed in the broader frames of being “Indian,” “Native,” and, less often, “indigenous”—are publicly celebrated; others are elided or hidden from view.

I also look at discourses of Navajo social authenticity and forms of belonging. Within this framework, I build on ideas of political identity and citizenship within the Navajo Nation—a given for most of the musicians and Navajo speakers I worked with—in order to examine other forms of Navajoness that are less inclusive than the broader, political identity of being an “enrolled” Navajo. In this way, I follow identity ethnographically through its performance in and through music and language. In order to recreate these ethnographic moments more vividly for the reader, throughout this study I often write encounters into the present tense, taking 2008-2010 as what Feld and others have referred to as the “historical ethnographic present” (Feld 1990:9; Seizer 2005: 18).

Within this context, linguistic and racial identities in particular—the latter often being associated with physical appearance and “phenotype”—sometimes get used as the clear-cut seeming “litmus test” for what is actually the inchoate, shifting difficult-to-pinpoint thing that is Navajo belonging and social authenticity. Thus, the

⁴ Chapterhouses are Navajo municipal buildings where political and social events take place.
skill with which one does or doesn’t speak Navajo (about ¾ of the tribe self-reported in 2000 as speaking some Navajo in their home) and the way in which one does or doesn’t appear phenotypically Navajo—such as having black hair, dark eyes and brown skin—are sometimes used as indices to determine one’s social authenticity and “right” to belong within a broader social community of Navajos or Dine’é.

Finally, throughout this dissertation I reflect on the politics of ethnographic practice on Navajo land. Here I use my experience of fieldwork—including as an ethnographer, language learner and musician—to interrogate what it means to “do anthropology” in Indian country today. Historically, relations between anthropologists and Indians have been precarious at best, often fraught with tension, misunderstanding and distrust. As I found, anthropology remains a politicized domain of knowledge production, and I encountered varied and sometimes skeptical views of my role among many of my interlocutors, many of whom have college degrees. I discovered, perhaps unsurprisingly, how savvy many Navajos are not only to anthropological method but also to the anthropological politics of knowledge and to the ramifications of my research. These discussions—ones which, I argue, wouldn’t have occurred in this same fashion fifty years ago—profoundly influenced the direction my research took; they speak to a relationship

5 In the 2000 Census, 83.3% of Navajos age 18 + identified as “speaking a Native language in the home,” and 74.0% of youth ages 5-18 were listed as such. However, as the authors of The State of Native Nations caution, these “estimates should not be interpreted as fluency or even comfort communicating in the given language; they only indicate that it is likely that the stated percentage of individuals sometimes use Native language in the home” (2008: 284).
now much more of equals and intellectual peers than that of the all-knowing anthropologist and the less formally educated research “subject.” And yet, at the same time, there is no denying my own racial privilege as a non-Navajo in these relationships, reflected in my level of education and geographic mobility. Thus, much of my research content was dictated by the needs, desires and intellectual interests of my Navajo interlocutors. These changing dynamics, I argue, have profound ramifications not only for the direction that the nature of the relationship between anthropology and Native North America will take in future scholarly endeavors but also for the ways we as anthropologists think about the “field” and “doing research.”

***************

1. Arrivals and Introductions

I arrived in Crownpoint, New Mexico—located in the eastern portion of the Navajo reservation—in late August 2008. The area is characterized by the muted, pastel colors of white limestone, pale green chert and light pink sandstone of northwestern New Mexico. Crownpoint itself is the prototypical dry, dusty reservation town and home to the main Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) “seat” of the Nation’s Eastern Agency.

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6 This was my third visit to Crownpoint since early 2000, but my first time living there.
After getting situated in a small apartment, I set out a few days later to begin my journey in finding a Navajo language teacher and tutor, walking the local flea market, the Laundromat and the Basha’s supermarket in order to make small talk with town residents. I felt learning Navajo was essential, and I also contacted theNavajo Nation Senior Center\(^7\) in Crownpoint and asked if they might be interested in having someone come a few times a week to visit with the “elders” who frequent the center in order to practice my Navajo. After some discussion, the center director,

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\(^7\) The Navajo Nation operates 93 senior centers on the Navajo Nation. Centers are run through the Navajo Area Agency on Aging (NAAA), [http://www.naaa.navajo.org/senior_citizen_cntr.html](http://www.naaa.navajo.org/senior_citizen_cntr.html).
matriarch Constance Casamero, somewhat reluctantly agrees to have me come in two mornings a week to talk with elders and to try to come up with some activities—cross-stitch, games, sewing—that we might do together as a group. After meeting some of the (mostly female) seniors during my first morning (9/25/09) at the center and coming up with an activity game-plan, it became clear that some of the women who are bilingual (Navajo/English) are hesitant to speak to me in Navajo; they are used to talking Navajo to Navajos and English to Anglos. At the same time, the oldest monolingual speakers expressed surprise and even seemed to enjoy the fact that I was trying to stutter along in their heritage language. I also learned that Constance rules the center with an iron fist, and heard some general debate about whether the Navajo Nation Senior centers are for exclusive Navajo use or whether non-Na

vajo Seniors living in Crownpoint are also eligible to partake in the free daily lunch.

Come lunchtime, I volunteered to help the head-cook, Ethel, serve the hot lunch—homemade tortillas, roast mutton, and sautéed summer squash, along with a large vat of steaming “Navajo tea.” When I returned on Thursday at 9 am for conversation practice and activities, Constance tells me that the driver is running

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8 Unless specified otherwise, throughout the dissertation I use pseudonyms for my interlocutors.

9 The question about eligibility surfaced frequently because of one non-Na
vajo individual who regularly attended the Senior Center’s lunch program. An Anglo BIA employee, this individual had worked in Crownpoint for most of his adult life and seemed to be on friendly terms with local residents, including his fellow seniors.

10 Mutton is a staple celebratory food for many Navajos past and present. In the Navajo context, it can refer to the meat of either an adult sheep or goat.

11 “Navajo tea” [Ch’il ahwééhe], also called “Indian tea” or “Mormon Tea,” is an herbal tea made from a yellow flower that grows on reservation roadsides in the summer months.
late and the seniors won’t be dropped off until closer to lunch-time. I am assigned, instead, to enter data onto index cards—seniors’ census numbers,\(^\text{12}\) age, addresses, last physical check-ups and spouses—using an old, manual typewriter. The task is arduous, particularly because the whiteout has run out and I keep entering the data on the wrong line. Constance comes over and eyes me dubiously, asking if I really know how to type and whether I’m qualified to do what I’m doing. I respond in the affirmative, explaining that I simply haven’t used a typewriter much and am more comfortable on a computer. However, after a few more minutes she has me removed from the typewriter and replaced by another volunteer, Cory; I am sent back to the kitchen to wash pots and pans generated from lunch preparation. Pots and pans sounds simple enough, especially compared to a using an archaic manual typewriter. I donned a pair of large, industrial-strength yellow rubber gloves that reach almost up to my armpits, filling up both the deep steel vats with hot water and suds. I heard Tray, Constance’ nephew, arrive with the van, which means the seniors are finally here, but it’s close to lunch by now and I know that there won’t be any time for craft activities or chit-chat in Navajo today.

After washing pots and pans by myself for 45 minutes, Ethel and Cory begin serving lunch through the kitchen window that opens into the dining room. I finished with the pots and release two stoppers to drain the water from both sinks.

\(^{12}\text{Specific census numbers are assigned to all enrolled members of federally recognized American Indian tribes. For enrolled Navajos, the census number appears on their Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) card, a card issued by the Navajo Nation Office of Vital Records (Tribal Enrollment Services) which specifies one’s percentage of “Indian blood” and which uses a tribal roll from January 1st, 1940 to determine its enrolled members. Only enrolled Navajo citizens have census numbers (Spruhan 2008: 11). Prior to 1975, CIB cards were issued by the BIA.}\)
Immediately, water starts spraying all over the kitchen from beneath the sink, soaking me, Ethel and Cory. Water begins flooding the floor, too, and starts to spread over toward the door that opens into the dining room, where all the seniors are standing in line, patiently waiting for their lunch. I panic. Ethel drops her serving spoon and runs out into the dining room to the cleaning closet, grabs a floor mop and runs back into the kitchen, commanding: “start mopping!” By this time, water has begun to trickle into the dining room, and a few minutes later, Constance herself walks in, demanding to know what is going on. Chagrined, soaked and exasperated, I try to explain myself. She silently nods and walks away.

On the morning of day three as a volunteer at the Senior Center, I call to confirm what time I should come in. Constance tells me that the tribe has suddenly and mysteriously revoked funding for Navajo Nation vehicles (such as the transport vans driven by André) and that the Senior Program is temporarily suspended. She adds that I don’t need to come in any more as a volunteer. Suspecting this may not be the whole truth but knowing I’d been canned nonetheless, my stint as a volunteer at the Crownpoint Senior Center is over. Two days later, walking to the local Basha’s supermarket from our apartment, I see André drive by in one the Senior Center vans, seniors in tow: the vans are up and running, but I am not invited back.

*   *   *   *   *   *   *

These early experiences foreshadowed many of the dilemmas and themes that would recur throughout my research. For a start, the reluctance of older bilingual Navajos to speak to outsiders in Navajo was a common frustration I had.
In addition, the fact that most of my Navajo language teachers—both formally and informally—would be older women was also anticipated by it being Mae, Nancy and others at the center who took me under their wing and agreed to teach me Navajo and do arts and crafts together. This became important because spending time and learning from an older woman was, I learned, the culturally appropriate way to learn as a woman myself. Finally, a non-Navajo speaking Navajo was something relatively rare, and, by turns, created complications and provided crucial connections and inroads for my fieldwork. Thus speaking Navajo—or at least making the effort—had a certain symbolic capital that became important in showing my own investments and in learning about a Navajo ethnography of speaking. At the same time, while the majority of bilingual Navajos I spoke with in Navajo appreciated and helped with my language learning efforts, this didn’t necessarily mean they were interested in communicating to me in Navajo. From their perspective, as English speakers it was more efficient and left less room for error if they simply spoke to me in my mother tongue (English) rather than Navajo.13 Determined to improve my own Navajo and to communicate with older, monolingual Navajos in Navajo—a goal of mine since I was a teenager has been to become fully fluent—I thus quickly learned that it was more culturally appropriate to learn my Navajo in more formalized contexts from female Navajo educators and linguists who were comfortable, eager and willing to teach and speak to me in Navajo. Later, I could practice these new words and phrases in more organic,

13 In this regard, I usually followed my interlocutor’s lead; if s/he code-switched from Navajo into English and indicated the desire to speak in English, I usually followed suit.
situational contexts such as at the “Flea Market” on Fridays or with my host parents during my three month “home stay” at a hooghan\textsuperscript{14} in Rough Rock, Arizona.

After my failure at the Senior Center, I continued to look for a Navajo speech community or language instructor. Enquiring at the other tribal college in town, Diné College Crownpoint, I was pointed to Shirley Bowman, Navajo language instructor extraordinaire and life-long devotee of teaching Navajo language and culture to her own Diné people. Shirley was to become my primary Navajo teacher, mentor and friend during my fieldwork experience. She agreed to let me audit her Navajo 201 class, “Navajo Literacy for Speakers,” and shortly thereafter we also began meeting independently of class, working first in the main foyer of the college, then in her home, and finally at the dialysis clinic while she received treatment for kidney failure, brought on, she explained, by overwork and stress.\textsuperscript{15}

Sitting with Shirley at the Crownpoint Dialysis Center as she received treatment, together we first came up with a Navajo language “introduction” (refer to Appendix 2a, b and c). This was the way that I was encouraged, by Shirley and other teachers in the past, to formally introduce myself, my ethnicities, my profession and

\textsuperscript{14} A hooghan [pronounced “hoo-wan”] is a circular structure used by Navajos for dwelling and ceremonial purposes. It has a cribbed roof and is traditionally made from logs and adobe clay/mud. More specifically called a hooghan nimazi [round hooghan or female hooghan], hooghans can have anywhere from 6-16 sides; the one I lived in was a female hooghan and had eight sides. In addition to the traditional materials, today hooghans are made from any and all available materials, including ply wood, timber, tin, and dry wall. Since most Navajo ceremonies are performed during the summer months, the hooghan was not in use for ceremonies during the time I lived in it.

\textsuperscript{15} At the time when she was diagnosed with diabetes and kidney failure, Shirley was working full-time as the Navajo language and culture instructor at the Crownpoint Community School (a local school funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs), teaching two classes at Diné College, at a branch four hours away on a smaller, satellite Navajo reservation called Alamo, and taking classes at New Mexico Highlands University.
my marital status to other Navajo speakers—usually adults older than myself. Since I was a guest on Navajo land, I was told that the Native language introduction would be heard as a sign of respect, an audible and performative\textsuperscript{16} form of deference indicating I had taken the time to learn at the least the rudimentaries of Navajo. Thus, in keeping with larger themes of this dissertation, introducing myself in Navajo became a way in which I, too, performed my own cultural difference and outsider status and, at the same time, also became a performance of a temporary form of quasi-belonging.

On my long hikes with my dog on top of the mesa (\textit{dah azká}) on Crownpoint’s south side, I would memorize bits and pieces of the introduction off of my digital voice recorder, until I could perform it without hesitating and presented it to Shirley at another lesson in the dialysis clinic. For the first year of my fieldwork, we met like this, three times a week, for 2-3 hours at a time in the dialysis clinic, often driving together to and from the clinic before and after dialysis. My introduction in Navajo varied somewhat depending on the setting (typically either a musical performance,\textsuperscript{17} a classroom, a family gathering, or a first introduction of import, i.e. to a band I was hoping to play with), and is given in detail in Appendix 2a.

I would use this formal and formulaic introduction in my tripartite role as musician, language learner and ethnographer throughout my 27 months of fieldwork on the reservation. As I do throughout the dissertation for Navajo words, I

\textsuperscript{16}There is a highly performative quality to introductions in the Navajo language. For example, many Navajos who don’t necessarily speak or understand Navajo know how to introduce themselves in Navajo and do so when the occasion calls for it.

\textsuperscript{17}In musical parlance, such performances are often referred to as “gigs.”
provide two levels of translation from Navajo to English, providing first the literal translation for this introduction, followed by a more vernacular English rendition. This is because Navajo nouns—and neologisms, such as “the guitar that cries” for steel guitar, in particular—are extremely descriptive, so that even with the description translated into English the referential meaning is still often lost for non-Navajo speakers. Literal translations of Navajo words also can help to show how Navajos see the world, as seen in the Navajo word for computer, béésh ntsíkeesígíí or “thinking metal.” Since I am Anglo—or a bilagáana in Navajo parlance—I have no Navajo clans, so early on I substituted my European ethnicities where one would usually introduce one’s four Navajo clans.18

A “Native language introduction” is often an important icebreaker as a format19 to showcase linguistic and cultural knowledge and to reveal one’s Navajo clans and/or non-Navao ethnicities and other tribal affiliations. In Navajo contexts, it is important to be up-front about one’s clans because, in the traditional Navajo way (T’áá Diné bik’ehgo), Navajos aren’t supposed to marry other Navajos with whom they share their first two (maternal and paternal) clans.20 As such, it is a

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18 In my “Navajo introduction,” I also eventually became comfortable enough to attempt my first humorous pun in Navajo. Since the word for a Navajo ceremonial practitioner (“medicine man”) and singer is the same in Navajo—hataalii—I identify myself first as a hataalii and then go on to specify that I (obviously) am not a ceremonial “singer” but rather a singer of country western songs, instead. This was sometimes followed by a few giggles.

19 Originally a legal term denoting Indian land held in trust by the U.S. government, I use “Indian country” in its non-legal sense to denote American Indian social spaces, both on-reservation and off, across the continental United States.

20 This is traditionally considered a form of incest, because those with whom one shares a first or second clan are your brother and sister. In some communities and families, one also shouldn’t marry someone from any of one’s four clan groups or any of the “related” clan groups.
particular performance of one’s identity transmitted and mediated through a highly stylized and formulaic linguistic format. In hearing a person reveal their clans, the listener can then establish a relationship—grandma, grandpa, brother, sister, mother, daughter—to the person in question and thus establish k’é or kinship with that individual. Ideally, a person is balanced between their four clans and doesn’t let one clan predominate over the others.

Revealing yet another way that Navajos distinguish among and between each other, clans, like Western zodiac signs, are each understood to have their own characteristics and personalities, for example Naakai Dine’é (Mexican People Clan) are seen to be very skilled in public oratory and in holding political office, and Todích’ii’niiis (Bitter Water People Clan) are seen to be very knowledgeable about traditional culture and are often ceremonial practitioners and medicine men. Bit’ahniis (Fold Arms People Clan), on the other hand, are known to be very hard workers, be very educated, and to have a lighter skin tone than other Navajo clans. The characteristics of this last clan were revealed, for example, in a conversation Tommy, Arlondo and I had while eating roasted corn stew (neeshjįįzhįį) at a food stand in Chinle. After ordering our food and sitting down, a middle-aged lady21 joined us and began talking about her two daughters, one of whom (the older one) is a doctor at Fort Defiance hospital.22 Obviously proud of her older daughter’s achievements, she began comparing her two offspring, noting how the one who’s a

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21 Following local practice, I use “lady” rather than ”woman.”

22 This is an Indian Health Services hospital located on the Arizona side of the reservation in the town of Fort Defiance.
doctor “really looks like a Bit’ahnii [the first of her four clans]” and has “light, smooth skin” while her other daughter resembles her father’s clan [the second of her four clans] and looks like she’s from the “real rez,” has ch’izhii [rough], slightly darker skin and doesn’t yet have the educational aspirations of her sister. Thus, using her daughters’ clans as a way to explain their different personality and phenotypic “types,” this lady mapped these differences onto extant Navajo social hierarchies based on class, education and physical appearance.

The introduction also shows the frequently literal, emplacing and descriptive qualities of the Navajo language and, in comparing the length of introductions 1b) and 1c), the sheer length of many Navajo words in general. These descriptive qualities—and the way a noun can be created for just about anything even if it didn’t exist before—are perhaps seen most clearly in the word that Shirley suggested I use for “steel guitar.” Since there are very few steel players out on Navajo—one of the reasons I chose this instrument to begin with—and thus there is no codified Navajo noun for it, she asked me to describe the sound of the instrument first, and based on that description she then chose “the guitar that cries.” As the iconic country instrument simulating the ravaged, crying voice of grief and loss, I couldn’t have put it better myself. Although a term that she invented, this description often elicited amusement and head nods from my Navajo-speaking listeners.

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23 This lady then went on to compare the “real rez,” which in this conversation was a beautiful, rural peninsula on the eastern side of Canyon de Chelly called “Black Rock,” against more “urban” reservation spaces such as Chinle.
The Navajo Language and Navajo Country Music

My first contact with the Navajo language had come when I was sixteen during my junior year of high school. Always interested in languages, I learned through my mother that a noted Emeritus Professor and fluent speaker of Navajo, the late David P. McAllester, lived near my hometown of Great Barrington, Massachusetts, and we asked him if he would be interested in tutoring me in Navajo. During my year of learning beginning Navajo with David, he regaled me with tales of his life on the Navajo reservation as an anthropologist, and introduced me to the discipline of ethnomusicology, his sub-specialty. I can still recall the sound of him singing traditional Skip Dance songs (often code-mixed in Navajo and English) to me in the basement of the Simon’s Rock Library language lab where we would meet for my lessons. David encouraged me to travel to the Navajo Nation to continue my Navajo language studies, and I would do so many times. Thus, although I haven’t been “adopted” by the Navajo tribe (as detective writer Tony Hillerman and others have claimed about themselves) and this dissertation is very much an outsider’s account, living on the Navajo reservation has strongly shaped both my sense of self and the ways in which I see the world at large and the disciplines of anthropology and ethnomusicology in particular. It was on one such visit, for example, during a summer when I worked as a Ranger for Canyon de Chelly National Monument in

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24 I have lived on the reservation on and off since my first visit when I was in high school (1997). Prior to beginning my fieldwork, I lived there for extended periods while I worked as a Ranger at Canyon de Chelly, a teacher at Rough Rock Community School, a radio station intern at KTNN in Window Rock, and when I took Navajo language classes and lived in the dorms at Diné College, Tsaile.
Chinle Arizona, that I was introduced to the vibrant scene that is Navajo country music.

July 1998. One evening, I was invited to a country “dance” at the old Chinle Community Center by new acquaintances Wanda Benally and Aileema Ahasteen. A popular band, “Aces Wild,” was playing and they wanted to catch the band while they're still in town. Wearing my Park Service hiking boots since I didn't own any western “cowboy” boots, I agree to join and jumped in Aileema’s white pickup for the six-mile drive from Park Service Housing to “downtown” Chinle. We arrived to a packed parking lot and slowly make our way into the gymnasium. Once inside, the scene was electrifying: hundreds of moving bodies, Navajo cowboys and cowgirls, decked out in their finest, couple-dancing their way around the make-shift dance floor. On the stage, a Grateful Dead-style jam-band featuring four men, two Navajos, two Anglos in cowboy getup, singing early Merle Haggard and Waylon Jennings classics in two- and three-part harmonies, repeating popular songs two, three and sometimes four times based on crowd response. There was barely room to move. Realizing that I am probably the only person in the room without Western boots and that I am also the only Anglo, I retreated into a shadowy corner with my friends, until, lo and behold, I am asked out on the dance-floor, despite my clunky boots, by a dashing Navajo cowboy wearing a ten-gallon hat and what my new friends identify later as Tony Lama boots. “This is the Texas two-step,” the gentlemen leading me around the room informed me, and we awkwardly lunched through the crowd, my
face flushed with self-consciousness as I adjust to the two-step pattern of quick-
quick, slow, slow.

Ever since that moment, I have been intrigued not only by the fact of Indian
“cowboy” bands but also by the widespread popularity of these bands across the
reservation for an older generation of Navajo fans, musicians and dancers. Working
at a Navajo language, country-format radio station in order to interview some of the
musicians in this scene, I wrote about it for my Master’s thesis, and followed its
progress during each return visit to Navajo country. In particular, I was intrigued by
the way that this music scene—and the cowboy attire that comes with it—
profundely disrupts the dichotomy of “cowboys and Indians.” As Michael Martin
Murphey put it in 1976 in his song, “Cherokee Fiddle,”25 “Now the Indians are
dressing up like cowboys/And the cowboys are putting leather and turquoise on”
(“Cherokee Fiddle,” 1976). The Navajo country scene continues to flourish. Today,
at least sixty bands perform, no small number given that fewer than 200,000 people
live on the “Big Rez.” Inspired by Samuels’ work among the Apache (2004), to get to
know this scene more intimately—one I have now been acquainted with for nearly
fifteen years—I decided to learn the lap-steel guitar and make the attempt to
become a “temporary insider” in this subculture by singing and playing with a
Navajo country band for my dissertation field research.

Multi-Sited Research Methodology

25 “Cherokee Fiddle” was written by Michael Martin Murphy (1976), recorded by Johnny Lee (1980)
and later used in the soundtrack for the film, Urban Cowboy.
My decision to play with a country band is inspired by my earlier graduate training in ethnomusicology. Most specifically, I was inspired by the work of Aaron Fox (1992, 1995, 1997, 2004a, 2004b) and David Samuels (1998, 1999, 2004a, 2004b), whose musical ethnographies were based on their participation in country bands in Texas and San Carlos, respectively. From the perspective of wanting to do an “anthropology of music,” I understand participation in musical cultures different from my own—what ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood termed “bi-musicality”—as an in-depth form of “participant observation,” the modus operandi of standard anthropological field research (Hood 1960). The benefits of becoming an active participant in a musical group are many; namely, as microcosms of cultural practice (McAllester in Titon 2008; White 2008), musical groups are by definition intense, political, often highly gendered domains where allegiances of many stripes are central to the identity of the group. Being a member of these bands gave me access to many of these tensions in action, often in relation to my own decisions and allegiances as a musician and community-external ethnographer. In the Navajo context, musicians are often intensely emotionally connected, sometimes literally through “blood” (family or clan) and sometimes through the intimate act of playing music together, referring to each other as “brother,” “cousin” and “father.” In this family setting, allegiances—who you play with and how dedicated you are to just one group—take on additional weight and the stakes are often increased multi-fold, such that leaving a band means not only leaving a musical community but often
going against your natal or clan-based family.\textsuperscript{26} Thus, playing with mostly-male country bands provided an ideal forum for exploring my interests in Navajo expressive practices, Navajo language politics and American Indian working class experience through popular cultural forms.

My dissertation research, which included learning Navajo and singing and playing with Navajo country western bands,\textsuperscript{27} took me across the main Navajo reservation, to Navajo “satellite”\textsuperscript{28} reservations such as Alamo and Ramah, and to “border towns” such as Farmington, Gallup and Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Page and Winslow, Arizona. I lived in many of these places for a stretch during my fieldwork.\textsuperscript{29} In this way, my multi-sited field research within and around the vast area of land designated as the “Navajo Nation” reflects a broader shift in anthropological field research, itself increasingly multi-sited, and also contrasts with older ethnographic models within the discipline of Navajo Studies.

For example, whereas earlier anthropological monographs about Navajo social life—such as Matthews' \textit{Navaho Legends} (1897), Reichard’s \textit{Social Life of the Navajo Indians} (1928) and McAllester’s \textit{Enemyway Music} (1954)—often featured

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\textsuperscript{26} In this context, being a “freelance” musician on the reservation is extremely challenging if not almost impossible.

\textsuperscript{27} Throughout my fieldwork, my goal was to evenly split my time between language learning and playing music/performing.

\textsuperscript{28} In addition to the main Navajo reservation—often called the “Big Rez”—there are three smaller satellite reservations located in other parts of New Mexico and each constituting their own ”chapter” (the equivalent of a county), each governed by the Navajo Tribe and of which there are 110 total. These satellite reservations are: Ramah, Alamo and Tohajilee.

\textsuperscript{29} This was motivated partly by fieldwork reasons and partly because I was teaching at Diné College myself for the last three semesters of fieldwork and needed to be within driving proximity to campuses in Crownpoint and then Chinle.
studies of one reservation locale (usually in Arizona) or one (usually male) individual, my multiple field sites reflect the many geographic locations where Navajo country bands play and perform, both on-reservation and off. My methodology also reflects the increasing number of places where Navajo is spoken and Navajo language classes are offered, such as Albuquerque (NM), Tucson, Phoenix and Flagstaff (AZ). This multi-sited approach, therefore, allowed me to mimic the movements and sojourns of many Navajos today, who also frequently travel between the reservation and its various border towns for work, study and errands.

During my fieldwork, I also frequently crossed back and forth across the Arizona and New Mexico portions of the reservation, living in both places for a time. My own nomadic path, and the responses it solicited, showed me that many Arizona and New Mexico reservation residents only infrequently cross the Chuska mountain range which divides AZ from NM. Thus, residents’ linguistic and cultural perceptions of each other were often informed by lack of regular contact and information. For example, when Native Country, an Arizona-based band, was planning to play a gig in my “hometown” of Crownpoint, two of the band members joked that they were entering a “new country” and related that they had only once

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30 Although there is a portion of the reservation also in Utah known as the “Utah strip,” I was unable to find any bands or language classes there that would warrant my living there for any extended period.

31 For the first ten months of my fieldwork (August 2008-June 2009), I lived in Crownpoint, NM. From July-September, 2009, I lived and worked as a Ranger at Chaco Culture National Historical Park, also in New Mexico. From October-December, 2009, I lived in a hooghan with my host parents in Rough Rock, Arizona, then back to New Mexico, this time to the off-reservation town of Gallup, NM. Finally, for the last eight months of my fieldwork I lived in Many Farms, Arizona (May-December 2010).
before visited Eastern Agency for rodeo. Ironically, my own residence on “Eastern” and, later, at Chaco Canyon, catalyzed their second visit to Eastern Agency. Thus, my own mobility between these two state jurisdictional spaces often prompted comments and stories about larger cultural differences between “New Mexico Navajos” and “Arizona” or “Eastern” Navajos. In this way, mobility served as a methodological tool in its own right.

Living in both Arizona and New Mexico, on-reservation and off, allowed me to observe musical and linguistic practice in a variety of contexts and sites of practice, both urban and rural. For example, I lived for four months in the peri-urban reservation “border town” of Gallup, New Mexico, and also lived in a traditional ceremonial hooghan with the Tom family in the rural village of Rough Rock, Arizona. These two contrasting field sites represent my own attempt to capture the broad range of musical and linguistic practice I see in differing Navajo social spaces and places.

My living in the hooghan most closely resembled an earlier model of anthropological research about Navajos, where anthropologists—often interested in Navajo ceremonial life, language and music—lived with the individual or family they were studying and were fully immersed in the Navajo language in the process. Examples of this are David McAllester and Charlotte Frisbie, both of whom lived with Frank Mitchell’s family beginning in the 1960s while they recorded Frank’s life.

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32 These state divisions, of course, are a relatively recent, post-reservation phenomenon for Navajos now living within their boundaries.
story for *Navajo Blessingway Singer: The Autobiography of Frank Mitchell, 1881-1967* (Mitchell 1978 [2003]), and anthropologist Gary Witherspoon, who married into a Navajo family and went on to write (among other important works) the classic *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe* (1977). In contrast to these earlier studies, however, I had no specific agenda in my home-stay beyond my desire to learn/improve my Navajo and generally broaden my understanding of Navajo culture. In accordance with my desires and in the attempt to integrate myself into a large, traditional extended family network, living in the *hooghan* was the period where I felt most truly “other.” During this time, I learned to haul water and coal, chop wood and care for the Tom’s large herds of sheep and goats (88 head) and cattle, still also gigging almost every weekend with *Native Country*, the main band I played with throughout my field research.

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33 In re-reading the introduction to McAllester and Frisbie’s *Navajo Blessingway Singer*, I am struck by some of the similarities between Frisbie’s experience living with the Mitchells and my own experience living with the Toms. In addition to our both being called “Yellow Woman” in Navajo due to our hair color, Frisbie notes about her own experience that “she came as a student of Navajo culture and expressed her hopes of learning to cook in the Navajo style, grind corn, herd sheep, butcher, spin, card, and, possibly, weave” (2003: 6).
In contrast, living in Gallup accorded me the opportunity to see and observe life in a border town first hand, places which are notorious in the southwest for their hardscrabble mentality and racial tension between Natives and non-Natives in particular. These border town dynamics were something that especially interested me, since Native Country played most of our gigs in border towns and, as an interracial band, these were the places where we came up against many of these same racial and class-based tensions. As the Diné writer Irving Morris notes about racial dynamics between Indians and non-Indians in the American west while on a road trip from his temporary home “back east,” “the further west we went, the more obviously “Indian” we became, and consequently, the more blatant people’s racism became. We attributed that to a theory that the further west one goes the more
cowboy-and-Indian the population gets...and the fresher the memory of olden
pioneer days is, with the parallel raw attitudes and treatment that result from that
mix” (Morris 1997: 170; italics mine).34

Also during my time in Gallup, I began writing more of my own songs and
performing in local venues and at open mics in Gallup with other musicians, both
Native and non-Native. At many of these gigs I invited my friend and fellow female
musician from Crownpoint, Candice Craig (Sage Brush People), to join me on lead
and back vocals. Attending these open mics and networking with Navajo musicians
living off the reservation broadened my perspective on Navajo music making
beyond the confines of both genre (country music) and rural Native geography (the
reservation). It was in Gallup, for example, where I met, performed with and spent
some time with the Navajo blues and rock band, Chucki Begay and the Mother Earth
Blues Band (discussed in Chapter Five), heard the first rap group performing in
Navajo, met other fellow Navajo singer-songwriters at the Camille’s Sidewalk Café
“Hootenanny,” and spent many pleasurable hours learning about Indian case law
from Navajo Nation attorneys and friends extraordinaire, Bidtah Becker and Paul
Spruhan.35

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34These same border town and checkerboard tensions—and the way they have been exacerbated by
various federal interventions—from the subject of Thomas Biolsi’s book, Deadliest Enemies: Law and
the Making of Race Relations on and off Rosebud Reservation (2007).
35Btidah Becker is Principal Attorney, Water Rights Unit, for the Navajo Nation. Her husband, Paul
Spruhan, is Assistant Attorney General, Human Services and Government Unit for the Navajo Nation.
This dissertation investigates how identity, citizenship, and belonging are negotiated on the Navajo Nation. In particular, I focus on how a Navajo politics of sameness and difference becomes linked to larger ideas and perceptions of “social authenticity” as this is determined through the ability to speak, look and act “Navajo” in predetermined and often socially limiting ways. Using ethnographic examples from music and language throughout, this study brings together interdisciplinary scholarship from cultural geography, cultural ecology, critical race theory, linguistic anthropology and ethnomusicology, focusing on how, in both public and private discourse, “being Navajo” is contested and debated today. Using op-eds, AM radio commentary and reservation humor as among my “primary sources,” I conjoin this data and my own observations to much broader debates about bloodedness and social belonging within the disciplines of American Indian and Indigenous Studies.

My particular interest in linking cultural geography to a politics of difference stems from the internal divisions I observed within Navajo communities. It was helpful to explore these lines of tension and cleavage through the lenses of geographic and linguistic distinction. These discourses are often parsed along the lines of Arizona Navajos—who live on contiguous reservation land and often have larger landholdings—as being more “authentic” and living on the “real” or “deep” rez. In contrast, New Mexico Navajos see themselves (and sometimes are seen as such by their AZ counterparts) as “less” Navajo due to living on a non-contiguous,
“checkerboarded”\textsuperscript{36} land-base and (allegedly) having fewer fluent Navajo speakers, particularly among youth. Thus, territory plays a key role in assessments of authenticity and Navajoness, however this may be defined.

I also look at an interracial (Navajo-Anglo, Navajo-African American) and inter-tribal (Navajo-Pueblo) politics of sameness and difference. In particular, I analyze a politics of selective commemoration in which ancient Pueblo pasts are sometimes privileged over more recent Navajo presences; this is in keeping with a larger U.S. historical trend to romanticize the ancient Indian past while delegitimizing more recent histories and contemporary Indian peoples. Such was the case, for example, during my stint as a Ranger at Chaco Culture National Historic Park, located within the Navajo reservation’s Eastern Agency “checkerboard.”

Through this discussion, I examine how an intra-Navajo politics of difference is worked out through extra-Navajo relations and social hierarchies.

Race and phenotype also play a role into a Navajo politics of difference. Particularly in the case of those Navajos who hold public office or are in the public eye more generally, criteria for assessing Navajoness become increasingly narrow and prescriptive and sometimes begin to echo dominant U.S. racial ideologies such as the “one-drop rule” rather than the more malleable non-race-based criteria of kinship or political belonging that preceded such racial technologies within Navajo and other Native communities in the United States (Sturm 2002; Purdue 2003;

\textsuperscript{36} The “checkerboard” (discussed at length in the following chapter, Chapter One) comprises the eastern portion of the Navajo reservation. It is made up of various landowners in addition to the tribe, so that it resembles a literal “checkerboard” when looked at on a map.
Biolsi 2004; Denetdale 2006; Dennison forthcoming). In these contexts, “blood” comes to be understood differentially; that is, “white” blood, “black” blood and “Indian” blood come to take on different and contrastive social meanings, where black admixture is sometimes understood to “pollute” and subsume one’s Indianness and white admixture is understood to merely “dilute” or become subsumed into one’s Indianness or by one’s Indian “blood” in particular (Brooks 2002; Omi & Winant 1994; Roediger 2002). My study of Navajo social belonging in and civic estrangement (Tillet 2009: 125) from the Navajo Nation looks at the ways in which language and Navajo language fluency often replace phenotype as a key “ethnic trope” (Fast 2002) employed by Navajos in assessing the Navajoness of fellow tribal citizens. In this way, one essentialized identity—a racialized one based on phenotype—is replaced by another—that of the fluent heritage language speaker.

My project also builds on the assumption that musically organized sound is inseparable from social practice (Feld 1982, 1984a, 1990; Meintjes 2003; Brenneis & Feld 2004; Fox 2004a; Samuels 2004a). From the perspective of linguistic anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, this means that the study of music and the human voice can enable us to track social experiences and relations in sometimes unexpected ways (Jakobson 1960; Bakhtin 1981; Feld, Fox, Porcello & Samuels in Duranti 2004; Weidman 2006; Gray 2007). Through its emphasis on the voice as a site of both public performativity and a poetics of intimacy, this research builds upon scholarship coming from the ethnography of communication (Hymes 1964;
Tedlock 1983; Bauman 1975; Urban 1988; Bauman & Briggs 1990; Feld and Fox 1994; Feld et. Al 2004) and the politics of indigeneity, bloodedness and belonging (Cowlishaw 1987; Strong & Van Winkle 1996; L.T. Smith 1999; Povinelli 2002; Sturm 2002; Brown 2003; Niezen 2003; Starn & de la Cadena 2007; Dennison forthcoming), showing how a study of the Navajo singing and speaking voice can join the embodied, aesthetic and political elements of voice to an ethnography of expressive culture (Meintjes 2004).

North American anthropology has long been fascinated by American Indians, including their music (Fletcher 1893; Matthews 1894; Densmore 1913; Boas 1927). Early, classical Boasian studies in the vein of “salvage anthropology” tended to focus on “traditional” cultures and expressive forms (Matthews 1897; Wyman & Kluckhohn 1938, 1940; McAllester 1954; Witherspoon 1977; Zolbrod 1984; Frisbie 1967, 1980). In the Navajo context, this included an explicit interest in the music and language accompanying key religious ceremonies in which the healers or “singers” (hataalii) are primarily men. More recently, scholars have turned their attention to issues of religious syncretism, cultural hybridity, creolization, language shift and popular culture in Native North America and Aboriginal Australia (Frisbie 1992; Lassiter 1998; Carter Vosen 2002; Diamond 2002; Browner 2004; Scales 2004; Nevins 2004; Samuels 1999; 2004; Ottosson 2006; Webster 2009; Meek 2010; Marshall forthcoming).

With my particular methodological focus on music and language—my main entry points into Navajo communities—I look at how “performing” language and
music often acts as a sort of gauge for different generational takes on what it means
to be and perform one’s identity as a Navajo. In particular, since I was studying
Navajo and playing country music with musicians in their forties and older, this
means that this dissertation focuses primarily on a view of Navajoness espoused by
older Navajos—and it is thus a partial, generational perspective on ideas of
Navajoness, tradition, and Navajo cultural authenticity. These musicians and
language speakers, however, today act as the gatekeepers to a certain kind of Navajo
tradition, and for this reason I situate the debate from this vantage point. How does
listening to and performing country music signal a different kind of Navajoness than
listening to blues or rap music? And how might these different genre preferences
foreground specific class-positionings, generational views and racial affinities
(Radano & Bohlman, Eds. 2000; Mann 2008)? In asking these questions, I show how
the decision to align oneself with a particular musical genre has real consequences
for radio airplay, being hired for local on-reservation gigs, and for one’s perception
of being and “sounding Navajo.” Similarly, speaking Navajo—how fluent one is,
whether one’s phenotype “matches” one’s speech, and the assumption that someone
with Navajo “blood” should speak Navajo—is an expectation that many Navajos
have of other Navajos, and not having this skill-set often renders one “less”
authentically, locatably and identifiably “Navajo.”

Recent scholarship within indigenous studies has often focused on the larger
scale meanings of tribal sovereignty, politics and legal status and relations between
tribes, counties, states and the U.S. nation. By contrast, my study foregrounds the
everyday and aesthetic side of identity politics. To put this another way, I look at how these larger political structures impact lived experience and affect daily senses of self and community as these are seen through discourse and performance. Thus, my study joins an aesthetics of the speaking and singing voice to a broader politics of voice (Weidman 2006), joining the public spaces of performance to the intimate space of ethnography. Through such an approach, I show how an analysis of voice can be used to get at overarching ideas of indigenous identity politics and social hierarchy as seen through who, for example, has the authority to speak or sing for whom (Dinwoodie 1998; Moore 1988).

11. Politics of Ethnographic Practice on Navajo Land

“Getting Outed:” The Unveiling of Anthropological Method

An old joke epitomizes the historical relationship between anthropologists and Navajo communities, and shows how savvy many Navajos are to anthropology in general. “Question: what does a Navajo family look like? Answer: mom, dad, son, daughter, and an anthropologist.” One example of the legacy of anthropologists and in particular how savvy many Navajos are to the idea of being a research subject is seen in a late-night conversation I had with members of the Navajo country band, Re-Coil, after we finished playing a gig at the Ute Mountain Recreation Center in Towoac, Colorado. This conversation was about whether the band would give me
permission to write about the experience of playing with them for my dissertation.

Thus far, band members had accepted me as a musician and liked me performing with them—I had been playing with them for about three weeks—but had also said they still needed to think about the research portion and were clearly in no rush to make a decision. Revealing his in-depth knowledge of anthropological method, the bandleader—a Stanford graduate who had read my M.A. thesis cover-to-cover and offered a thorough and insightful critique—starts the conversation by saying to the group: “You all need to be aware that what she [referring to me] does is called ‘participant-observer’ anthropology. This means that she can write about anything—you, your wife, your kids, and you need to think of all this before you consent” (Frank Begay, 3/15/09). Doreen, the female lead singer, interjected at this point, adding in her own expectations of anthropologists to the mix. She noted that the anthropologist she grew up knowing—“her anthropologist,” David Aberle37—had established k’é or kinship with community members through his ongoing work on the reservation for over fifty years and also through his dedication for advocacy work on behalf of Navajos in land claims issues. Thus, for Doreen, doing accountable anthropology is about time-depth and political commitment to a community.

Moreover, on an artistic and business level, Frank and Doreen were also concerned about their rights as songwriters, and specifically about maintaining intellectual

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37 David Aberle (1918-2004) worked in Navajo communities from 1949 through the early 1990s. He published two books related to Navajos, The Peyote Religion among the Navajo (1966) and Lexical Reconstruction: The Case of the Proto-Athapaskan Kinship System (with Isidore Dyen; 1974). In the 1970s, ’80s and ’90s, Aberle was also an active participant in defending the Navajo in the so-called Navajo-Hopi land dispute (http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/u_arch/aberle.html#bio, accessed 3/04/11).
property rights over their songs if they allowed me to write about the band in my dissertation. While I explained that band members could give me any parameters they felt comfortable with and that I'd respect them, ultimately this long and intense conversation ended with the band saying they wanted to continue to think about the whole research component of it, but that, in the meantime, they wanted me to continue playing with them and voted to start giving me an equal cut of the pay, regardless of the outcome of their decision.

The general awareness of contemporary anthropological method—and in particular of the notion of “informed consent”—is also seen in an incident that occurred at the Windy Mesa Bar with the other band I played with, Native Country. Half-way through our first set at this “biker”/“Indian” bar, two men with fanny packs looking out of their element showed up with video-cameras, seated themselves at the closest table to the stage where we were playing, and began to film us. They stayed extremely focused, drinking only water, and, before the first set was over, they were gone. Everyone in the band was a bit unnerved by them, and particularly by the fact that, after having gone through the informed consent process with me for my own ethnographic research, these men didn't ask permission from any of us to film in the first place. Back at the band trailer after the gig, Arlondo the drummer said to LeAnder (lead guitar player)\(^{38}\) and me, “Yeah, where are our consent forms?” (Arlondo Bia, 7/26/09).\(^{39}\)

\(^{38}\)The term “lead player” in country music refers to the individual who plays the instrumental introduction to the song, the “solo” section in the middle of the song between the chorus and the verse, and the “outro” or instrumental ending.
Although Re-Coil eventually agreed to let me write about my experience playing with them,⁴⁰ their initial refusal, and Arlondo’s comment about informed consent, shows the shift in the balance of power between researcher and researched in Indian country over the course of the last two decades; it also shows the way in which my own presence—and in particular my use of informed consent forms, as mandated by both Navajo Nation and University IRBs—impacted the way in which band members came to objectively see themselves as sometime research subjects and their rights and expectations of the researcher (or photographer/novelist in this case) as such. In Arlondo and LeAnder’s case, these expectations were a direct result of their own work with me over the previous six months. In this way, as Paul Rabinow notes, a sort of double translation was taking place, in which “the data we collect is doubly mediated, first by our own presence and then by the second-order reflection we demand from our informants” (Rabinow 1977: 119). Finally, these interactions also show that, from the band perspective, my primary role was less as an ethnographer and more as a musician.

Instead, my ethnography was often understood as a sort of quirky side project, the *quid pro quo* for having (in this case) a female vocalist and “the sound of a steel guitar,” which is perhaps just the way our ethnography should be seen: as one of the many hats we wear as scholars, travelers, language learners and, most

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⁴⁰ We later found out that these two gentlemen, from Lyon, France, returned home with the video material and one of them, a school teacher named Max Mercier, has since written a novel, *Sur la Route des Frères Patison* (2011), with a version of me as the Anglo heroine named “Susie,” playing with a Navajo band called “Navajos Roll” (Max Mercier, email correspondence, 3/15/2010).

⁴¹ This occurred in May 2009, about two months after our conversation at the Ute Mountain Recreation Center.
importantly, as human beings. This politics of refusal—a refusal to sign a consent form or expecting one if someone is going to take your picture—is reflective of a broader power shift in Indian country, in which Indian peoples decide what and who can and can’t be studied, by researchers both Native and non-Native.

Doing Anthropology in Indian Country Today: “Home” and the “Field”

Historically, anthropologists have focused on large tribes like the Navajo as totalities, “the Navaho.” Perhaps because the Navajo Nation fared relatively well under Removal and Relocation, these studies have tended to elide internal differences and distinctions in favor of the cultural expressions which unified Navajos as a tribe. In addition, whereas many Oklahoma tribes lived in the southeastern U.S. pre-Removal and have two or three present-day tribal nations in different states today, Navajo communities didn’t remain in Fort Sumner, New Mexico, the place to which they were temporarily removed (1864-1868). As a result, Navajo homelands (at least since the 1300s) were, and continue to be, in the American southwest. Thus, while such totalizing studies served a purpose—not the least of which is to show that Native cultures are here, have a (sometimes) unified

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41 My thanks to anthropologist Dana Powell for an invigorating conversation about the politics of refusal as it related to this late-night conversation with Re-Coil.

42 Earlier ethnographies tended to spell “Navajo” as “Navaho,” with an /h/ instead of a /j/.

43 This can be assessed in different ways. In contrast to many tribes that were also “removed” during federal Removal and Relocation (1828-1887), Navajos are still a federally recognized tribe, have a living language, a land-base comprised of their original ancestral homeland, and have their own executive, legislative and judicial bodies.

44 For example, Mississippi Choctaws/Oklahoma Choctaws and North Carolina Cherokees/Oklahoma Cherokees.
political voice and are alive and well—they can also gloss over the huge amount of internal differentiation found within Navajo communities today.

Even just shopping at the Basha’s grocery store in downtown Chinle, I might meet and interact with individuals whose lifestyles span almost a century of Navajo life ways. Some come from the more urban town of Chinle, have cable television and enjoy playing their “Wii;” others live on the outskirts of town, own livestock and may or may not have running water; and those who live in the “deep rez,” usually off a dirt road at least 50 minutes or more from Basha’s, don’t have running water or electricity and only come into “town” on the first of the month to buy groceries. In contrast to outside perceptions, some individuals living without electricity or running water do so by choice and not out of deprivation. At Basha’s, I might also meet self-identified spiritually “traditional” Navajo friends and acquaintances; members of the Native American Church (NAC); Baptists, Pentecostals, Latter Day Saints, Roman Catholics and agnostics. From a blood percentage perspective, although many of these individuals look “Navajo,” many of them will share a mixture of Navajo, Apache, Pueblo and Mexican “blood” or ancestry. It is a commonplace to say that the U.S. is extremely internally diverse—-religiously, ethnically, politically and racially. But this same diversity often gets lost in discussions and perceptions of America’s Native communities, who are sometimes portrayed as being mono-national and mono-racial.

However, as studies such as Valerie Lambert’s (2007) and Circe Sturm’s (2002) have shown us within Choctaw and Cherokee communities, respectively,
American Indian nations are as internally diverse as the larger U.S. nation that surrounds them. Most federally recognized tribes reflect the heterogeneous U.S. nation-state while also maintaining an integral sense of political distinctiveness from the larger U.S. nation. My study in particular aims to demonstrate some of this internal diversity—and the discourses, debates, inclusions and exclusions this generates—on the Navajo Nation today, using on-the-ground examples from my own fieldwork experience. As such, I show the schisms between differing registers of Navajo identity, such that, on the one hand, we see a Navajo political identity—citizenship within the Navajo Nation—and, on the other hand, racial and linguistic identities that get layered on top of this political identity. Each of these identities—and the way they do and don’t converge for different individuals—play unique and separate roles in determining the overall contested domain that is Navajo belonging and Navajo social authenticity, the two main theoretical frameworks for the present analysis.

Ethnography, like music, is an interpretive art. This is not to say, however, that ethnography is a sort of “anything goes” endeavor. Getting the facts right and the analysis correct from the perspective of those I’ve spent the most time with is crucial. This is why I have circulated copies of interviews and multiple drafts of this dissertation among my interlocutors and their families. With that said, my field research was neither particularly systematic nor focused on collecting data per se, and also leaned heavily toward the “participation” side of participant-observer anthropology. Rather, during my fieldwork I focused on becoming a part of the
communities in which I lived, being helpful in ways both logistical and monetary when I could and where it felt appropriate, and becoming a part of local music scenes on both the New Mexico and Arizona portions of the Navajo reservation during the periods I lived in each place. In this way, I tried to keep my methodology flexible and fluid, using music and language—and the meeting points between the two—as my primary methodological tools. 45

These nodes of entry and time on the reservation helped me to eventually build rapport, comfort level and some level of trust with my neighbors, friends, teachers and fellow musicians. Indeed, part of my decision to apply for funding and stay for a second year of fieldwork was based on my intuition that gaining inroads into any community—but perhaps Native North American communities in particular—would require more than one year’s time and that a second year would help to build relationships that would extend, I hoped, beyond the confines and time constraints of my formal field research. In this way, the type of ethnography I set out to do was dictated by my research subject, and by the fact that my particular focus required in-depth, weekly and daily time commitments which needed time to develop, mature and grow.

Moreover, many bands were initially very vocal about their reluctance to be my research subjects and to assign me roles of musical responsibility, especially if I would only be around for 9-10 months. One bandleader told me, flat out, that hearing that I was only going to be around for nine months was a “red flag” that

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45 As such, music and language became not just my methodological tools but also my primary lens of analysis.
made him think I was going to “take their data and their original songs, do what I wanted with them, and never look back” (Frank Begay, 3/15/2009). Similarly, a member of another band, when I introduced myself as an anthropologist, expressed his hesitation about being an object of study by using a science metaphor and also revealed the common conflation of cultural anthropology with archeology and the natural sciences, asking me if I was on the reservation to study the “bugs in a jar.” In response to my explanation, he remarked to his father that “we must be dinosaurs” (Arlondo Bia, 11/05/2008). Thus, committing to a second year of fieldwork proved very important in deepening and broadening my relationships to individuals described in this dissertation and also for further sharpening, contextualizing and enriching my own understandings of the scenes I describe.

It was also during this second year of field research that my own experience of doing “fieldwork” changed, where my own sense of “home” morphed from being North Carolina to becoming “the rez.” Specifically, fieldwork stopped feeling like “fieldwork,” an artificial time capsule dedicated to this thing we call ethnographic research, and instead, playing in a country band, living on the reservation, working as a Ranger at Chaco canyon and teaching at a tribal college fundamentally became “my life.” In particular, having a job that I loved hugely increased my own sense of feeling like an integrated, productive member of the “imagined community” of the Navajo Nation (Anderson 1983). In this sense, this phenomenological shift in perception made it much harder to leave the reservation and return to the world of academia, but it also made me feel like my field experience was also not just a
temporary stint “abroad,” but instead part of a longer-term commitment characterized by continual returns.

As I write this dissertation, I often feel like I am the one in exile from the Nation rather than being re-ensconced “at home” in my middle-class milieu of Durham, North Carolina. I miss the field and it is now, for me, another home. And this, I think, is the point. If fieldwork is to feel transformational—if we are to feel like we've really become integrated into and changed by our host communities, however fleeting and however temporary the feeling—I think that our idea of “home” should change. This transformation shakes us up and opens us up both to ourselves and to our newfound communities in ways that can fundamentally shift the discourse from “us”/"them” to “us/us” and this, in turn, alters the nature of the cultural translations we produce as writing anthropologists. In this way, as Paul Rabinow so eloquently noted of his own research experience in Morocco, my intuition was altered by the incredible “alchemy of fieldwork” (Rabinow 1977: 3). This alchemy, in turn, has profound implications for the ethics of anthropological writing—and in particular, how we portray and think about our research “subjects.” How, for example, would we think about what we’d write about our own parents and our natal “home” versus how we might write about someone else's parents who also happen to be our research subjects in their “home?” It is much more difficult to objectify the things, feelings, and expressions of something we see as our “home”
than it is to objectify what we think of as “the field,” something “out there” and thus external to ourselves.46

Frank Begay’s “red flags” and Arlondo Bia’s “dinosaur bones” also speak to a larger history and legacy of doing anthropology in Native North America. Any anthropologist working in Indian country must now contend with and be cognizant of this complex, sometimes troubling history. Until the 1960s, Navajos were perhaps the tribe in the U.S. that received the most continuous anthropological attention (Matthews 1897; Franciscan Fathers 1910; Haile 1926; Reichard 1950; McAllester 1954; Wyman 1957; Kluckhohn & Leighton 1962, among many others). The tenor of anthropological scholarship on and in Native North America began to change, however, with the publication of the late Vine Deloria’s (Standing Rock Sioux) manifesto, Custer Died for Your Sins (1969), a scathing indictment of anthropologists and other “researchers” who do research for research’s sake (“pure research”). Published at the beginning of the Red Power movement, Custer Died For Your Sins called for a new kind of anthropology in Indian country, one which took Indian peoples’ real, everyday lives into account and whose data would ideally be used to effect positive social and economic changes in Indian country.47 Deriding non-Indian anthropologists for creating ideal types of Indianness that are impossible for most Indians to live up to—and thus creating what anthropologist Jessica Cattelino has termed the “double bind of indigeneity” (Cattelino 2008: 8;

46 This objectification of the field as something apart from our “real” lives is a theme that Gupta and Ferguson, among many others, also critique in their introduction to Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and grounds of a field science (1997: 35).
47 For a more recent, programmatic response for ways to conduct ethical research in New Zealand Maori communities, see L.T. Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies (2005).
2010)—Deloria clearly shows the negative impact that much anthropological scholarship has had on Indian senses of self and on ideas of culturally “authentic” Indianness by non-Indians, as well. As Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche) notes about the romanticization of Indianness in Hollywood movies in particular, “We secretly wish we were like the Indians in the movies (...) We are hopelessly fascinated with each other, locked in an endless embrace of love and hate and narcissism. Together we are condemned, forever to disappoint, never to forget even as we can’t remember” (Smith 2009: 6).

At the same time, early anthropologists doing “salvage anthropology,” best exemplified by the work of Franz Boas, performed important work in preserving and recording parts of Native culture that they were concerned might “die out” with the concurrent death of Indians themselves. While Boas was wrong about Indian people disappearing into the mists of oblivion, today these recordings of early Native language, musical practices and ceremonial beliefs have begun to act as a crucial archival resource for larger cultural revitalization movements within Native communities today. However, in light of the “salvage” critique beginning in the 1960s and an increased political self-awareness among Indian communities, anthropological research in Indian country waned from the 1970s-early 1990s and a “period of estrangement” began between anthropologists and Native North America, with scholars and granting agencies setting their sights on more exotic field sites outside the continental United States (Starn 2011a: 180). More recently, as Orin Starn documents, anthropologists have returned to the study of Native
North America. Now, however, we have many more Native anthropologists at the helm, determining appropriate areas of study and methodologies for anthropological research within Native communities (Starn Ibid.).

Also in partial response to Deloria’s call for a more ethical and accountable anthropology, in the last decade and a half\(^4\) tribal nations have begun instituting their own Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), and tribes have begun insisting that scholars go through both University and tribal IRBs before beginning research in Native communities (Brugge & Missaghian 2006). The rise in tribal IRBs also significantly followed in the wake of the congressional passage of the Native American Graves, Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990, which stipulated that human remains and funerary objects be repatriated to Native source communities upon request. Thus, IRBs began to frame both tribal ceremonial knowledge and human remains in particular as forms of cultural property that in most cases should be off-limits to outsiders, and researchers in particular.

For example, in order to carry out both my Master’s and Ph.D. fieldwork, I went through the Navajo Nation IRB, housed in the Historic Preservation Department, and was issued a “Class C” ethnographic permit which stipulated, in no uncertain terms, that with this permit I was not to do research pertaining to a) Navajo traditional religious ceremonies or b) anything having to do with human remains (Jacobsen, Class C Ethnographic Permit, Appendix 3). Reflecting increased

\(^4\) According to David Brugge and Mariam Missaghian, the Navajo Nation was the first tribe to institute its own tribal IRB, formerly operated on the reservation by Indian Health Services, in 1996 (Brugge & Missaghian 2006: 1). The Navajo Nation also passed its own Cultural Resources Protection Act in 1988, which “established procedures for reviewing and monitoring research plans involving Navajos” (Frisbie & McAllester 2003: xii).
tribal control over research and researchers on Navajo land, the permit also stipulates that I employ Navajos whenever possible, notify all local Navajo Chapter Officials to familiarize them with my research before doing research in that chapter and that I obtain written consent from all interviewees. More broadly, across Native North America, these and similar laws also reflect anthropology's historical predilection to study Native sacred and ceremonial practices, areas of study which are now off limits to most researchers. Thus, a part of Navajo belonging today is also about the unfettered access to ceremonial knowledge and practices that one has by virtue of being Navajo and which, in turn, are explicitly off limits to non-Navajos.

**Anthropology and The Politics of Refusal**

During my fieldwork, I played regularly with three different bands: *Native Country* (Many Farms, AZ), *Re-Coil* (Fort Defiance, AZ) and *The Wranglers* (Crownpoint, NM). Each band had a slightly different opinion and understanding of me being an anthropologist and writing about my experiences. All musicians (with the exception of one) asked that I use their real names,49 as they are interested in their bands becoming better known and are proud to have their name identified with the work that has gone into forming and promoting their respective band. Carson Craig (*Bit’ahnii* or Folded Arms People) of *The Wranglers*, for example, liked the idea of the band “going down in history,” or at least in my dissertation. *Re-Coil*, while not particularly invested in my role as an anthropologist and always

49 Each musician that I write about also signed an informed consent form.
somewhat suspicious of it, would sometimes “out” me on stage to fans between songs as “the cultural anthropologist studying everyone in the room” (e.g., Sky City Casino, 6/15/09). I read this as a sort of leveling device, a way of not allowing me to get too comfortable in my role as an anthropologist or a band member.

*Native Country,* and Tommy in particular, seemed to accept my anthropological role as an inevitable part of the package, a quid pro quo. In order for me to play with *Native Country,* they understood that I would need to have permission to write about their band. In addition, Tommy (*Naakai Dine’é* or Mexican People Clan)50 told me early on that he has a younger brother with a Ph.D. in Education, now the President of Pima Community College (downtown campus) in Tucson. His brother had also done interviews and research in the community in order to gather data for his dissertation. Always direct, Tommy also told me, upon reading my first published article about Native bands (Jacobsen 2009), that he only has a high school education and that it all looked like gibberish to him. When I gave him a draft (March 2011) of a chapter in which I talk about *Native Country,* he responded again by saying he was too busy with the farm to sit down and read it,

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50 Following a system that Navajos often use to identify themselves to one another, throughout the work I include names and primary (mother’s) clans for those that know them and specified their clans to me on their informed consent form (this was optional). Although the mother’s clan is the clan one is “born to” and is the most important clan, Navajos with four Navajo grandparents typically have four Navajo clans. By my own count, there are currently around 66 active original Navajo clans, and these clans are used to determine not only who one can and cannot marry but also determine allegiances and structures of reciprocity more broadly. In addition, there are a number of “adopted” clans that reflect early Navajo contact with other southwestern tribes. In the band context, clan relationships turned out to be fairly important in internal band dynamics and often prevented bandleaders from firing other band members if they were related to each other by clan.
but also said “I trust you, Kris.” Thus, while he supports what I’m doing educationally, he’s also not especially interested in the particulars.

Each band also expressed their understanding of anthropology as a politicized domain of knowledge production, albeit in slightly different ways. Overall, my fieldwork morphed from initial concern about whether I’d be accepted into a band to becoming, at times, a kind of low-level commodity. In this way, my whiteness in particular became, for better or for worse, a trademark that identified a band and made it memorable, since an all-male Navajo band with a white female musician is considered to be a novelty. The bands I played with also regarded my whiteness and ability to speak some Navajo as novel. In fact, I was frequently the only band member asked by the bandleader to introduce herself “in Navajo” on stage. For example, at the Albuquerque Centennial celebration in Old Town, Alfred Jim (A.J.) introduced me to the crowd as “the Navajo-speaking bilagáana from Crownpoint [New Mexico]” and then asked me to introduce my “clans” in Navajo.

Yet my whiteness was also sometimes a liability, particularly in playing with a band whose name was/is “Native Country.” For example, an exuberant male fan at a Native Country performance in Chinle shouted out to Tommy that we should call ourselves either “Native Country and Bilagáana Band!” or “Native Bilagáana Band!” instead of “Native Country Band” (NTUA Customer Appreciation Day, 9/31/2009).

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51 He has since given me more extensive feedback on subsequent chapters relating to his band.
52 “Bilagáana” is the Navajo word for Anglo or white person.
53 “NTUA” stands for Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, and is a tribally owned company providing electrical, water, wastewater, and natural gas to the Navajo Nation.
Calling attention to the rarity of female musicians and to the typically male social space that comprises Navajo country music performance practice, this fan was suggesting names that would accentuate how our band broke the old mold of “rez country” performance. Thus, by featuring a younger, Anglo female vocalist and by playing songs by female country artists (for example, those of Loretta Lynn and Kitty Wells) in addition to the typical “rez country” canon of Waylon Jennings, Merle Haggard, Johnny Horton and George Jones, Native Country opened itself to critiques about how “authentic,” “rez” or “Navajo” we really sounded. At the same time, we were also remembered and recognized by fans by virtue of this same social and sonic transgression.

III. Carson Mesa, Kit Carson and Vincent Craig

My fieldwork experience was haunted by the specters of two individuals, both now deceased: Christopher “Kit” Carson and Vincent Craig. Both of these historic figures come together in the man who is a paternal cousin to Vincent Craig and who is named after Kit Carson: the musician Carson Craig. Kit Carson was the famous federal Indian Agent known on the Navajo reservation for having rounded up the Navajo on their forced march to Fort Sumner/Bosque Redondo, known as the Long Walk (1864-1868). He is also remembered for senselessly burning all the peach and apricot orchards in Canyon de Chelly, main sources of sustenance for the Canyon’s residents. By contrast, Vincent Craig is the late Navajo comedian, singer-songwriter and storyteller par excellence, known for humorous depictions of Navajo
traditional lifestyles, “Navadlish” accents and lo-fidelity "chapterhouse" bands, the sound of which he parses as “jung jugga jung.” The presence of both figures shows the ways in which the past—and particularly the Navajo Long Walk—is very much alive in the present in Navajo communities today. This presentness of the past also shows how, once again, Navajoness gets remembered, recirculated and performed through these iconic figures in ways that codify and instantiate certain kinds of Navajoness over others.

Kit Carson in particular is still a living and bitter memory on the reservation, and his legacy is recalled in countless songs, poems, and pieces of visual art by Navajo artists today.54 His shadow is seen, for example, in the name of the mesa where Native Country held its rehearsals, known as “Carson Mesa”—an area, according to Tommy Bia, where Carson and his cavalry were tricked and out-run by a clever Navajo man before the cavalry headed south to round up Navajos in Canyon de Chelly— and in the story of how Carson Craig of The Wranglers got his name.

Carson’s last name, Craig, was a name assigned to his náhlí [paternal grandpa] in Shiprock, NM, by a Boarding School administrator in the early 1900s who couldn’t pronounce his náhlí’s Navajo last name. An Anglo doctor, Bob Craig, happened to be standing nearby in line, and said, “just let him take my name, instead.” So the administrator wrote that name down, and willy-nilly the name stuck in the bureaucratic records for the family from then on.55 Later, when Carson was born

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and his parents were searching for a first name, his mom, who wasn’t literate, recalled a name that, after the Long Walk, had become a Navajo household name, “Kit Carson.” Perhaps unaware of Kit Carson’s historical role as persecutor of the Navajo and the negative valence of his name, she gave her son the first name, “Carson.”

Carson is clearly aware that his name is not prototypically Navajo in sound. Unlike common Navajo surnames like Begay (from Navajo “biye’” or “his son”), Yazzie (from “yázhí” or “small/short one”) Benally (from “binálí” or “her/his paternal grandparent/grandson”) or Bia (also from “biye’”), all Anglicized spellings of Navajo words, Craig is a name of Anglo British extraction. When he gave me his oral consent to write about him in the dissertation, Carson told me that yes, I could tell people about this “Indian singing country music with a white man’s name” (Carson Craig, 9/12/09).

Carson’s daughter, Candice—who, I later found out, is the maternal granddaughter to Constance Casamero of the Senior Center—has also been influenced by the specter of Kit Carson. On a long drive once, she told me a story about “Bi’éé’ Lichí’i’” or “Red Shirt,” as Kit Carson remains known. Candice had been invited as the only Native to participate in a high ropes and leadership training course in Carlsbad, New Mexico. A teenager at the time, Candice was also probably very aware of being the only Native in a mostly-Anglo group of middle-class

55 Although it was common practice at this time to assign Anglicized versions of Navajo names—most Navajos had names which described their profession and thus changed every generation rather than names passed down through the father’s line—it was less common to assign Anglo last names to Navajos. Candice said that she has heard of an Anglo “Craig” family who lives in the Shiprock area to this day.
teenagers from around the country. At one point, a group leader had taken them into a secluded area of the woods for a group bonding activity. To set up the activity and create suspense using a well-known historical figure (and perhaps forgetting that one of the participants was Native), the group leader had said, “Watch out. Be careful. Imagine Geronimo’s gonna get you if you’re not very careful.” But Candice had turned the tables with her reply: “No. You got it backward. Kit Carson’s gonna get you: he’s gonna steal your children, rape your women, and burn down your peach trees. Geronimo, Geronimo’s gonna save you” (Candice Craig, 09/07/09). Everyone had stopped, confused, and she had repeated for effect, “yeah, Geronimo’s the good guy; he’s gonna save us.”

Candice was inverting the classical story of the heroic military officer and the “bloodthirsty” Native. She recalled it had helped her peers to see that there was a radically different way of understanding “good guys” and “bad guys” and the contingent nature of who represents “danger.” Detailing Kit Carson’s rampage through Canyon de Chelly during the forced march to Fort Sumner (Hwéeldi),56 Candice told other participants about the torched peach and apricot orchards and the slaughtered livestock, all done in an effort to starve her Navajo people into submission. In this way, she shows how Kit Carson, to her, is not just a historical figure but someone whose legacy and brutal forced march directly impacted her family’s history and her own sense of self in spaces beyond the reservation. In

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56 Lasting from 1864-1868, the Long Walk was not a single event, but rather fifty-three different episodes over a four year period in which large and small groups of Diné were forced to walk from Diné Bikéyah to Fort Sumner, in southeastern New Mexico.
particular, because her own ancestors went on the Long Walk and certain “Arizona Navajos”\textsuperscript{57} didn’t, Candice was narrating her own feeling of separateness from Navajos who weren’t relocated. Her story spoke to a larger Navajo politics of difference which distinguishes between those who went on the Long Walk and those who didn’t.

For example, a distinguishing feature of the satellite community of Alamo is the fact that Alamo Navajos didn’t go on the Long Walk. As one story (perhaps apocryphal) goes, Kit Carson had family connections to Alamo Navajos (he was at one point allegedly married to a Navajo woman) and for this reason decided to spare them in the roundup. In discussions I had with Alamo residents, they see the fact that they “stayed behind” as a salient dividing line between them and Navajos living on the “Big Rez.” It is an historical trauma which, thankfully, they were spared, but which also brings Navajos on big Navajo together today as a collective form of shared history and often serves as a talking point for political campaigns.

Similarly, it is also said [\textit{jiní}]\textsuperscript{58} that the residents of Tohajilee, another satellite community near Grants, New Mexico, served as scouts for the U.S. army during the Long Walk and, although they went to Fort Sumner, were allowed to relocate in a new area east of Grants, NM and were granted special favors by the federal Indian

\textsuperscript{57} Certain portions of the reservation in Arizona—such as Navajo Mountain or Naats’íis’áán— were so remote that Navajo residents were able to hide out in the mountains and canyons and escape capture.

\textsuperscript{58} Many Navajo oral stories are appended by the Navajo phrase, “\textit{jiní}” or “it is said—one says.” This is a way to attribute knowledge or information to someone other than the one delivering the message, and is typically used as a form of reported speech to frame stories in English and in Navajo. Use of \textit{jiní} is also a way to leave history in the domain of the not-quite-knowable. It’s a way of telling me, the ethnographer, to not push too hard for “facts” and to accept these stories as mostly true while indicating that I may not find them in the history books, either.
agents. Speaking to the ways in which U.S. colonialism successfully produced a “divide and conquer” mentality among Navajos, Tohajilee’ residents are sometimes referred to by residents of big Navajo as “traitors” today.

Like Kit Carson, the late Vincent Craig is also a household name on the Navajo Nation, albeit triggering a very different history and host of (mostly positive) associations. He was also one of the most active storytellers about Navajo experiences of the Long Walk and the deep history of Navajo service in the United States military mentioned previously (his father was a World War II Code Talker). Craig, who went on the Mormon (a.k.a. “Lamanite”) Placement Program,59 “got religion” and came back to Crownpoint before marrying and moving to the White Mountain Apache reservation (Eddie Mason, Sr., Many Farms, AZ, 7/12/2010), could be said to be the single-handed codifier of what is humorously referred to as the “jáán” (“John”)60 accent and “jáán” humor. In this way, Craig has played a key role in creating a locatable, sonic representation of Navajoness, one which is understood as overdetermined and essentialized, but salient and full of affect for some listeners nonetheless. Craig famously employed thick “rez” accents, as seen in his frequent use of non-standard English words or code-mixing as in the expression “Oh, shíheart!,” which could roughly translate as “Be still, my heart!” Craig applied

59 The “Lamanite Placement Program,” which ran from 1954-1996, was a program sponsored by the Church of Latter Day Saints which placed mostly Navajo and Crow students in white, Mormon homes (primarily in Utah) during the school year. The program specifically targeted American Indian children, who are understood in the Book of Mormon to be the “lost” tribes of Israel (“Indian Placement,” http://www.homelands.org/worlds/saints.html, accessed 11/21/06).

60 “Jáán” is a term used by some Navajos to denote other rural, “rezneck” Navajos whose mother tongue is Navajo, not English, and who live a more “traditional” lifestyle but without the prestige assigned to “elders” and ceremonial practitioners. Similar to the term “redneck,” jáán can often have a pejorative connotation but can also confer a certain kind of “authenticity” to the person so denoted.
his humor to Navajo oral history, creating Navajo characters from the Long Walk, BIA Boarding Schools, the Vietnam War (of which he is a Veteran), and from the thriving scene that is Navajo Nation rodeo. In his use of history, then, Craig acted as a sort of contemporary medium through which Navajo oral history going back to at least 1864 can pass, mediated and interpreted through his own historical songs, humorous spin and dialectal impersonations. These impersonations are also a part of how Vincent Craig—and Carson Craig in his own way, as well—performed Navajo belonging and social authenticity, emplacing himself within a certain generational stance on Navajoness and distinguishing himself from “other” kinds of Navajos different than himself.

Vincent Craig also poked fun at the earliest Navajo country bands such as The Fenders; his imitations have become the gold standard for a prescriptive “authentic” older rez band sound which bands today either seek to emulate or actively work against in order to set themselves apart. And, although Craig makes fun of the “rez” sound, his own music recordings very much follow in this same sonic tradition, recorded in a home studio (called “Mutton Man Productions”) and often featuring just his voice, an acoustic guitar and a harmonica. Thus, depending on your point of view, the early “rez” band sound of both Craig and The Fenders is either heard as “corny,” “mono,” “lo-fi” and outdated or, alternately as “retro,” “traditional” and thus quintessentially Navajo (Jacobsen 2009: 457). Mono or no, as a Navajo musician

61 Other themes that run throughout Craig’s work include the fictional characters “Ch’izhii” and “Mutton Man,” a character who was created out of the uranium tailings from the Church Rock uranium mine spill of 1979.
today, it’s a legacy with which you have to contend and a musical landscape within which you must situate your own musical sound. The situated, gendered nature of social authenticity as this is expressed through music is a theme that I take up in my final chapter.

Vincent Craig’s use of Navajo English (“Navadlish”) and a jáán accent in his many live recordings has also deeply influenced reservation humor and attentiveness to language use in public oratory and private conversations more broadly. In story vignettes such as “Are Indian Men Romantic?” recorded live at Many Farms High School in 1995, Craig riffs on the inhibition some Navajo men feel about expressing their true feelings toward a woman (excerpt from “Selected Performances ‘LIVE,’ Many Farms High School” “Song weaver,” 1995: CD). In this vignette, a Navajo teenager and his girlfriend sit in his truck on a mesa overlooking Many Farms. They look longingly at each other by the lights of the dashboard, the moon is full, KTNN (local Navajo-format country music station) is playing on the radio, and the mood is perfect. In the apotheosis of his desire to tell her how he truly feels about her, the guy tells her in a thick Navajo accent, “oh honey, yer’ eyes are...jus’ somehow.” Similar uses of “just somehow” are often heard in daily English discourse on the reservation, in a form of reported speech that most folks know is an impersonation of Craig in particular; it’s funny and uniformly gets laughs, I think, because “somehow” is such a non-specific euphemism being used to describe

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62 Building on the popularity of this expression from his fourth album, “Boarding School Fish Stories,” Craig’s fifth album, recorded live in September 1998 at San Juan College (Farmington, NM), is also titled “Yer’ Jus’ Somehow.”
something very specific, feelings such as love, affection, and happiness, so it acts as a completely inadequate substitute for all these words and feelings. Its inarticulateness, and the user’s recognition of this inadequacy, is what, when the reference works, makes it so funny. He is literally lost for words. As such, many Navajos—and particularly men—love to create their own riffs using “jus’ somehow” as the punch line.

For example, during band practices on Carson Mesa, Tommy and his son Arlondo (Todichʼiiʼnii or Bitter Water Clan) also frequently use “yer jus’ somehow” in the context of making a joke, and particularly when they are “riffing” on the Navajo accent. After a long night of recording and finalizing our fourth song for our album, we all felt particularly pleased and satisfied with the end product. As Tommy and I exited the sound booth, Arlondo, referring to the song, says “it’s just somehow.” Tommy starts to chuckle, responding to Arlondo’s reference by adding another layer of multivocality, using the English adjective “good” and changing it, in the style of Vincent Craig’s non-standard, code-mixed Navajo-English jokes, to “gooders,” exclaiming: “It’s really gooders, ya’ ” (“It’s really “gooders,” isn’t it?”).

Since his passing in spring 2010, Vincent Craig’s vibrant legacy continues in current musical practice in much the same way that he, too, continued the legacy of the Chapterhouse bands in his own songs and humor. He is referenced on reservation billboards, such as the one between Gallup and Window Rock which read “Oh, Shí Heart!, Buckle Up Navajo Nation,” in musical styles and sounds which some bands seek to emulate and others distance themselves from, and in male
word-play and humor. Vincent Craig’s legacy is also seen in particular humorous relationships to technology which eschew a sort of “technological primitivism” between Native peoples and musical technology by exaggerating and making fun of this perceived relationship, for example by “blowing” into the microphone to do a mic check before practicing with a PA. However, his pervasive influence on public discourse is perhaps seen most clearly in a “spoof” application that was circulated a few years back for the “Navajo Housing Authority” (NHA) circulated to me by one of the musicians I played with. After a series of questions designed to humorously determine one’s eligibility as an “authentic” rural reservation Navajo (for e.g., “Occupation (check one): Spring sheepherder, Summer sheepherder, Fall Sheepherder; “Model and year of your pick-up: 194__ (fill in the blank”, etc.),” the final two questions on the questionnaire read as follows:

**Do you listen to Vincent Craig while traveling? ( ) Yes ( ) No**

**Are you just somehow? ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) Sometimes ( ) All the time**

Thus, the late Vincent Craig has become a sort of Navajo cultural icon, an “in joke” to the initiated whose humor lives on after his passing.

In these ways, my dissertation field research was haunted by two ghosts, one Native and the other non-Native, tied together most concretely for me in playing

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63 Public Address System.
with and getting to know the man that bears both of their legacies and their names in his own name, Carson Craig. Here, I think of what Michael Taussig calls the “unquiet dead.” Defined as “the tremendous moral, and indeed magical, power that the dead hold over the living” (Taussig 1990: 18), Navajos use the memory of both the older Craig and “Redshirt” to remind themselves of who they are, where they have been and where they are going in the future. Thus, analyzing contemporary relationships to these specters sheds light on the sense of distinction and separation from non-Navajo society which informs how many Navajos understand their own history and their own sovereign political status. These relationships also reveal some of the internal historical divisions within the Navajo Nation—for instance, those who went on the Long Walk or those who went on “Placement” versus those who did not—that I seek to foreground and analyze in the current work.

Outline of the Dissertation

In my first chapter, “East and West: The Internal Politics of Difference on the Navajo Nation,” I look at the politics of Navajo cultural and linguistic difference through geography (in particular through discussions of difference between the Arizona and New Mexico portions of the “rez),” and through use of terms such as “jáán.” Analyzing how ideas of social authenticity then become linked to ideas of place, territory and perceived rural lifestyles, I examine the discourse behind places referred to as either the “deep rez” or the “real rez” and show how these locations are unfixed and relative to the social position and geographic location of the
speaker. My second chapter, “Navajo Presences and Absences: Chaco Culture National Historic Park and the Politics of Preservation,” focuses on the themes of historicity, authenticity and temporality through my observations working as a Ranger at Chaco Canyon. In particular, I explore the ways in which more recent Navajo histories of canyon occupation have been erased in favor of older, ancestral Puebloan histories, such that “Indianness” comes to be defined by ahistorical absence rather than its presence. Focusing on these inter-tribal relations, I look at the recent proposal, initiated by local Navajo residents, to pave one of the access roads that leads to Chaco and the ensuing controversy that has ensued.

Chapter Three, “Radmilla’s Voice,” interrogates ideas of race, bloodedness and the singing voice and focuses on the story of the first biracial, Navajo-African American “Miss Navajo,” Radmilla Cody. In particular, through Radmilla’s story I explore the idea of Navajo citizenship as a nationality rather than as a racial identity and I focus on the idea of performative voice (singing and speaking in Navajo in particular) as a means through which Navajo social citizenship and civic belonging articulate. In my fourth chapter, “Language Politics and Social Authenticity,” I use my own experiences as a non-Navajo learning the Navajo language to talk about how having Navajo “blood” and speaking Navajo often become fused. For example, I interrogate the expectation that those with Navajo blood should speak Navajo or need merely “activate” the Navajo language gene that resides within them. In contrast to the focus on public vocal performance of Chapter Three, in this chapter I
focus on the idea of the utterance and the speaking voice in the context of intimate, everyday discourse.

My fifth chapter, "Sounding Navajo," focuses on the bands I performed with and asks what it means to “sound” Navajo. Looking at how gender, nation and the idea of a prescriptive “Navajo” sound become intertwined, I show ethnographically how Navajo blues and rock bands are often told they don’t “sound Navajo” by local radio deejays who refuse to play them on air. Instead, these deejays insist that “sounding Navajo” is defined as a male vocalist singing either country or heavy metal, exclusively. Tracing why, historically, Navajoness has come to be aligned with country and the male singing voice, I show how Navajo musical taste and class affinity are largely divided by age-group, with younger generations showing a much stronger affinity for rap, hip-hop and r & b and older generations showing a predilection for country. In my concluding chapter (chapter 6), I reflect on how a politics of difference and belonging—and a politics of indigeneity more broadly—is fostered among Navajos and I attempt to answer what the stakes might be in creating and reifying social difference through linguistic knowledge, place of residence, musical taste and phenotype. Examining the parts of Navajo identity that get either publicly celebrated or hidden from view, I interrogate what these categories of difference mean for those that utilize—or refuse them—today.
Chapter One

East and West: The Internal Politics of Sameness and Difference on the Navajo Nation

Driving back to Crownpoint, New Mexico, from a band rehearsal in Many Farms, Arizona, I head south on state route 191 toward Canyon de Chelly National Monument. To my right runs black mesa, the male mountain, and to my left, along the Arizona-New Mexico border, I see the female Chuska Mountains and Tsaile Peak. In Chinle, or “Where the Water Flows Out,” I turn left onto Indian Route 12, heading northeast on the “rim” drive towards Tsaile (“Where the Water Flows In”) and the Chuskas, catching glimpses of magnificent Canyon de Chelly—red, sandstone walls, lush tamarisks and Russian Olives growing on the canyon floor against an aquamarine blue sky—along the way. On either side of the two-lane road, piñon and juniper forest covers the ground, and houses, hooghans and doublewides dot the landscape. Hitting Tsaile, AZ, I turn southeast on Indian Route 12, climbing in elevation as I pass small herds of sheep, goats and horses grazing on the side of the road. I hang a sharp left on state route 134, crossing into New Mexico as I do so, and begin the long climb toward “Narbona Pass,” so named after the great Navajo leader, reaching the summit at 8730 feet. Up here, the air is incredibly clear and thin, and the piñons and junipers give way to tall quaking aspen stands, giant fur trees and a series of cold, clear mountain lakes. Reminding me of the Italian Dolomites in its
alpine beauty, I continue eastward, dropping down in elevation as I head toward the reservation town of Sheep Springs, at the junction of 134 and state route 491. In the winding drive down from the summit, the landscape begins to drastically change. Reds and oranges give way to peaches, pinks and muted green pastels, and mountain lakes and streams give way to a much drier, almost alien-looking landscape. Similarly, tall, sharp geologic formations such as the spire of “Spider Rock” in Canyon de Chelly now morph into more rolling, rounded shapes of buttes, bistis and small mesas; I’m looking down on what’s called the “checkerboard,” the easternmost portion of the Navajo reservation.

I turn right at Sheep Springs, playing back the previous night’s rehearsal through the truck speakers, only one hour remaining of my weekly, 3 ½ hour drive. I pass Naschitti, or “Badger’s Water” in Navajo, Tohatchi, Mexican Water and, at the town of Twin Lakes [Bahast’ah], turn left again, heading east on Indian Route 9. The road is a mess—they’ve been doing construction for almost four months—and beige dust kicks up everywhere, coating my tires and my windshield and making it hard to see. There’s no livestock on the roads, now, and barbed wire fences begin to dot the landscape in square angles. I pass the tribal rehab center at Coyote Canyon—Mq’ii Tééh Yítłizhi—the “pipeline road,” a rough dirt road running along the natural gas pipeline that I use as a shortcut to get to Gallup, NM to do my weekly errands, and drive by Standing Rock and the little stone chapter house, too. I pass the Eastern Navajo Rodeo Fairgrounds on my left, “Church Road” and the West Mesa HUD housing project on my right, and cruise through the only four-way stop sign in town, looking for new cardboard signs about community events and country dances that
may have been posted at the corner while I was away. Turning into the Navajo Technical College faculty housing, I'm finally back home in the little town of Crownpoint, New Mexico.

Figure 3. Welcome Sign to the Navajo Nation, town of Thoreau, New Mexico (Eastern Agency); Map of Navajo Nation in Center; photo by author

The geographic and geologic distinctions between Arizona and New Mexico, described above, also play out at the cultural level. In this chapter, I focus on how a Navajo politics of difference—or the way Navajos distinguish between and among themselves in language about “culture”—can be seen and heard at the level of discourse through distinctions about dialect, place of origin, class and ideas about Navajo cultural authenticity. In particular, because of what I see as a lacuna in
anthropological scholarship which has almost always focused on Navajo communities living on the Arizona side of the reservation, I write this chapter from the vantage point of Navajo New Mexico—the place where I chose to do my first 18 months of fieldwork, instead. I demonstrate this politics of difference as it specifically plays out on the ground in one New Mexico “Agency” called Eastern Agency, and in one Eastern Agency chapter and town, called Crownpoint. Starting with a broad-level analysis which compares tropes and discourses about Arizona and New Mexico sides of the reservation, I move to a mid-level analysis which focuses on Eastern Agency—one of five Navajo agencies or land areas—and compare “Eastern’s” own unique history to the rest of the reservation. Finally, I perform a smaller scale analysis of one town (Crownpoint) within Eastern Agency, demonstrating the ways in which a politics of difference plays out in debates about access to resources in this small, northern New Mexico town.

One way to examine a politics of difference—both internal and external—on the Navajo Nation is through reading Navajoness via the lens of geography. Beyond the borders of the great Navajo reservation (27,000 square miles), there are also three “satellite” communities which constitute their own chapters and which, for a host of reasons, remain culturally and politically distinct from “Big Navajo,” as the main reservation is sometimes referred to. Similar to how the islands of Sicily and Sardinia view the Italian mainland as an authority from which they distance

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1 The town of Crownpoint, NM, is located within Crownpoint Chapter, Navajo Nation.

2 Chapters are the Navajo reservation equivalent of counties. There are 110 chapters on the Navajo reservation, and each chapter has a “chapterhouse,” a building where local, town-hall style meetings, community events and celebrations take place.
themselves, linguistically and symbolically, by calling it "the continent," people from Ramah, Alamo and Tohajilee’ refer to “Big Navajo” with a mixture of admiration, disdain, remove and curiosity. In addition to these three outlying communities, there are numerous Navajo communities off the reservation (approximately 40% of the population or 117,735 individuals in 2000), many of whom continue to vote via absentee ballot through their birth chapter (if they are registered) and constitute powerful voting constituencies in their own right. This includes, for example, substantial diasporic communities in Phoenix, Denver and Colorado Springs, Albuquerque, Riverside, Dallas, Chicago, and the ca. 10% of Navajos serving in the armed forces at any given point in time, but also Navajos living in virtually every state of the union with the exception of Vermont, Rhode Island and Delaware (2000 Census; Begay 2010: 29).

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3 “The total population within the reservation boundary in 1990 was 148,451 and in 2000 this number increased to 180,462 (1990 and 2000 Decennial Census). Approximately 45% (120,749) of the total population lived outside the reservation boundaries in 1990, and in 2000 the percentage decreased to 40% (117,735)” (Begay 2010: 33).

4 David Wilkins notes that "Under current tribal law, a Navajo belongs to the chapter of his or her birthplace for life, regardless of where he/she actually lives" (1987 [1999]: 149).

5 Many of these communities were formed during the “Urban Indian Relocation Program.” Implemented in 1952 by the B.I.A., American Indians were relocated to seven major U.S. cities—Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San José, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Dallas—and were offered temporary housing and assistance finding jobs in the urban workforce. As part of an attempt to, once again, assimilate American Indians into “mainstream” American society, many American Indian families permanently relocated to these urban areas, such that 64% of American Indians live in cities today (http://www.pbs.org/indiancountry/history/relocate.html, accessed 10/07/10).

6 There are doubtless also Navajos living in these three states. However, Begay’s data is taken from the 2000 census records, which indicate that at the time the census was taken no Navajos reported living in Vermont, Rhode Island and Delaware.

Perhaps even more than other American Indian tribes, Navajos are and have always been particularly mobile. In sharp contrast to more fixed pueblo towns that are inhabited year round, since the arrival of sheep to the southwest (and perhaps before) Navajos have traditionally had at least two sheep camps (a summer camp \([\text{keesh}]\) and a winter camp \([\text{keehai}]\)), which they seasonally moved between. Pegged as “nomadic” by early anthropologists who didn’t have the vocabulary to describe a people living in two, semi-permanent homes, these camps tend to be decentralized and are very different from the more settled communal villages evidenced by their closest Native neighbors, citizens of the Hopi Nation.

While some traditional creation stories tell of Athabaskan\(^8\) communities emerging into this world—the fifth or “glittering world”—through a reed near present-day Huerfano Mesa, New Mexico, or, alternately, near Canyon de Chelly, Arizona, other accounts (those espoused by archeologists) tell of Athabaskan peoples migrating from Siberia across the Bering Land Bridge, into present day Alaska and then southward to the American southwest and northern Mexico. The strongest evidence for the latter theory is the shared vocabulary of Athabaskan speakers from Alaska, down the western coast of Canada, into the Pacific northwest and Northern California and into the American southwest and northern Mexico (Sapir 1936).\(^9\) Supporting the “Bering Strait theory” is the preliminary research of linguistics professor Paul Platero’s \((Diné)\), on a community of Athabaskan speakers

\(^8\) Navajo, along with other Apachean languages, is linguistically grouped as part of the Southern Athabaskan language family.

\(^9\) See, for example, Edward Sapir’s article, "Internal linguistic evidence suggestive of the northern origin of the Navaho" (1936).
called the Ket, who reside in Russian Siberia today. This preliminary research suggests a link between northern Athabaskan languages in Siberia and Yukon languages in Alaska and would thus solidify the perceived connection between Siberia and Alaska.

There are also some Navajo stories and vocabulary which support a migration from the Bering Land bridge, or at least an origin from as far northward as Alaska. For example, one Navajo term for Native peoples of Alaska is “Diné Nahodló” which, according to my bandleader Tommy Bia and his wife Helen is a term that probably refers to “the people that stayed behind” (Tommy and Helen Bia, September 2010, personal communication). Perhaps continuing this theme of mobility and of going “where the resources are at” (Don Whyte, ANT 225, summer 2010), many Navajos today work in urban construction in Phoenix, Las Vegas, and across the United States (where they are known for their state-of-the art welding and ironwork), sell handcrafted jewelry on the national, state, and art fair circuits, and are stationed on various military bases nationwide and internationally. Because of this reputation for mobility and cosmopolitan identity grounded in a working-class experience, my Navajo teacher used to joke: “Navajos are like beer cans...they’re everywhere!” (Shirley Bowman, October 2009, Crownpoint Dialysis Center, RMCHS, Crownpoint, New Mexico). Proving this point statistically, the 2000 decennial census shows that 5.6% of Navajos live in a U.S. state other than Arizona, New Mexico or Utah (Begay 2010: 16).

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10 For further discussion of this link, see an article from June 16th, 2010 in Yukon News, posted at http://www.yukon-news.com/life/18465/.
Because of this diversity of Navajo experience, there is often tension between its many constituencies. This can be seen in particular between so-called “urban” Navajos and those who grew up on this entity called the reservation, also known as “the rez” or, for those who hold great affection for it, “shikéyah” [my land]. However, even on the Navajo reservation proper, there is a huge amount of internal differentiation which can be seen on the scale of the Nation as a whole and at the smaller, chapter level as well. This is played out, for example, in terms of who receives—or, more importantly, feels they do or don’t receive—funding and attention from Window Rock, the Nation’s capital and tribal headquarters. These differences also manifest in who feels themselves to be (or is perceived as being) more or less “Navajo,” however this might be defined in different contexts. Thus, citizenship is defined differently for Navajo citizens based on place of residence. One finds reservation residents on the AZ side, for example, often leveraging claims to resources as citizens of the tribe. Conversely, New Mexico reservation residents more frequently make claims to material and symbolic resources as citizens of the state and as U.S. citizens rather than as tribal citizens per se. As a result, because of the different histories of land allocation on AZ/NM sides of the reservation, New Mexico residents often focus on a transcendent idea of Navajo culture while Arizona residents use territorial authority and access to a tribal elite in Window Rock in order to assert their Navajo identities. These politics of internal and external difference, and how they are played out at the micro level in discussions over language, land, chapter and class politics, are thus the focus of this chapter.

11 Although not my focus here, politics play out in interesting ways at the macro level between
The Chuska Mountains: Dividing East and West

Within the boundaries of the Navajo reservation, formally known as the Navajo Nation, the Chuska Mountain range acts as one dividing line through which cultural difference and “traditional” Navajo identity are parsed. In what I call the “politics of east and west,” I argue that the Chuskas, which run north-south along the border between Arizona and New Mexico and where a number of Navajo Nation Tribal Parks and Forest areas are located, serve as a symbolic divide between two different ideas or ideal types of Navajoness. Thus, although there are other ways to frame social divisions within the reservation—such as a center/periphery model which distinguishes those who live on the reservation versus those who live “off” might be another—because of the looming presence of these mountains in Navajo life and the way that AZ/NM statehood solidified this geologic-geographic divide, I choose to frame the current analysis on a primarily east/west division.

Moreover, since Crownpoint—a town on the New Mexico side of the reservation—was my most consistent “home base” during my 28 months of dissertation research, and because much of the anthropological literature about Navajos historically focuses on the Arizona portion of the reservation as being “representative” of Navajos and Navajo culture as a whole, in this chapter I

Navajos and other tribes, as well. For example, in comparison to other southwestern tribes, the Navajo Nation is regarded as the “big daddy” or even sometimes the bully of water rights litigation—historically vis-à-vis the Hopi Nation and San Juan Paiute—and also in the idea that Navajos do things “first” in Indian country, such that “how Navajo goes, so go the rest of U.S. Indian nations go” (Bidtah Becker, personal correspondence).
intentionally use Crownpoint and Eastern Agency, instead, as my analytic home base. In addition, I draw on data and my experiences living in “Navajo Arizona,” where I lived for an additional 12 months, where needed.

The Chuskas act as a unifier—something that all reservation residents share, a beautiful place to camp, fish, herd sheep and haul wood for the winter—but also as a definitive dividing line shaping Navajo lived experience. Thus, at certain levels of discourse, Eastern Agency comes to stand in for all of “Navajo New Mexico” and everything west of the Chuskas, including reservation portions of the southern Utah “strip” and Monument Valley (UT), represents “Navajo Arizona.” In this way, although a Navajo political entity and Navajo sovereignty long predate the founding of the United States (Wilkins 2007; Becker & Spruhan 2010) and the decades when Arizona and New Mexico became territories and then states,¹² in more recent times, one way in which an internal politics of difference and authenticity has been framed is through whether one comes from New Mexico—often parsed as less “traditional” and more assimilated—or Arizona, often portrayed as being the “locus” of Navajo traditional culture and language. Perhaps reflecting the political shift in Indian country over the last fifty years, the prestige that Navajo assimilation into Anglo culture once carried—including having lighter skin, having a “western’ education and rejecting one’s language and one’s culture—has now reversed itself. Instead, today there is often a prestige and cultural cache in knowing one’s heritage language and in coming from a family which had less intermarriage with non-Navajos and a stigma associated with those who “lack” these cultural markers.

¹² Arizona and New Mexico both became of part of the Union in 1912. Utah became a state in 1890.
Although the “realness” of these east/west differences are open to interpretation, what is real is the perception of difference and the effects this perception has on how individuals from different parts of the reservation carry themselves and indeed interpellate\(^\text{13}\) other Navajos in their everyday lives (Biolsi 2005: 400). Following Gupta and Ferguson’s assumption that “all associations of place, people, and culture are social and historical creations to be explained [and] not given natural facts” (1997: 4), culture, politics and ideas about race converge in specific geographic locations such as Navajo to make “places” out of “spaces” in concrete ways. Thus, constructions of place carry concrete ideas about racial purity, mixture and cultural authenticity, which may or may not be based on historical facts or demographic data.

From an historical perspective, what is also “real” or true is that, due to practicalities of westward expansion, the eastern portion of the reservation was “contacted” before other parts of Navajoland. This means it has more Spanish influence both in cuisine and last names, and Christian missionaries and summer revivals are certainly more visible in “Eastern” than elsewhere on the reservation. Equally germane to such a history is the continuing debate about where the “center”—and hence cultural wellspring—of the Navajo Nation really is. In particular is the question of where the emergence (\textit{Hajíínáí}') of the Navajo people took place. While many say that it is in \textit{Dinétah}, the area of northwestern New

\(^{13}\) I use this term in the way it is described by Althusser, as a way in which human beings “hail” one another into specific subject positions. See L. Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” in \textit{Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays}. 1989. London: New Left Books, 170-86.
Mexico that today comprises part of what is called the “checkerboard,” others insist that the emergence took place in Canyon de Chelly (Tséyi’), in the present-day town of Chinle, Arizona.

Moreover, comparing “Navajo New Mexico” and “Navajo Arizona” is revealing for what it tells us about what “ideal” Navajoness is or “should be,” though this is surely contested, debated, and constantly changing. Through observing conversations about east and west, and the huge amount of internal linguistic and cultural differentiation seen within the boundaries of this entity we call “Diné Bikéyah” or Navajoland within the four sacred mountains, we see how place (and in particular the U.S. states of Arizona versus New Mexico) stands in for different ways and understandings of being “Navajo.” Finally, while it is widely known on the reservation that there are numerous dialectal and even idiolectal differences for speakers east and west\(^\text{14}\) of the Chuskas—ahwééh, “coffee” (AZ) versus gohwééh (NM) or yás, “snow” (AZ) versus zás (NM), for instance—these linguistic divisions also speak to a much larger sense of perceived cultural difference and internal differentiation. In these and other ways, the Chuska mountains act as the symbolic dividing line between east and west, “traditional” versus “assimilated” identities, with the western part of the reservation fixed as more authentic and as the locus of Navajo “traditionality.”

One way to understand the politics of east and west on the Navajo Nation is through the framework of what Thomas Biolsi terms “racial projects.” Emphasizing

\(^{14}\) Although not detailed here, there are also significant idiolectal differences between residents of “Big Navajo” and the satellite communities such as Tohajilee (personal communication, Paul Platero, UNM Department of Linguistics, spring 2010).
both the “social constructedness (the fictional nature of race)” and the “social fact” (the inescapable human consequences of race for the individual in a racist society) of race” (Biolsi 2005: 400), we might best understand Navajo politics of difference as something that, to a large extent, is socially constructed but whose effects are felt in real and powerful ways in Navajo daily life. In my dissertation I examine the flexibility and mobility of what Biolsi, building on Foucault, terms “race technologies” (Biolsi 2005: 415). In this chapter, however, I look at race technologies as they are defined through geography, specifically. Defined as the way in which diverse social groups state, mix, classify and create social and physical spaces between each other (Biolsi 2005: 400), I examine how race technologies are expressed in microcosm within one large, reservation community—including citizens who live both on and off the Navajo reservation.

**Eastern Agency, Private Property and the Checkerboard**

(“Ha’a’aaahjí Naat’áaniishchíín Bił Ha Hoodzoh”—Eastern Agency)

This perception of geographic and cultural difference comes in part from the divergent histories of the Arizona and New Mexico portions of the reservation. While parts of the reservation that lie west of the Chuskas within Arizona and the “Utah Strip” are contiguous and bounded—that is, with the exception of the Hopi Nation and San Juan Paiute they are not divided by or partitioned with non-Navajo lands—the New Mexico portion of the reservation is comprised of a patchwork of multiple land owners, resulting in a map which quite literally resembles a patchwork or checkerboard. The eastern Navajo “checkerboard” (also known as
“Eastern Navajo Agency”) is also not technically “reservation” land per se. Instead, before and after the General Allotment Act of 1887, whose ultimate goal was to assimilate Indians into mainstream society by giving them private property and granting those landowners U.S. citizenship, Eastern Navajo Agency was partitioned as square tracts of land and given to separate and often competing entities, including to individual Navajo families (mostly 160 acres), non-Na

“stockmen,” the Navajo tribe, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (B.I.A.), the National Forest Service (NSF), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the National Park Service (NPS).

In order to assess who was eligible for land, it was also during this same decade that the Office of Indian Affairs (now the Bureau of Indian Affairs) also instituted the first Navajo tribal “rolls” and began recording percentage of Indian blood or “blood quantum” for those included on this list. After allotments were released from federal sale restrictions following the Burke Act of 1906, the

15 Thus, on most maps of the reservation such as the one presented in the Introduction, the Navajo checkerboard does not appear as Navajo reservation land. Legally, however, it is considered to be a part of “Indian Country.”

16 Checkerboarding initially came about as a result of western railroad companies cutting through historically Navajo homelands. In New Mexico, the checkerboard was instituted on land surrounding the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad Company, a line which ran from Springfield, MS, to the California state line, in which Congress provided a land grant of forty sections per mile. Instituted in 1876, “Much of the land given to the Navajos by executive-order action lay within the northern limits of the original Atlantic and Pacific land grant. Thus, where this occurred, alternate sections of the executive-order reservation belonged not to the Navajos but to one or more of the three land companies” (Iverson 2002: 101).

17 During the period in American Indian History known as “Allotment and Assimilation” (1887-1928), U.S. government policy shifted to assimilating Natives into mainstream American society. One of the main ways this was implemented was through assigning individual tracts of land to “heads of family,” the belief being that owning property outright would almost magically create landholding, assimilated and Christianized American citizens. Allottees were typically given 160-acre tracts of land; they had 25 years to cultivate and “improve” their land, after which point they became U.S. citizens and could sell the land outright if desired (Deloria & Lytle, 1985: 10).

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Secretary of the Interior also began using blood quantum (usually set at one-half) as a scheme to determine “competency,” or allottees’ ability to own and sell their allotments “in fee simple” (Spruhan p.c. 2011; Kauanui 2008: 88-89). Thus, by the end of allotment (ca. 1934), Navajo landholdings in the checkerboard had been reduced by over one-half, and many private Navajo landowners found that the land they had been given was unfarmable or, worse yet, sold their land for a pittance of what it was worth and lost it (Perry 2010: 3). Attesting to the scarcity of eastern Navajos who still live on/retain surface rights to their original allotment, a former female chapterhouse official from Thoreau Chapter remarked to me with pride one day that she is one of the only people she knows to still live on and have her original allotment land.

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18 Kauanui elaborates: The passing of the Burke Act, “led to a scheme to determine allottees’ competency linked to percentage of Indian blood—typically marked at one-half—and the Indian Office used this policy from 1917 to 1920, then later employed a case-by-case approach to determine competency” (2008: 89).

19 Further eroding land that prior to the Allotment Act was “public domain” (Leonard Perry, Crownpoint Baahane’, 7/23/2010), a revision to the Dawes Act was passed in 1891 which allowed the Secretary of the Interior to lease lands of any allottee who was deemed “incompetent,” resulting in further alienation of Navajo-owned allotments (Deloria & Lytle: 1985: 10).
Figure 4. Map of Navajo Nation by B.I.A. Agency; eastern agency (including Alamo, Ramah and Tohajilee' [a.k.a. Cañoncito]) is color-coded in orange);
Used with Permission.

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20 My thanks to Anson Chee, surveyor for the Navajo Nation Land Office, Crownpoint Branch, for bringing my attention to these maps.
Figure 5. Map of Eastern Agency (courtesy of Navajo Nation Land Office, Crownpoint Branch); Used with Permission.
A representative breakdown of land ownership in Eastern Agency’s Casamero Lake Chapter is illustrated in figure 6. This shows the interspersion of Navajo tribal trust land (purple), Navajo tribal fee land (tan), Indian allotment land (maroon), remaining 2195 PLO land (pink), private leased land (white), BLM leased land (yellow) and state leased land (blue). As we can see, checkerboarding “was accomplished by ‘opening’ to homesteaders Indian land declared “surplus” after each allottee had received her/his allotment, and by making available for sale to whites allotments from which the trust status had been removed.” According to Thomas Biolsi, the logic in interspersing Navajos and Anglos was that “having white neighbors was good for Indians” (2005: 414).
Following the Dawes Act, allotted was passed down equally generation-to-generation by individuals to their (usually male) heirs, and “a parcel of land that at the time of allotment had one clear owner may now have more than 100 owners who hold the land as tenants in common” (Shebelwich and Zalneraitis 2000: 104-5).

This collective land tenancy has had a negative effect on the economic value of checkerboarded land, since large-scale land use planning, such as installing electrical lines or paving roads, becomes extremely difficult because of the number of parties that have to be consulted (Ibid. 2000: 104-5). In the small town (pop. 10,000) of Crownpoint, New Mexico, B.I.A. agency “seat” of Eastern Agency, for example, “land...is under the ownership and control of...the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Land Reclamation, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Postal Service, the National Park Service, the State of New Mexico, the Navajo Nation, individual Navajos, and private owners” (Ibid: 104).

In sum, the net effect of checkerboarding today results in a much higher non-Navajo population living in Eastern Agency (greater than 10%) than on other parts of the reservation; it has also severely impacted economic value of land parcels and has curtailed economic development in the region (for example additional obstacles in obtaining a Business Site Lease required to open a new business on the reservation). Thus, because tribal sovereignty is often most effectively exercised over people, events and infrastructure located on tribal trust land, checkerboarding severely impedes Navajo tribal sovereignty in Eastern Agency as a whole (Shepelwich & Zalneraitis 2000: 104-106). As a result, with the exception of the Bennett Freeze area of the Navajo-Hopi partitioned lands, where until very recently
economic development has been effectively frozen since the 1960s, the four other agencies on the Navajo reservation have substantially more economic development than their eastern counterparts.

The reasons for this are many. Since the Navajo Nation is the final authority which grants Business Site Leases\(^{21}\) and the Nation can only grant leases for applications proposed on tribal trust land, the number of business site leases granted to Eastern Agency is significantly less than the number granted to the four other BIA agencies of the Navajo Nation (Shiprock, Fort Defiance, Chinle and Western Navajo).\(^{22}\) Moreover, because land held in trust can't be used as collateral in order to obtain small business loans, the process of obtaining a business site lease for Navajos and non-Navajos on the reservation is notoriously cumbersome; the average wait time for a would-be business owner to obtain approval to break ground on a new business is currently three-five years (Cocheo 1994; also Arlondo Bia, p.c.).\(^{23}\)

\(^{21}\) See Appendix D for the first page of the Navajo Nation Business Site Lease Application.

\(^{22}\) In the application for the Business Site Lease, for example, it states that protocol for obtaining “location clearance” for Eastern Agency is different than other agencies: “Eastern Navajo Agency. Contact Crownpoint Office of Navajo Land Administration. Also contact Eastern RBDO [Regional Business Development Office] and RES to clarify land status to ensure that the proposed business site in on Tribal trust land” (2004: 6).

\(^{23}\) Borstadt, Lee and One Feather explain the source of some of these complications as rooted in the unique status of tribal trust land: “The sovereign status of Indian tribes has, in some ways, contributed to the lack of reservation economic development. As government entities, tribes are immune from lawsuits by banks and other financial institutions. As a result, land and other assets cannot be pledged as collateral because “the trust status” prohibits their ownership from being transferred to non-Indians. However, in certain cases the “trust status” can be waived. This has been occurring with increasing frequency to enable individuals and businesses to obtain loans. Sovereignty also means that each tribe has its own government structure complete with taxing authority and control over land use. Individuals cannot own land on the reservation. Therefore, anyone wishing to start a business must go through a complicated and lengthy site lease process in order to locate a business on a particular site” (1997: 34).
Having a non-contiguous tribal land base also has less tangible effects on issues relating to Navajo cultural continuity, senses of community and “togetherness.” As my Navajo teacher sometimes expressed this fact-of-life, “Crownpoint is not really a ‘together’ community” (Bowman, fall 2009). What I take her to mean is that checkerboarding affects the ability to create Navajo cultural spaces where “Navajoness” is practiced and reinstated, be it through shared language, making music, holding ceremonies, or community events. Thus, while territory isn’t necessarily the basis for cultural collectivity, for many contemporary Navajos, it turns out to be just that: Because ranching, having land, being able to say “díí éí shikéyah” [this is my land] and owning livestock for many Navajos are important ways of expressing not only status but have also become ways of indexing an attachment to a larger, Navajo collectivity, territory is seen as linked to a certain kind of Navajoness. For example, many Navajos living off-reservation in urban areas, or in larger reservation towns such as Crownpoint or Chinle, will also have a separate piece of reservation land and livestock for which they care and to which they diligently return each weekend. It in this context that a phenomenon which has perplexed me for a long time—the fact that many Navajos own horses that are unable to be ridden or even touched/halter broke—begins to make sense, because it becomes the process of taking care of horses/livestock and land that ties contemporary Navajos to their Navajoness in a grounded, concrete manner.24

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very real way, then, a fragmented land base, lack of Navajo jurisdictional control over land and the challenges in owning livestock on Eastern Agency lead to the perception of a more fragmented sense of community and Navajo social collectivity.

One specific example of a town that has been adversely affected by limited economic development and internally fragmented over issues pertaining to land allocation and uranium mining is the town of Crownpoint, New Mexico. This is where I lived, took line dancing and Navajo language classes and played with a variety of local bands. Revealing both the discourse of abandonment and sense of separation from both Window Rock and the Arizona side of the reservation, in the following section I show how the town of Crownpoint differentiates itself from other parts of the reservation. I then discuss the internal differentiation and fragmentation within the town itself that is the result of checkerboarding and the recent proposal for uranium mining, which would use the town’s main aquifer as the source for “solution” mining.

**Crownpoint**—*T'iis Ts'óóz Ndeeshgiizh* (Slender Cottonwood Canyon)

Crownpoint has a small Indian Health Services (IHS) hospital (10 beds), a post office, three elementary schools (one public, one B.I.A. and one private parochial), a high school, and two tribally assisted colleges (Diné College and Navajo Technical College). In Crownpoint you can also find a Basha’s supermarket and shopping center (sometimes referred to as “Béézhaazh” in Navajo) with an adjacent dialysis clinic and two empty storefronts, three gas stations (two running and one defunct), two laundromats, a domestic violence crisis center called “Family
Harmony,” a number of tribal offices including Navajo Tribal Police (Headquarters for Eastern Agency, 31 officers for 5,769 sq. miles), Department of Behavioral Health Services (DBHS) and the Office of Youth Development, a BIA Agency office, a Bureau of Land Management Office (BLM), and the Office of Environmental Health (OEH). Driving into “downtown” Crownpoint, known as the “Four Corners,” you’ll also see a flea market where the informal economy thrives, a Chinese makeshift food stand, and an impromptu ice cream shop running out of a plywood stand in the parking lot of “Willie’s Tire Shop,” located at the 4-way stop sign at the Four Corners.

25 Crownpoint Navajo Tribal Police jurisdiction includes the satellite reservations of Alamo (two officers) and Tohajilee’ (three officers), with an additional sub-station to be set up soon in Dzihna’ooditi, New Mexico. According to the Crownpoint Chief of Police (phone conversation, 9/30/10), the unit for Eastern Agency is supposed to have forty-four officers, but due to lack of funding the force is currently down to thirty-one. Navajo Nationwide, Navajo Nation Law Enforcement has 319 Police Officers for a population of over 200,000 people. The number of Police Officers per population of 1000 is 1.9 as compared to 2.5 per 1000 at the U.S. national level (http://navajodps.org/Page.asp?CustComKey=30996&CategoryKey=30997, accessed 9/30/10).

26 This food stand is in Crownpoint about three months out of the year and is owned by a Taiwanese family. For the other nine months, the family lives in other reservation towns such as Chinle and Tuba City and sells their food at flea markets there.
Figure 7. NW corner of “Four Corners;” food trailers selling lunch; Photo by Author.
Figure 8. Chinese Food Trailer, parked under cottonwood tree at Flea Market; photo by author

Compared to other agency seats, however, “Slender Cottonwood Canyon” (original Navajo name) or Crownpoint, as it was named by first Eastern Agency Superintendent Samuel Stacher in 1910, has surprisingly little economic development and a surprisingly large number of churches per capita. There is even a road called “atiin sodizin bá hooghan bee wohjihígíí” or “Church Road,” where I counted five denominations of Christian churches on one road about three miles long. Moreover, while Business Site Leases are challenging to obtain because of the scarcity of tribal trust land, Navajo Land Office surveyor Anson Chee has noted that, in contrast, permits for new churches and missions are currently multiplying in Crownpoint (Anson Chee, phone conversation, 9/05/2011).
Housing in Crownpoint consists of several groupings of Navajo Housing Authority (NHA) low-income HUD and rent-to-own houses, with names such as “China Town,” Sunnyside and West Mesa.27

Figure 9. “China Town” NHA Housing Community, with taller buildings belonging to Navajo Technical College in background; photo by author

Finally, sitting out of sight behind the Ferrell Gas Company on Highway 371, Crownpoint boasts a three-story anaasází or ancestral Puebloan dwelling, known as Kin Ya’á or Towering House. Significant both for archeologists and traditional Navajos, Kin Ya’á is the origin site of one of the first four Navajo clans,28 the

27 Echoing the work of Eleanor Nevins on Western Apache naming practices (2008), these more contemporary placenames for newer housing communities also seem to be acts of “community self-definition” that privilege reservation insiders. Also exemplifying this are the placenames “Beverly Hills” and “Jurassic Park” in Chinle, Arizona.

28 The other three original clans are Tódích’i’íni (The Bitter Water People), Hashtlíshnii (The Mud People), and Honágháhnií (The-He-Who-Walks-Around-You People).
Kinyaa’áanii or The Towering House People, from whom the first Navajo people are said to be created.

Crownpoint also has a surprising number of vacated or abandoned buildings, giving it a somewhat eerie feeling when one visits for the first time. The old Pueblo Bonito Boarding School, located in Crownpoint, which in the 1930s allegedly once had a beautiful fruit orchard, perfectly manicured grounds and a working dairy farm, is abandoned and in disrepair. Old community buildings such as dance halls and even a makeshift old movie theatre are abandoned and awaiting demolition. With a total population of ca. 10,000, Crownpoint's largest employers are the tribe—Navajo Head Start, specifically—and the BIA—Crownpoint Community BIA Elementary School (http://crownpoint.nndes.org/, accessed 9/30/10).

In the late 1990s (the most recent figures available), Crownpoint proper had an unemployment rate of 23.5%, nearly three times the rate of non-metro New Mexico as a whole. However, since this statistic didn’t include discouraged able-bodied adults who are no longer actively seeking formal employment, the Navajo Department of Economic Development estimates that, as of 2003, unemployment in Crownpoint could be as high as 65 percent (Shepelwich & Zalneraitis 2000: 103). Moreover, Eastern Agency as a whole has the highest unemployment of all five agencies on the Navajo Nation (as of 1990), estimated between 67.93-70.44% (McCloskey 2007: 81). This figure stands in striking contrast to the current national unemployment level of 8.6%, a figure which is often referred to by the media as being near crisis levels. During this same time period, average unemployment for

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29 As of 1/12/2012.
the other four Navajo agencies was between 43.65-45.81 percent. With these figures in mind, in Eastern Agency “employment, regardless of its form, is a privilege” (Ibid: 81), and to have a job of any sort is a coveted status symbol.

Also unlike other agency towns such as Chinle (Chinle Agency), Tuba City (Western Navajo Agency), Shiprock (Shiprock Agency) and Window Rock (Fort Defiance Agency), Crownpoint lacks almost all of the more typical reservation “chain stores,” some of which are Navajo-owned, such as Pizza Edge, Navajo Westerners, “King Dragon” Chinese Food, Ace Hardware, and Navajo Arts and Crafts Enterprise. Nationally owned chains found elsewhere on the reservation (Subway, Taco Bell, Burger King, McDonald’s, Church’s Chicken, That’s a Burger, Blake’s Lotaburger, or even the tribe’s own Quality Inn franchise) are also nonexistent in Crownpoint. Indeed, with the exception of the Navajo Technical College Cafeteria (for students and faculty but allows community members to purchase meals for $5) and the three tables located next to the deli in the Basha’s supermarket, there is no public eating facility of any kind in the town of Crownpoint.\(^{30}\)

Thus, Crownpoint’s lack of economic development contrasts even with other reservation towns, areas also generally known for a lack of infrastructure and economic development, and is sometimes commented on by Navajos from other parts of the reservation. For example, when my band passed through Crownpoint on their way to a gig at Chaco Canyon—their second time ever even being to Crownpoint—the bandleader and his son, both from Arizona, remarked that “there’s

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\(^{30}\) Why this is the case has many answers, but one is the difficulty and expense in obtaining a Business Site Lease on the reservation in general, and on the checkerboard in particular.

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nothing [businesses, entertainment] over here!” Back in the 1980s, and typical of a discourse I frequently encountered while in Crownpoint where the town’s past is viewed with nostalgia and a sense of “has been,” there was a Kentucky Fried Chicken and burger joint owned by a man in Standing Rock, NM. After he passed on, this same building became “Cozy Fried Chicken,” which now sits on the southwest quadrant of the four-way, empty and with graffiti on the stucco and holes in the walls.

Moreover, as Brugge, Benally and Yazzie-Lewis point out in The Navajo People and Uranium Mining (2006), a sense of Eastern Agency being different from the rest of the reservation has also been directly impacted by the recent specter of four uranium mines that a Texas-based mining company, Hydro Resources, Inc. (HRI) is hoping to open in McKinley County by 2013. Even though former Navajo Nation President, Joe Shirley, Jr.’s. main platform in his 2000 campaign was “No More Uranium Mines” and the Navajo Nation Council successfully passed the Diné Natural Resources Protection Act (DNRPA) in 2005 which banned uranium mining and processing on Navajo reservation lands, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has approved the in-situ leach or solution mining\(^{31}\) in Navajo residential areas close to Crownpoint and Church Rock, New Mexico. Although there is strong local opposition to the proposed mining, spearheaded by a non-profit called Eastern Navajo Diné Against Uranium Mining (ENDAUM), allottees who lease

\(^{31}\) According to the Associated Press, “In-situ leach mining injects chemicals into the ground to release uranium then pumps the solution to the surface” (AP, Sept. 17th, 2010). Water from the town’s high-quality aquifer would be used as the medium for the mining.
their mineral rights to Hydro Resources receive an initial lease payment of $367,000 and, as a result, some see it as “their only ticket out of poverty” (Shuey 1996: 1). Since many family members’ allotments are adjacent to one another and some agree with the benefits of uranium mining while others vehemently oppose it on moral, spiritual or health-related grounds, decisions to lease one’s allotment out for mining have literally “split blood families” in two in Eastern Navajo, further eroding a sense of togetherness, community and common purpose (Shuey in Brugge et al 2006: 169). Thus, similar to what Suzana Sawyer shows about the way oil extraction has split communities and families within one Amazonian Quechua community, uranium mining in Navajo serves to “discipline, coordinate, and control the movements of individuals” while in the process often fragmenting “existing indigenous social geographies of place, belonging and responsibility” (Sawyer 2004: 60).

The late Navajo comedian and singer-songwriter, Vincent Craig, a Crownpoint Native, also had his own take on the history of uranium mining in Eastern Agency and McKinley County. Herding sheep as a child in the canyons of the Rio Puerco river, close to where the 1979 Church Rock mine spill occurred which dumped radioactive waste down this same river, Craig created a comic book character whom he called “Mutton Man,” a Navajo Spiderman whose “superhero power of flight [came] from eating contaminated mutton from the Church Rock spill” (Yazzie-Lewis & Zion in Brugge et. al 2006: 4). Finding humor in what was otherwise an undeniably tragic environmental and social disaster, Craig’s artistic
response shows how deeply—and how viscerally—the history of uranium mining is a part of the history and psyche of Eastern Agency residents.

Yet another feature visually marking the town of Crownpoint is the large number of chain link fences. This stands in stark contrast to most reservation towns in Arizona, such as the picture below in Many Farms, AZ, where cattle, sheep and horses are often a taken-for-granted part of the “downtown” landscape.

![Figure 10. Mustang Horses and school bus in “downtown” Many Farms—Many Farms Public School, Many Farms, AZ; photo by author.](image)

These fences—a product of checkerboarding and erected as a way to keep livestock out of downtown Crownpoint—make it nearly impossible to walk in a straight line anywhere in Crownpoint. For example, from our residence at the
Navajo Technical College faculty apartments to the Basha’s supermarket is about 1 ½ miles as the crow flies. To get there on foot, however, one has to cross three separate fence lines, one of which is high and has no opening. Each school is surrounded by a fence, as is each BIA and tribal support office, making the whole town a crisscross of haphazard fences wherever you go. In striking visual contrast, residents of Arizona reservation land practice an “open range” policy, meaning that livestock are (in theory) earmarked and branded but are free to graze where they want. This means that, in practice, in downtown Chinle, Arizona, one will often see horses, cattle and occasionally sheep or goats grazing on grassy tidbits or sage growing next to the bank, the post office; you can also see them crossing State Highway 191 to get from the Burger King to the A & W.

Lacking the tourist draws of a Canyon de Chelly or a Monument Valley, Crownpoint also has virtually no tourist infrastructure, and, with the exception of two new hospitality suites for guest speakers at Navajo Technical College, no accommodations. Its main tourist attraction, the Crownpoint Rug Auction, allows visitors to sleep in their R.V.s in the Mid-School parking lot in order to encourage them to make the one-hour trek from Gallup or the 1 ½ hour trek from Farmington, the two nearest off-reservation towns, and to spend their money at the auction.

However, what Crownpoint may lack in the way of a formal economy it makes up for with its informal or “alternative” economy, and residents are by no means complacent in the face of Crownpoint’s infrastructural needs. Due to the high

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32 I thank my colleague, Dana Powell, for some invigorating conversations and insights on the topic of “informal economies” on Navajo.
unemployment rate, many individuals are extremely creative about ways to make money while staying close to home. For example, on an average day driving through town, it is common to see at least one private “food sale” of a lunch item such as enchiladas, Navajo tacos, lasagna or tamales, often sold directly out of the individual’s home with a housing community name and house number affixed to the sign (“CHINATOWN, HOUSE #34”). In the Basha’s shopping center there are often individuals selling jewelry, arts and crafts, pillows, aprons, and roasted pine nuts (locally called piñons or ndeeshchíí’) if the crop is good that year. Within the informal economy, however, most noticeable is the flea market at the Four Corners.

Like many swap meets, reservation flea markets specialize in used items of every ilk at rock bottom prices, along with bootlegged CDs and DVDs. Also at the flea market, perhaps making up for the lack of restaurants in town, are at least three permanent food stands, all converted horse trailers, selling some version of Navajo tacos, Navajo burgers, roast mutton or mutton stew along with homemade tortillas and fry bread, from Monday through Friday. Adjacent to that, about two weeks out of the month, sits a Chinese food stand, selling various fried rice dishes and pop. This stand, owned and run by a Taiwanese family, specializes in selling at flea markets across the Navajo reservation. When they are not traveling the reservation selling their food, the family lives inside their food trailer in the Kin Ya’á trailer park east of town.

Yet, despite many of the negative depictions of Crownpoint found in the media and elsewhere, Crownpoint residents also take a lot of pride in being from this hard-scrabble community, as evidenced in a recent letter by a Crownpoint
transplant now living in Keams Canyon, Arizona, Roman Montaya. Revealing both the widespread sentiment that Crownpoint is a town under siege and also the belief in the resilient spirit of Crownpoint residents, in a letter to the editor of the *Navajo Times* titled “Glad, concerned about Eastern Agency” (October 14th, 2010: A6-7), Montaya notes the many recent negative events covered by the press about Crownpoint, countering that, “while these events warrant press, there is positive news not covered in the media that we would love to read about” (Montaya in Navajo Times). Citing the opening of the new community school, the resurfacing of Crownpoint streets, and the new power and waterline projects impacting many families, Montaya specifically mentions the positive contributions of the newly-formed Crownpoint Historical and Cultural Heritage Council (CHCHC), of which I was a participating member, and the Crownpoint Community Land Use Planning Committee (CLUPC) as examples of community organizations with momentum and optimistic visions for Crownpoint’s future. Concluding by reiterating that “Crownpoint can be viewed from a more positive perspective and with more optimism for the future to counter the negative images reported in recent news reports” (A7), Montaya calls our attention to “the positive light stemming from our small community” (A7) and the investment that many community members have made in the town despite its imperfections.

**Blood and Language: Perspectives from Eastern Agency**

We can also see perspectives of difference revealed in discussions about language, blood and belonging, as seen in the perspectives of country singer Candice
Craig. Candice’s specific thoughts on being a Navajo from Eastern Agency are filled with ambivalence as well as humor. As a Navajo who isn’t fully fluent in her language, Candice often feels very uncomfortable and put on the spot when other Navajos address her in Navajo, and she typically responds in Spanish, a language few Navajos speak as fluently as she does, in order to equally disorient them and give them a taste of their own medicine. On Friday 9/10/09, Candice invited me to attend her niece Megan Craig’s Kinaaldá or girl’s puberty ceremony. While making tortillas and getting ready to eat on the first evening, Candice’s maternal aunt, Rita Capitan, commented to me that my Navajo, and particularly the way I say “aoo’” or “yes,” sounded like “Arizona Navajo.” Unsure whether that is a good thing or a bad thing (or neither), I told her that I have indeed learned some of my Navajo on the Arizona side of the reservation, and Candice and her aunts proceeded to discuss some of the differences between Navajos from New Mexico and Navajos from the Arizona portion of the reservation. Rita said, “Those Arizonans always think they know more than us New Mexico Navajos” (9/10/09). Referring to one of the critiques she’s heard from the Arizona side, she added “They think we’re just Hispanic and white.” Expanding on this, Candice noted that “some of them didn’t go on the Long Walk [1864-1868], so they think of us [Eastern Navajos] as more acculturated because we did go on it.”33 In this case, for Candice the shared

33 The Navajo Long Walk refers to the forced removal of approximately 8,000 Navajos from their ancestral homeland in the four corners region to southeastern New Mexico in an area known as Fort Sumner, on the Pecos River. Begun in winter and carried out on foot, many men, women and children died along the way or in the prison camp at Fort Sumner. The Navajo equivalent of the Cherokee “Trail of Tears,” the Long Walk serves as a major unifier and point of shared history and remembrance today for Navajos whose ancestors went on it. Those that didn’t go on it number around 2,000 people, and include members of Alamo, certain families that hid out in Canyon de
experience that many Navajos see as defining Navajo experience and cultural practices today—the forced removal known as the Long Walk—becomes a liability indexing assimilation rather than an asset in assessments of Navajo authenticity.

Moreover, this idea of language as cultural patrimony, or Navajo as being one’s language even if one doesn’t necessarily speak it or understand it, is regularly expressed in day-to-day conversations. For example, a student of mine at Diné College, a male sashbelt weaver from the Canyon de Chelly area, told our class that, although he doesn’t speak or understand Navajo, he still considers Navajo to be “his” language and English, the language he speaks, understands and (eloquently) writes, to be “someone else’s” (field notes, July 2009).

These and similar distinctions between the eastern “checkerboarded” side of the reservation and the four other agencies34 located on contiguous reservation land are part of a discourse that surfaced frequently during the sixteen months I lived and participated in community life in Crownpoint, New Mexico (Eastern Agency) and also during the combined seven months I lived in Rough Rock and in Many Farms, Arizona.

As Rita’s comment about knowledge and bloodedness makes clear, Navajos from Arizona often perceive themselves as being possessors of a linguistic and cultural knowledge that New Mexico Navajos do not have. And sometimes, New Mexico Navajos see it this way, too. Thus, in many conversations I overheard, to

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34 Navajo B.I.A. Agencies are: Eastern Navajo, Western Navajo, Chinle, Fort Defiance, and Shiprock.

Chelly, Arizona, and some communities living in the remote western and northwestern reaches of Diné Bikéyah including areas near Black Mesa and Navajo Mountain, Arizona (Iverson 2002: 57).
some extent New Mexico Navajos perceive themselves as “lacking,” in their Navajoness, in the myriad ways this should and could be defined. Particularly interesting about the conversation relayed above between Candice, her aunts and myself is that the setting for the conversation was a Kinaaldá, a traditional ceremony held to celebrate a young woman’s first menses and which is typically conducted in the Navajo language. Indeed, talking in Navajo and preparing for a ceremony may itself have been the impetus for a conversation about cultural continuity to begin with, either as a self-reminder and point of pride that “eastern” Navajos do still participate in Navajo traditional life or, alternately, as a reprimand from the aunts wishing their nieces and nephews would speak more Navajo than they do.

Similarly, in both formal Navajo language classes I attended regularly in New Mexico (Diné College, Crownpoint, and UNM-Albuquerque), students from Arizona were quick to identify themselves as such and to draw minor distinctions between themselves and classmates (or the New Mexico instructor) from different parts of the reservation. For example, one young student, Jerome, in Shirley Bowman’s Navajo 102 class in Crownpoint, corrected me on the first evening I met him, telling me I shouldn’t use the standard farewell term, “hágoónee,‘” and instead I should just say “hagooshńį,” a much more informal leave-taking term which can also mean “ok, good, no problem.” In Kayenta, Arizona, Jerome explained to me, if you say “hágoónee‘” it is perceived as being too final and can be misinterpreted as you wishing death on the person you’re saying it to, so his paternal grandfather (“náłį”) told him to always avoid saying it. Shirley Bowman, who overheard the
conversation, responded by relativizing Jerome’s ultimatum, saying that leave-taking terms can vary widely from one portion of the reservation to another, so saying “hágoónee’” to someone in Crownpoint might not be perceived in the same way it would be perceived in Kayenta. Through correcting those of us in the class in our use of this term, Jerome was positioning himself as a linguistic and cultural authority partially based on his place of origin—Arizona—and his traditional upbringing with his Navajo-speaking grandparents.

Similarly, in my Navajo 202 class at UNM-Albuquerque, the three Navajo students in the class from Arizona expressed a clear kinship and bond with each other and assumed a position of cultural and linguistic authority in the classroom. These students, although fluent speakers of Navajo, were taking the class in order to learn to read and write in Navajo, as many fluent Navajo speakers aren’t necessarily literate in Navajo (most reservation schools do not teach Navajo language literacy). On two separate occasions, I was cautioned by these students that, as an anthropologist, to take what our teacher, a Navajo from Tohatchi, New Mexico, who is married to an Iranian Baha’i, said with a grain of salt because, as far as her traditional knowledge went, she sometimes “got it wrong.” Moreover, because of this perceived lack of traditional knowledge, I was encouraged by these students to also regard her language teaching, although thorough and excellent, as slightly suspect as well. One example cited was her lack of knowledge about Navajo weaving and that her accent and vocabulary—something which is of course

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35 As of this writing (fall 2010), this professor now teaches a Navajo Weaving Class at San Juan Community College.
localized to environment, geography and family idiolect—was different from theirs. In these moments of perceived ontological difference or what Elizabeth Grosz terms an “ontology of lack” (1994: 222), the students would frequently look at each other with a knowing look. Thus, in this instance perceived lack of cultural knowledge and difference in vocabulary was also understood as potential lack of linguistic knowledge and caused these students to regard her teaching as more generally “suspect” and something to be continually questioned amongst themselves.

As evidence of this larger discourse of lack associated with New Mexico portions of the reservation, my Navajo language and culture teacher, Shirley Bowman, announced several times in her Navajo 102 class that “New Mexico is just for the lizards!” When I queried her, she explained that land on the New Mexico side of the reservation is “dried up” and “shriveled like a lizard,” “all used up” and unable to be cultivated or lived off of in the traditional Navajo way; New Mexico land, therefore, is inferior to more fertile land allegedly found in, say, Chinle or in the aptly named town of “Many Farms,” Arizona, towns which are both located close to the Chinle Wash. This idea that all Eastern Agency’s land base can support is reptilian forms of life, that it’s “useless,” is an idea that was expressed regularly to me by my teacher, compounded I’m sure by the fact that she has never quite felt at home living in Crownpoint since she left her hometown of Tohatchi (Tohatch’i), New Mexico.
“Da’ Jáán Bilagáana Níłísh?” (“Are You a Navajo Bilagáana?”): Class, Place and Navajo Authenticity

But not all perceptions of “Arizona reservation land” or “Arizona Navajos” are quite so laudatory. Take, for example, the use of the term “jáán.” A Navajo term denoting someone who lives close to the land and chooses to live a traditional, reservation-based lifestyle, “jáán” is employed as a rhetorical device in many different ways, some of which I trace in the following section.

In its everyday usage, you might hear someone say that someone either acts really “jáán” or has a really “jáán” name, or simply is a “jáán” or, perhaps most pejoratively, is a “jááner.” “Jáán” might also be used to simply mean “Navajo” as opposed to another racial identification, as in the time I was questioned at the Many Farms laundromat, while sitting with my friend and talking in Navajo, whether I was a “jáán' Bilagáana,” translated to me as, “Are you a white Navajo?”

And, although used to denote rural Navajos from many parts of the reservation, because of the stronger associations between Arizona Navajos and traditional lifestyles and cultural ways, the term seems to be used more often when referring to “Arizona Navajos.” Both a noun and an adjective, the secondary implications for a “jáán” are of an uneducated individual, the rural rube or

36 “Jáán” is also often written with its anglicized spelling as “John.”

37 According to my “house sister,” Karen Morgan, the way in which this individual used “jáán” left it somewhat open to interpretation, so that he could have either meant “Navajo” or simply “Native/Indian.”
“backwoods Navajo,” whose mother tongue is Navajo, who may or may not speak English and, if they do, speaks it with a thick “Navajo” accent, and who, like the proverbial “redneck” in Anglo society (Fox 2004a; Huber 1995; White 2007; Darling 2009), lacks savvy about technology or how to navigate in a non-Navajo, more cosmopolitan milieu. Similar to the ways “redneck” is used as code for working class individuals in an Anglo context, “jáán” is code for working-class Navajos who also live “in the sticks.”

Yet the stereotype is even more specific. The Navajo version of the “backwoods Navajo” implies that, instead of riding a tractor or making moonshine like the proverbial southern “redneck,” a “jáán” lives off the land through ranching and herding sheep, hauling water, conserving resources and growing traditional foods through “dry farming.” Thus, their “working-class” identity comes often from working the land—not the linguistic origin of the term “redneck”—rather than through holding a blue-collar job or participation in a working-class, modern wage economy. Thus, in many ways the “jáán” who communes with nature is in some ways an expression of an internalized stereotype of Indian peoples more broadly, that of the Indian as “tree hugger,” first environmentalist, or, most bluntly, as the quintessential “noble savage.”

Conversely, the other stereotype often associated with the jáán, and one that historically goes hand-in-hand with the “noble savage,” is that of the bellicose, “bloodthirsty savage” or unsuccessful modern. In these multiple depictions of the

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38 “Dry farming” is a type of irrigation, common throughout the Native southwest, in which fields are flooded two or three times per growing season and then allowed to slowly drain in between (personal communication, Tommy Bia, June 2010, Many Farms, AZ).
“jáán,” we see the tension and ambivalence in view of what are taken as for sites of
“tradition” and how, on the one hand, the “jáán” is considered the pure “touchstone”
of authentic Navajo culture and on the other hand is shunned and criticized for this
same cultural “purity,” portrayed as “behind,” backward and less than fully
modern.39 Both of these stereotypes, historian Philip Deloria points out, feed from a
larger American narrative about American Indians in which “Indian people,
corralled on isolated and impoverished reservations, missed out on modernity—
indeed, almost dropped out of history itself” (Deloria 2004: 6).

Speaking to its currency today, an entire body of self-deprecating humor
exists around the so-called “jáán,” which Navajo comedians like Vincent Craig and
James June and Ernest Tsosie III (“James and Ernie”) have taken to the next level in
their comedic routines, replete with heavily aspirated, thick Navajo English or
“Navadlish” accents. For example, in a recent performance at Newcomb High School
gym in Newcomb, New Mexico, Navajo comedy duo James and Ernie ended their
routine by asking the audience, “So, what do you call a [Navajo] tribal councilman?”
Punning on “jáán” and the bad guys of “Transformers,” while also poking fun at
recent scandal and fraud in the tribal government, the punch line was: a “DECEPTI-
jáán!!” (Newcomb, NM, 9/30/10).

Like similar terms in African American and other minority communities that
can take on a negative or positive valence depending entirely on the user and on
contextual usage, who has the permission to use “jáán” (or “squaw” or “redskin,” for

39 I thank Orin Starn for his insights on the double-sided nature of “tradition” in this context.
that matter) without sounding racist depends largely on whether you’re Navajo or not, and, if you are, whether you grew up on the reservation or off-reservation in a more urban area or what part of the reservation you’re from. As Clifford notes about the diversity of indigenous experience today, an indigenous sense of connection to homeland and to language is often common in indigenous communities. However, who has the authority to use a term like jáán, or “how this feeling [or term] is practiced, in discursive, embodied, emplaced ways, can be quite varied” (Clifford in de la Cadena & Starn 2007: 205; italics mine).

At its most exoticized, the “jáán” denotes someone who is truly or deeply Navajo, someone who lives on the “rez” and rarely ventures off of it, someone who, from an outsider’s perspective, is truly and inalterably a subaltern “other.” It is the image of the “pre-modern” Indian, the essence of whom so many New Age religions today seek to recapture, someone who is deeply identified with a sense of place and for whom “a feeling of connectedness to a homeland and to kin, a feeling of grounded peoplehood, is basic” (Clifford in Starn and de la Cadena, 2007: 205). This sense of dislocation—articulated most frequently in daily conversations and performances through the use of a highly accented, Navajo English—and of being the kind of Navajo that both Navajos and (potentially) Anglos would make fun of, is thus embodied by the John. These are many of the characters that Vincent Craig, for example, impersonated, such as his invented characters “Ch’izhii” (“Person with the rough skin”) and “Rita(hhhhhhhhh).” Here, the fact that Vincent Craig, the key public

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Craig adds the additional seven additional |h| consonants at the end of “Rita” to denote its highly aspirated pronunciation when spoken with a “Navajo” English accent.
figure to establish the John and the Navajo accent as cultural typologies, was an Eastern Navajo making fun, more often than not, of Western Navajos. More recently and problematically referred to by campaigning politicians euphemistically as “hooghan level” Navajos—a term which some find to be quite offensive and classist—a jáán is someone who is understood to live in “one” cultural world rather than the proverbial “two worlds” so often referred to when discussing American Indian individuals who layer Western cultural practices on top of their own Navajo traditions.

At the Basha’s parking lot in Crownpoint one afternoon, along with my very blond-haired friend from Denmark, a local artist approached us selling “long hairs,” or Zuni kachinas intricately carved out of a single piece of cottonwood. Assuming that my friend, obviously a tourist, was looking for something specifically “Navajo,” he says to her: “It’s called a Zuni Longhair” and he lists the different prices. With a knowing smile, by way of reassurance he looked slyly at me and then added, “but it’s made by a jáán,” and he starts to laugh.

‘Jáán’ as a Pejorative Term

Like the figure of the Arizona Navajo, jáán also has a less ambivalent and more outwardly derogatory set of uses. At its worst, jáán is used to denote a sort of primitiveness, or regressive/deviant social behavior. For example, concerned about

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41 The Pueblo of Zuni is located about two hours southwest of Crownpoint, south of Gallup in the town of Zuni, New Mexico.

42 Presumably, this gentleman had either seen me before or knew that I spoke enough Navajo/had been on the rez long enough to understand his use of the term jáán.
me walking near a certain mesa by Navajo Technical College (N.T.C.) at night, my Navajo teacher’s daughter told her mom that “those Arizona monkeys”—N.T.C. students that weren’t local to Crownpoint or New Mexico—might assault me in some way and I should steer clear of the area. Although she didn’t specifically use the term “jáán” for shorthand, the description that followed matches one of the common usages of “jáán” as a calloused and libidinous man: the “bloodthirsty savage.” In this way, and similar to Said’s discussions of orientalism and exoticization of the Eastern “other” by the West, ideas of Navajo purity are a double-edged sword. Ideal types like the “Arizona Navajo” come to stand in for both for the beauty and continuity of Navajo culture (“noble savage”) as well as its perceived social maladies (“bloodthirsty savage”). Seen from this perspective, Arizona Navajos encapsulate an internal contradiction, in that they are simultaneously culturally “higher” status and more “redneck” at one and the same time. In the usage of the term “jáán,” we see how the linguistic sign comes to have multiple, contradictory but nonetheless potent signifiers. Moreover, these internalizations of very public and well-known stereotypes of Indian peoples, traceable to at least the nineteenth century, each equally dehumanize Native peoples in that they are both unattainable.43 As Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche) writes about American Indians and romanticized internalizations of history as seen in film, “We are hopelessly fascinated with each other, locked in an endless embrace of love and hate and

43 I thank Valerie Lambert for her insight into the equally dehumanizing nature of so-called “positive” and “negative” stereotypes in the American Indian context.
narcissism. Together we are condemned, forever to disappoint, never to forget even as we can’t remember” (2009: 6).

“The Minority in Fifth Position:” Crownpoint Chapter House and the Community Land Use Planning Committee (CLUPC)

Other discourses separating Navajos east and west of the Chuskas are seen at the chapter level, and particularly at monthly chapter and CLUPC (Community Land Use Planning Committee) meetings. The CLUPC in Crownpoint is the main elected governing body helping to resolve the myriad land disputes in Crownpoint chapter, including most recently “cemetery issues, safety of the flea market area, and the rural addressing project” (Montaya October 14th, 2010: A7). At one CLUPC meeting that took place on February 29th, 2009, there is a petition from a Crownpoint family about an “Arizona Navajo” who, they believe, is taking advantage of them by dint of his Arizona origins, college education and possible connections with the Navajo tribal government. In this conversation, it is the higher status Arizonan who takes advantage of the lower-class, less educated Navajo family from New Mexico.

The following incident was part of a larger discourse of abandonment that I often encountered in Crownpoint and throughout other parts of Eastern Agency. According to Crownpoint chapter officials and CLUPC officers, Eastern Agency’s subaltern status in the tribal pecking order is determined by the Navajo Nation’s Capitol, Window Rock, Arizona, and its tribal bureaucracy. Here, the fact that Window Rock is in Arizona and not New Mexico is understood to be significant. This
is because of the geographic distance between Window Rock and, in this case, Crownpoint (about 1 ½ hours by car), but also because the perception is that Window Rock tends to “forget” about Crownpoint and Eastern Agency, thus making members of Eastern Agency chapters feel invisible to some extent.

From the Eastern perspective, folks on the reservation in Arizona and even Utah tend to be considered for funds and tribal services before Eastern Agency is even on Window Rock’s radar, as evidenced in CLUPC (Community Land Use Planning Committee) President Stephen Begay’s comment that “Eastern Navajo is always put in fifth position” and that “we’re [Eastern Agency] the minorities to the minorities of the Navajo Nation (...) so we have to survive on our own” (2/25/09, Stephen Begay, Crownpoint Chapter House, CLUPC Meeting, Crownpoint). Bringing some word-play and humor into an otherwise serious and stressful situation, Begay states that, for Window Rock, Eastern Agency is just “gone with the wind, ya’” ⁴⁴ (2/25/09, Stephen Begay, Crownpoint Chapter House, CLUPC Meeting, Crownpoint).

The idea of having to survive on one’s own, as Stephen so clearly articulates above, permeates many levels of chapter house discourse, and is evidenced by the ways Eastern Navajos often seek political rights as U.S. citizens and not just as Navajos. This is also made manifest in the Martin family proactively coming to the CLUPC in an effort to “take matters into their own hands” at the chapter level since tribal officials in Window Rock won’t be able to help them.

⁴⁴ “ya’ ” is a part of speech added to the end of a statement when one is seeking affirmation/confirmation of one’s view, similar to “right?”
The family—patriarch Billy Martin, a retired Crownpoint police officer and Navy veteran, and his children—requested that the committee review their recent loss of grazing land near the “sewer lagoon” north of Crownpoint on NM Highway 371 North. Exemplifying the extreme bureaucratization of land in Crownpoint Chapter, the Martin’s family parcel is referred to in bureaucrat-ese as “Township North, Range 12, Section 16.” Having leased this particular 160-acre section (160 acres=one “section”) of land for over sixty years, the Martin family was very concerned when, a few months back, they were told to vacate this land by one “Harold Slim,” a Navajo from Arizona with a geology degree from Arizona State University. Stating that, “we’re a sovereignty nation,” the oldest sister asks CLUPC members how Slim managed to lease the land from under them without their knowledge, and also who leased the land to him—the state of New Mexico or the tribe—since the land was transferred from the state to the tribe for grazing rights back in the early 1990s. Most concerning to Billy Martin was the idea that Harold Slim, with his geology degree and relative status, might know something about this “section” that the family isn’t privy to, for example that there might be uranium under the bedrock and that maybe Slim hopes to lease the mineral rights and profit from it. The family also speculated that Slim had possible connections with the B.I.A. or the Tribe and had maybe wrangled his way into obtaining this permit because he had already prospected and surveyed this particular section.

Knowing all this, the Martin family is trying to avoid being another family torn apart by the ambiguities of Eastern land permitting and the impact of mineral leasing and uranium mining. As someone actively involved with Eastern Navajo
Diné Against Uranium Mining, Billy Martin is acutely attuned to the havoc that uranium politics has wreaked on a sense of community in his hometown of Crownpoint. Or, as Stephen Begay puts it, “land is always the excuse” to not do anything pertaining to issues such as the Martin’s, mostly because determining who owns which section of land on the checkerboard is a virtual nightmare due to the way it was allotted to multiple and often competing tribal, state, federal and private entities.

As former Navajo Nation Chairman, Leonard Haskie (served 1989-91) related about the arbitrary and “unequal” (Cheever 2006: Denver University Law Review) methods of allotment in Eastern Agency’s genesis to a crowd of several hundred at the annual Navajo Studies Symposium in September 2010, “In 1909, the [U.S.] government said, ‘hold it!’ The people froze. Wherever they froze, today that’s their land” (Leonard Haskie, 9/04/2010, Window Rock, AZ). This quip was delivered to uproarious applause interspersed with whistles and guffaws.

While nothing was resolved in this particular preliminary meeting regarding Slim or how and why he obtained the permit, what these and similar conversations reveal about Navajo internal politics of difference is the sense of distrust between Slim and the Martins and the Martin’s fear that they are being taken advantage of by someone with “tribal connections” to the political elite in Window Rock. Finally, this exchange shows how specific reservation histories differ from one another—e.g., relocated Navajos from Arizona versus Navajo families living on the New Mexico

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45 1909 is close to the year when New Mexico became a state (January 6th, 1912).
checkerboard—revealing how different ideas of Navajoness and senses of self are fostered and cultivated through these very kinds of conflict negotiation.

**The Checkerboard and Erosions of Sovereignty**

The particular social and geological history of the checkerboard—detailed in the beginning of this chapter—also adds to the anxiety about land in Eastern Agency in general and tribal control of trust land in particular. If, as lawyer Rebecca Tsosie contends, “tribal sovereignty enjoys its fullest expression within tribal territory,” then by definition a checkered and patchworked land base is already an erosion of sovereignty at a fundamental level (Tsosie in Thorson et. al 2006: 16). As Stephen Begay’s comment, “land is always the excuse” reveals, jurisdictional issues over land ownership are a major hindrance for economic development and most types of community planning in Crownpoint and elsewhere in Eastern Agency. Take the defunct carwash.

During this same meeting held on 2/25/09, the defunct carwash and flea market at the “Four Corners,” the four-way stop sign in downtown Crownpoint, were discussed at length. The carwash and the informal flea market sit on the northwest quadrant of land at the Four Corners. The carwash is old, covered in graffiti, and hasn’t been used since the late 1980s. The flea market consists of a small dirt area riddled with deep potholes and no formal parking area, and has been cited as a safety concern for small children who may not be seen by incoming drivers/customers looking for a place to park. Since this is the only carwash in
Crownpoint, community members are interested in having the carwash turned back on—i.e., having hot running water piped through it so that they can use their coins to self-operate it. Community members are also interested in having some of potholes filled in at the flea market.

Figure 11. Defunct carwash in Crownpoint, Four Corners. Photo by Author.

However, at issue is that the northwest quadrant of the four-way is jointly owned by the BIA and the tribe (tribal trust land), and where the boundary between these two segments lies determines whether the chapter—as a tribal entity controlling local land use—has jurisdiction to either turn the water back on or fix the potholes. Since the BIA, according to the CLUPC Secretary Leonard Perry, has been “anything but cooperative” in helping them to obtain a map of the quadrant,
things at the Four Corners have been at a stalemate for going on twenty years now, and the chapter as yet has no jurisdiction to change anything (2/25/09, Leonard Perry, Crownpoint Chapter House, CLUPC Meeting, Crownpoint, NM).

Other items on the agenda for this same meeting included wanting to fence the Office of Workforce Development (OWD), whose office had just been vandalized and all its computers taken, and fencing off a decrepit sewer plant which had become a hazard for local kids who played in the vicinity. In both cases, the CLUPC finally concluded that both buildings sat on BIA land and, as per BIA policy which states that the tribe can't fence BIA land, cannot be fenced for the foreseeable future or at least until the land is transferred into the hands of the tribe.

Thus, in effect, the overall result of checkerboarding for residents of Crownpoint and Eastern Agency is a major erosion of tribal sovereignty over land base along with a decreased sense of community and decreased visibility of Navajo social spaces. While sovereignty is certainly not always an unqualified good—the case of the Navajo Nation claiming “sovereign immunity” in order to unilaterally open a coal-fired power plant in Burnham is but one example of how sovereignty’s meanings can be twisted for political ends—it does appear that having a contiguous land base is important for communities like Crownpoint so that residents have a say in what goes on within the boundaries of their town. In this sense, land base is absolutely essential for the full exercise of tribal sovereignty and practices of cultural survival, including language. As Les Field, in his book about “unacknowledged” tribes in California, states: “For federally recognized tribes, the effort to expand and deepen sovereignty over reservation space constitutes the
condition for exploring cultural revitalization” (Field 2008: 9). Evidenced most concretely in material infrastructure, the erosion of sovereignty makes simple projects, such as putting up a simple fence or providing running water to an already-built carwash into often-impossible tasks. The fact that a CLUPC even continues to meet on a monthly basis—not all 110 Navajo Chapters even have a CLUPC—and sincerely attempts to assist people with their jurisdictional and land-based questions and quandaries is an act of sheer will and a testament to the tenacity and dedication of the four elected officials who sit on its board.

Moreover, as heard in the case of the Martin family, checkerboarding’s less tangible effects result in communities that often feel invisible to and abandoned by Window Rock and in some cases even by their own local chapter, creating a strong sense of independence and need to “do it yourself” without help from the central tribal government. In conversations with Rita and Candice at the Kinaaldá, we also see Eastern Agency’s strong sense of cultural, linguistic and historical separation from other parts of the reservation, and from Arizona in particular. This perceived sense of cultural difference is a frequent topic of conversation and interest and shows the strong belief, if not the actuality, in internal differences for residents spanning the 27,000 square miles of the Navajo Nation today.

**Conclusion: Contradictory Mandates of Navajoness**

In this chapter, I have asked: What are the stakes behind differing Navajo claims to authority and resources? Since Navajos historically have aligned
themselves more closely with clan groups and nuclear families than with a unified entity called a “tribe” or a “nation”—indeed, before the Long Walk there was no “one” Navajo leader but rather multiple “headmen” who represented major clan groups during times of peace and war—there are many different ways to be and identify as Navajo. Perhaps because of the large population of the tribe (ca. 300,000), in an economic environment in which resources at the chapter, tribal, state and federal levels are increasingly scarce, proving the depth of one’s Navajoness—and indeed, one’s Indianness—is often necessary to lay claim to resources, particularly those allocated by Congress to Indian Country or to the Navajo Nation alone. Because of their feeling of being a minority within a minority, Eastern Agency Navajos often appeal to an alternative authority beyond the tribe, including seeking redress for their own marginalization in U.S. state institutions. In addition, they also seek assistance and support from the numerous local Evangelical churches and off-reservation non-profits.

Yet another way to understand the intensity behind such competing claims is to view claims to Indianness—and the ways these have often been negated—from a comparative historical perspective. In an essay comparing the U.S. government’s policy of segregating African Americans while assimilating American Indians into white society, Biolsi traces the anxiety behind claims to Indian identity today in the need to show proof of not only Indian “blood” but also social markers of one’s

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46 For a history of Evangelical (and particularly Fundamentalist) Christianity on the New Mexico side of the reservation, see Kimberly J. Marshall 2011, “Performing Conversion Among the Diné Oodlání (Navajo Believers),” PhD Dissertation, Indiana University Department of Anthropology, Folklore and Ethnomusicology Institute.
“Indianness” (such as verifiable enrollment in a federally recognized tribe) in order to be considered “Indian enough.” Referencing the “Rogers-St. Cloud” test, based on the 1988 federal case of *St. Cloud vs. United States*, in which Native individuals have to show both “the presence of Indian “blood” and some form of social “recognition” as an Indian,” the Supreme Court doesn’t consider someone legally “Indian” unless both criteria—the blood and social recognition—are met (Biolsi 2005: 412).47 This classificatory scheme, in which the federal judicial system historically used blood and social recognition as a way to delimit Indian identity and tribal citizenship,48 was, according to Biolsi, consciously articulated as both “a measure of, and a technique for, the legal liquidation of tribes and Indians” (Biolsi 2005: 412).

Although tribes today have their own criteria for determining tribal membership which is also used by the BIA,

> In the case of identifying American Indians, a drop of “Indian blood” has almost never been enough to make one legally Indian; it has historically taken more Indian blood...to make one legally Indian than it has taken black blood to make one black. Indeed, *even being “full-blood” Indian may not be sufficient* (Biolsi 2005: 411, italics mine).

Perhaps as an internalization of the legal criteria for Indianness and sense of “lack,” from a Navajo perspective, then, blood alone is also rarely “enough.” Oddly, perhaps because “bloodedness” for Navajos is, at present, not really a part of Navajo identity perceived to be under siege—the majority of Navajos are “full blooded,” continue to


[48] Here it is important to distinguish between federal case law and BIA policy. While federal court cases have often used and continue to use the “Rogers-St. Cloud” test to determine an individual’s legal status as an Indian, individual tribes now determine their own tribal membership and may set a minimum blood quantum or use descendancy (lineal descent) from a base roll if they so choose. These tribal rolls are then used to determine who is eligible for federal services such as health care.
primarily marry other Navajos, and tribal membership is set at ¼ Navajo blood or more—the focus shifts to other forms of “recognition” and belonging that mark someone as even more identifiably “Navajo.” In this way, Navajos do the work that the federal government no longer has to: exemplified in the divisions of eastern and western Navajo, they self-police the boundaries of Navajoness and tribal belonging in highly regimented, often exclusionary ways that foreground difference over similarity.

In stark contrast to, for example, members of Oklahoma’s Cherokee Nation, where having Cherokee “blood” often forms the foundation for who is considered to be truly “Cherokee” (Sturm: 2002), at Navajo it is other markers of cultural belonging—ones chronicled in this dissertation such as a sense of place, musical taste, language use, dialect, vocal practices and preservation politics—that often become the litmus test of authentic Navajo identity today. From the Cherokee perspective, southwestern tribes such as Navajos are often considered to be more authentically Indian based on their high blood quanta. It is in this context of contested ideas of Indianness, I believe, that the drummer for Native Country, a full blooded Navajo raised on the Navajo reservation but who doesn’t consider himself to be fully fluent in Navajo, often liked to joke with me en route to a gig. Upon approaching another Indian nation such as Zuni, Ute or Jicarilla Apache en route to a gig, he would dramatically announce: “Look, Kris! Real Indians!!”

Since the filming of John Wayne’s famous “westerns” in Monument Valley and before, outside perspectives of Navajos and Navajoness strongly associate Navajo identity with the landscapes of southern Utah and, above all, the red desert
vistas of Arizona. Coming from regions less symbolically identifiable with Navajo identity, Navajos from New Mexico—a region of more muted pastels, striking white rock formations and peach-colored buttes—feel they have to fight twice as hard for the same recognition of their Navajoness, both as citizens of the political entity known as the Navajo Nation and as members of a larger symbolic Navajo community. As such, they often align themselves as citizens of their state and U.S. nation and less as citizens of their tribal nation and of “Big Navajo.”
Chapter Two

Navajo Presences and Absences: Chaco Culture National Historical Park and the Politics of Public Commemoration, Private Heritage and Cultural Patrimony

August 7th, 2009. Three of Native Country’s four band members show up late, about twenty minutes before our 7 pm show time. I have cooked chili beans and corn bread for “the guys,” which quickly grow cold as the show grows closer. Finally, Tommy, our bandleader, Errison, our rhythm guitar player, and LeAnder, our fulltime lead guitar player and Tommy’s nephew, appear under the shadow of Fajada Butte, cars showing wear and tear from the eighteen miles of dirt road which accesses the park. Driving in on the south dirt road (57 South) from Many Farms, AZ1, with his wife, son, son’s girlfriend and three-year-old granddaughter, our lead singer Tommy tells me that, after about ten miles of rough dirt road and with no sign of anyone or anything, they decide they are lost and pull over. Hailing down a vehicle that turns out to be a departing park visitor, they are informed that it is indeed the correct road and travel on. “This is really in the middle of nowhere, Kris!” , Tommy observes to me upon arrival. “Don’t forget,” he adds, “This is your turf, your show. We’re just along for the ride this time.”

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1 Many Farms is a five hour drive from Chaco.
It is going to be a full moon. Park visitors and Park staff begin arriving, many with family members in tow. There is Bessie Cly, on the Maintenance crew, who went to SIPI\(^2\) to study interior design, with her daughter who works at Crownpoint Community School and granddaughter. Robertson from the Preservation crew, who used to be a welder until he started going blind from working without a visor, with his wife and two young children. Young Francisco from Pueblo Pintado, his beautiful wife and their small children. An East Indian couple, standing in the back and looking like they feel out of place. Other park visitors from outside the region, older ones dressed in Safari hats, loose fitting khaki-colored clothing and tevas. Ranger G.B. Cornucopia, wearing his new revolutionary war hat, Nikon slung around his neck, prepares the telescopes for the Night Sky program to follow Native Country’s performance. Don, Chief of Law Enforcement, on duty and in his green and grey Park Service uniform, monitoring the crowd for any disturbances. Russ, my supervisor and Chief of Interpretation, scurrying around in shorts and Birkenstocks, welcoming everyone. All in all, there are about fifty people present.

The stage of the outdoor amphitheatre faces the northeast canyon wall. As Leander cranks up his guitar, the sound echoes off the stone face of the canyon, creating an eerie acoustic effect. The sound reminds me of the natural “amphitheatre” effect of a carved out space (\textit{Tse'Biinaholts'a Yáłti}, “Curved Rock

\footnote{\textit{Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, in Albuquerque, NM.}}
That Speaks”\(^3\) not far away between Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl. I wonder if the acoustics we hear are similar to what the ancestral Puebloans might have heard in this same spot, making music one thousand years ago. What might the carved stone flute\(^4\) played by ancestral Puebloans have sounded like coming from that amphitheatre or this public space?

The show starts. Slowly, as it begins to grow dark, people lose their inhibition. One by one, the two-steppers begin to move, slowly shuffling around in the makeshift dance floor we’ve constructed with red Christmas lights in the adjacent parking lot. Young park volunteers and “seasonals” start their own forms of non-couples dancing, moving their hips back and forth and making mirror motions in the air a la “oldies” style dancing. I invite my roommate, Amber, to come up to the stage and harmonize on a Lorrie Morgan song that I dedicate to her, “What Part of No Don’t You Understand,” and the crowd laughs at my song choice as they misconstrue our relationship to each other.

Now the crowd really begins to let loose, laughing and catcalling as the dance moves get wilder and jokes let loose. The band is having a blast. Arlondo and LeAnder are joking with each other between songs, exchanging observations and taking in the scene. Tommy seems more comfortable than usual, almost chatty, and

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\(^3\) For more on the archeoacoustics of this amphitheatre, believed to have been intentionally altered for musical performances and ceremonies, see Richard Loose 2008, “Tse’Biinaholts'a Yalti (Curved Rock That Speaks)” in *Time and Mind*, Volume 1, Number 1, March 2008: 31-49 (19).

\(^4\) Two, intricately carved end-blown flutes were excavated from Room 33 at Pueblo Bonito, a Puebloan Great House not far from the amphitheatre. Archeologists believe these flutes were played by ancestral Puebloans in or near the amphitheatre. For a description of the flutes, see George H. Pepper’s original description from 1909, [http://gamblershouse.wordpress.com/2009/09/19/room-33/](http://gamblershouse.wordpress.com/2009/09/19/room-33/), accessed 11/23/11.
Errison is downright talkative, repeatedly stating into the microphone, as if it were a question, “Chaco CANyon?!”; the rest of the band starts to giggle.

The evening transitions, with G.B. taking the reigns and opening the telescopes. Park visitors form lines to look at the Crab Nebula and at Jupiter, assisted by a VIP\(^5\) volunteer from Austin, Texas, who has just lost his trailer back home in a tornado. Slowly, Navajo families living around the park also get in line, children in tow, to look through the “scopes.”

And then, as quickly and as matter-of-factly as the evening began, it’s over. People are shaking hands, members of Preservation are introducing me to their family members as the “Navajo-speaking bilagáana,” and everyone walks back to their vehicles on the other side of the visitor center. By 10:30 pm we are packing up and stowing our gear—P.A., drums, mic stands, instruments—into the back of the drummer’s gray Dodge pickup. We all remark on how young the night feels and how much energy we still have, since our standard bar gig runs from 9 pm-1 am with only a brief 15 minute break in between. Russ and I show LeAnder, Errison and Arlondo over to the brown trailer, where they’ll stay for the night, and I head back to my duplex in Park Service housing. From my south-facing front porch, I can see the moon rising over the silhouette of Fajada Butte: it’s the end of another long, full day at Chaco Canyon.

\(^5\) Volunteers in Parks (VIP).
Figure 12. Native Country plays at Chaco, 8/07/09
(note white observatory dome to the right of amphitheatre); Used with Permission
Figure 13. Dancers in our makeshift dance floor, Chaco Culture National Historic Park, 8/07/2009; Photo by Russ Bodnar; Used with Permission

Figure 14. *Native Country* facing north canyon wall and onlookers, 8/07/2009; photo by Russ Bodnar; Used With Permission
As in Crownpoint and Eastern Agency, in America’s National Parks differing claims to Indian identities are also made and debated. One way to analyze these claims is through the lens of conservation politics and the ways in which the domains of the “human” and the “natural,” and the past versus the present, have been pitted against one another in parks like Chaco. This chapter traces debates about representation, commemoration and cultural patrimony through my own work as a seasonal ranger at Chaco Culture National Historical Park, a park located within the Eastern Agency of the Navajo Nation. Focusing on how issues of memory and representation have crystallized in the debate over whether to pave one of the access roads leading to Chaco, I show how this discussion has pitted Navajo “locals” against National Park Service/federal government “outsiders,” non-Native park “visitors” and representatives of other, non-Navajo southwestern tribes. Thus, in contrast to the previous chapter’s focus on an inter-Navajo politics of difference, here I foreground how difference is perceived and performed both inter-tribally, between Navajos and Pueblos, and inter-racially, between Navajos and non-Navajos. These differences, in turn, play back into an inter-Navajo politics of difference in ways I document in

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6 Following local practice, I use the names Chaco, Chaco Canyon and Chaco Culture National Historical Park interchangeably throughout to refer to the park.

7 I wish to thank my former boss and Chief of Interpretation at Chaco, Russ Bodnar, for permission to write about my experiences as both a “park guide” from July 6th-September 4th, 2009 and as a performer for the Guest Lecture series organized by Park Interpretation staff.

8 Perhaps because of the term’s negative connotations, the National Park Service discourages staff from using the term “tourists” and instead encourages using the term “visitor” to describe visitors to the park.
subsequent chapters, for example in how “full blood” Navajos perceive other Navajos who are of mixed Navajo-Pueblo and Navajo-Anglo backgrounds. Using a specifically historical lens, I thus explore how forms of cultural “othering” are enacted between and among these different groups.

This chapter weds discussions of park policy with academic analysis, using ethnographic data, park policy manuals and archival material as the fodder for my analysis. I show how ideal types of Indianness draw visitors to Chaco and inform staff interpretation of park history for visitors, emphasizing how material evidence of the ancestral Puebloans is often privileged over more recent canyon histories and Navajo presences in and surrounding the canyon today.

These selective erasures and idealizations in many ways also parallel some of anthropology’s own ideas about “authentic” Indian culture, and this is no coincidence. Indeed, as Park Service history shows, nineteenth century anthropologists like John Wesley Powell and amateur archeologists like Richard Wetherill played a central role in “discovering” parts of the American southwest that would later become parks, determining what was most salient, “authentic” and interesting about these parks-to-be, their ancestral Puebloan predecessors and their built environments. Through the erasure of Navajos from the public, historical narrative of canyon history, I demonstrate how Navajo residents are ultimately denied a sense of social citizenship and civic belonging to the Park itself and, ultimately, to the U.S. nation, as well. Following Moore, Kosek and Pandian’s Race, Nature and the Politics of Difference (2003), my analysis thus attempts to untangle both material and symbolic meanings behind ideas of “race,” “nature” and social
belonging. In examining the “historical specificity of particular racisms and
naturalisms” (Moore et. al, 2003: 3), what we find is akin to what Salamishah Tillet’s
has termed “civic estrangement” (2007) in the context of Chaco Culture National
Historical Park.

This chapter is also about history, and about what is considered publicly
accessible knowledge versus what is understood to be private. How do ideas of
“public” and “private” differ sharply in varying cultural contexts, moments and
places? And how, in demarcated, protected areas such as America’s National Parks,
do the “public” and “private” often explicitly contradict one another? While national
parks are considered to be the public domain of the U.S. nation, set aside for the
edification, national pride and spiritual rejuvenation of the U.S. citizenry, they are
also now federally mandated by the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA,
1978) to serve as private spaces of worship and spiritual renewal for indigenous
inhabitants and former residents of these same areas. Thus these twin mandates
create a sort of contradictory “double bind” for National Parks (Bateson 1960;
Cattelino 2010), mandates which, from the perspective of Park employees, are often
next to impossible to fulfill at one and the same time. In this chapter, then, I tell the
story about how one Park has negotiated such competing and often-contradictory
demands between Park visitors and Chaco’s many Park-affiliated indigenous
communities.
God’s Country and Indian Country: America’s National Parks and American Indian Communities

In the United States, American Indian reservations and National Parks have intertwined histories. “God’s country and Indian Country are neighbors,” writer Philip Burnham notes, “and even then, as one goes back through the record, it can be difficult to tell them apart” (2000: xiii). Even the National Park Service logo—an arrowhead with a buffalo engraved upon it—bespeaks the historic relationship between parks and America’s Native peoples. Both first created by presidential executive order in the mid-to-late 1800s, virtually all lands that became national parks were at one point American Indian homelands. Supervised by “complex but weak federal bureaucracies, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the National Park Service (NPS), [and] located in the same branch of the federal government, the Department of the Interior” (Keller & Turek 1998: xii), many National Parks and contemporary American Indian reservations today rub up against each other.

Because of this cozy relationship between the National Park Service (hereafter NPS) and the BIA, and using the rationale of “worthless” land to defend these land grabs (Burnham 2000), land that began as designated reservation land was often “converted” into NPS land over time, such that “of the 367 Park Service units in 1992, at least 85 had some relationship with Indian tribes” (Keller & Turek, xiii).

However, when one looks at the “crown jewels” of the National Park system—Yosemite, Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, Mesa Verde, and Arches, to name a few—and excludes Civil War battlefields, the percentage of national parks
that work directly with Indian tribes comes much closer to 100 percent. In this way, beginning with the creation of the first national park in 1872 (Yellowstone National Park), Indian lands that were considered economically marginal—the reason much of it was designated as reservation land to begin with—came to later be seen by the Department of the Interior as “more useful in a national park than a reservation” (Burnham 2000: 26). These lands were then converted into Park-designated areas. This resulted in further alienation of Indian lands such that today, American Indian tribes collectively retain approximately fifty million acres of reservation land while the National Park Service controls eighty million acres.

Relations between parks and tribes are varied, each with their own specific histories, negotiations and tensions. As Keller and Turek (1998) note in their survey of the relationship between American Indians and national parks,

> We found parks totally inside Indian reservations and Indian reservations totally inside parks. There are parks sharing a common border with one tribe, parks surrounded by a half-dozen or more different tribes, and tribes encircled by the NPS. In places, a tribe may have title to park land. Elsewhere Indians may lease land to the NPS, or the service may lease land to Indians. Sometimes Indians manage park facilities; elsewhere the NPS trains rangers or tribal parks (1996: xiii).

However, with the exception of three parks,¹ American Indians residing in park-designated areas in the United States were eventually removed (sometimes forcibly) from residing in these parks. Adding insult to injury, in some instances (such as at Glacier National Park), Native residents were removed from parks and then

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¹ Canyon de Chelly National Monument, created in 1933, is one of the only parks in the U.S. Park system that is located on Indian tribal trust land (others include Death Valley National Park [Timbisha Shoshone] and Badlands National Park, South Unit [Oglala Sioux Tribe]). As such, the Park Service operates the park with the express permission of the Navajo tribe, and residents of the canyon are free to come and go as they please from their canyon residences lying within the park boundary. Canyon de Chelly NPS is in the process of handing the Park over to the Navajo Tribe.
replaced with non-Native homesteaders whose descendants still reside on—and have permission to farm—park lands today.\(^2\) Thus, in contrast to other park systems outside the U.S.,\(^3\) within the American National Park system “parks were conceived as a habitat for wildlife, not human beings—though tribes had long inhabited their environs in permanent or seasonal camps” (Burnham 2000: 9; see also Burns www.pbs.org/nationalparks, accessed 2/04/2012).\(^4\)

National parks and American Indian reservations also share resources in common. As Don Whyte (Ute Mountain Ute), Chief Ranger at Chaco points out, because parks are often literal geographic extensions or appendages of reservation land—and vice versa—the land that is shared between these two entities houses and protects numerous endangered plant and animal species as well as cultural resources. The continuity and preservation of these resources is often fundamental to both parties, albeit often for different cultural and symbolic reasons. For all these reasons, the stakes for good communication between parks and tribal citizens are particularly high.

However, good communication between parks and resident peoples is often lacking. Paradoxically, in many cases Native peoples were first removed from parks, then nostalgically romanticized in the archetypal park dioramas and visitor centers

\(^2\) I thank former Glacier National Park employee and Chaco seasonal park ranger, Amber DeBardelaben, for bringing my attention to this example.

\(^3\) Among other examples, the British National Park System, for example, makes accommodations for “resident peoples” to remain in park designated areas if they so choose. See Harmon, “National Park Residency in Developed Countries,” in West & Brechin, Eds., Resident Peoples and National Parks (1991).

\(^4\) As historian and philosopher Joseph Sax put it, the National Park Service was "generally in the business of preserving remnants of live nature and dead cultures" (1986: 1).
with little or no consulting of tribal descendants.\(^5\) Of a piece with the imperialist nostalgia for Native cultures that followed the end of the Indian Wars in 1890, once American Indians no longer posed a military threat and had been removed from parks, it became much safer and more interesting to “interpret” them in their absence. Thus, “while cultural heritage preservation has been a part of the national parks movement for many years,” at Chaco and many other parks it is often as represented as “interpretation of historical peoples or the physical remnants of removed populations” (West & Brechin 1991: 11).

As West and Brechin state, “there is a particularly strange irony in the policy of first removing a local people because they are ‘incompatible’ with the park ideal, and then interpreting the culture using the now empty structures” (1991: 11). Although more recently some parks have begun to enter into dialogues with affiliated groups from park areas in an effort to create more accurate and nuanced interpretive programs,\(^6\) the tendency for U.S. national parks to interpret Native peoples in their absence rather than in their presence continues to remain the norm rather than the exception.\(^7\) In the case of Chaco, the original indigenous inhabitants of the park were not forcibly removed — the ancestral Puebloans had vacated the

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\(^5\) A well-known example of this is the fully intact remains of an individual nicknamed “Esther the Smiling Mummy.” Esther was on display from 1939-1978 at Mesa Verde National Park (http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/region_111/vol2-1c.htm, accessed 10/29/11). Her public display offended the sensibilities of many Native visitors, neighbors and rangers until she was moved to a Park storage facility (http://www.mail-archive.com/NativeNews@mlists.net/msg03828.html, accessed 10/20/2011).

\(^6\) The major exception to this claim is the National Park Service’s Applied Ethnography Program, which initially focused almost exclusively on American Indian communities (see Practicing Anthropology, 26 (1), 2004).

\(^7\) As I discuss further ahead, the development of the Native American Graves, Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990 has also begun to change Park-local resident relations.
canyon by the late 1300s for reasons archaeologists are still debating. Instead, it was the subsequent Native settlers, the Navajo, who had been forced to leave the area. The Navajo occupied the canyon approximately three centuries later (early 1700s), and, by most accounts, have no cultural affiliation with Puebloans (past or present) or ancestral Puebloan dwellings. Nonetheless, the Navajo protected the awe-inspiring Chacoan ruins from Spanish colonial invasion and pot hunting; they feel a strong connection and history with the canyon—the burial site of their ancestors; and Chaco is a also place where important events from their own Creation Stories (Diné Bahane’) took place. In this way, examining the politics of difference among tribes through the lens of preservation politics at Chaco can shed light on the always relational and ever contingent nature of claims to firstness, time depth and autochthony and who has the right to most assertively make these claims at a given historical moment.

The conflicts between park administrators and Native peoples go beyond just the politics of heritage and commemoration. They also involve questions of money, class status, and resource access. Because of their geographic proximity, economic disparities between park employees and surrounding Native communities are highly visible and are often a source of embarrassment to park administrators. These economic disparities also quickly lead to resentment and strained relations when Native peoples/former park residents are charged admission entry fees, or

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8 A well-known Chaco polemicist and Navajo scholar, Robert Begay, disputes this chronology. Begay, who is Director of the Navajo Nation Archeology Department, believes that “Navajos have been in the area when Chaco was at the height of its occupation, which is anywhere from 1000 to 1200 A.D.” [http://www.kued.org/productions/thelongwalk/film/interviews/robertBegay.php](http://www.kued.org/productions/thelongwalk/film/interviews/robertBegay.php), accessed 11/17/2011.
alternately have to show tribal I.D. cards verifying specific tribal affiliation in order to gain free admission to areas that were once tribal customary use or allotted lands. In contrast to park visitors, who often have large amounts of disposable income and stay in prestigious park-run resorts (albeit with the trappings of a “rustic” vacation), the presence of poverty near park boundaries creates a clash both with “old money” of many Park visitors and with “contemplations of the sublime that many wilderness visitors seek” (Burnham 2000: 8-9). Thus, as Burnham astutely observes, for most travelers, “Indian communities at the parks have all the photogenic appeal of rural slums” (Ibid: 7) and, as in the case with the Timbisha Shoshone of Death Valley National Park and the Oglala Sioux Tribe of Badlands National Park, are often literally and intentionally hidden from view by park administrators (Ibid: 9).

Concurrent with the poverty associated with Park-affiliated Native communities is the extreme lack of economic and infrastructural development in these same communities, a process geographer David Harvey has, in other rural contexts, termed “uneven geographic development” (Harvey 1996: 310). Because of many parks’ various ecological and cultural preservation mandates, the ability to

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9 As one example, at Chaco Culture National Historical Park, technically only the 28 “culturally affiliated” tribes and pueblos receive free admission into the park. This includes Navajos, all 19 New Mexico Pueblos, Ute Mountain Utes, Hopi, and Apache tribes from Arizona and New Mexico reservations (Park Superintendent Barbara West, minutes of the sixth meeting of the Indian Affairs Committee, November 5-7, 2008). Because asking for tribal I.D. cards was almost uniformly met with distrust and put us in the uncomfortable position of Native identity “gatekeepers,” one way we as fee takers resolved this for ourselves was to waive the entry fee for anyone who self-identified as “Native,” regardless of tribe.

develop much needed infrastructure for economic and rural development—such as pipes for running water and electrical lines—is severely curtailed. Thus, the park's presence and its own environmental preservation mandates often extend, literally and symbolically, onto land surrounding the park now often occupied by Native peoples/former park residents. For example, in many rural parks, the only jobs available to those without college degrees are through park concessionaires—if the park has concessions at all—jobs which are low-paying, allow for little upward mobility and are often seasonal in nature. Other jobs are through the park service itself, although, as in the case at Chaco, positions occupied by Native staff are predominantly manual labor jobs, such as those in Maintenance or Historic Preservation, or in sales, such as jobs running the WNPA\textsuperscript{11} gift shop.\textsuperscript{12} These are the jobs, for example, held by many of the aforementioned individuals who graciously attended \textit{Native Country}'s performance at Chaco. As a result, and since most Ranger positions require a college degree, these jobs are predominantly staffed by non-Natives from across the United States. Ironically, in sharp contrast to those working the seasonal jobs listed above, these staffers providing tours and information about the park and the area may know little to nothing about the park prior to arriving at the park.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11} Western National Parks and Monuments Association.
\textsuperscript{12} There is, however, one Navajo individual who works as an Administrative Officer.
\textsuperscript{13} In addition, due to the desired (and often intentional) isolation of the park on the part of park administrators, the nearest large employment centers may be more than an hour's drive from park boundaries.
Chaco Culture National Historical Park: *Tsé Biyah Anii’áhi*

Chaco Culture National Historical Park exemplifies many of the tensions involving land, resident peoples, and natural versus cultural preservation seen in so many National Parks. Like Crownpoint, Chaco is located in the Eastern Agency checkerboard (discussed in Chapter One), near the town and Chapter of Nageezi, New Mexico. Surrounded by parcels of ranch, Navajo allottee, BLM and tribal trust land, “Chaco Canyon,” as it’s frequently still called, is one of the smallest National Parks (34,000 acres) and boasts one of the darkest night skies of any National Park in the United States. Founded in 1907 as Chaco Canyon National Monument with the mandate of protecting ancient “Indian Ruins and Artifacts” housed in the canyon, Chaco is a wide, flat canyon furrowed by deep arroyos and a seasonal wash that runs through it. It is best known and loved for the numerous ancestral Puebloan dwellings located there, including fifteen structures that are known as “Great Houses.”

Believed to have been the central hub of an ancient Puebloan Great House society which flourished between 850-1150 A.D. in the four corners region, Chaco is an isolated park, even by NPS standards. Much to the chagrin of park visitors who brave a visit in their recreational vehicles, Chaco is accessible only by two “washboard” dirt roads thirteen and eighteen miles in length, respectively; the park features a small visitors’ center, campground, museum, modest gift store, and a vending machine in the lobby (there are no food concessions within the park).

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1 According to veteran Interpretive Ranger G.B. Cornucopia, Great Houses are pre-planned, free standing structures characterized by multiple stories and core-and-veneer masonry that were often “overbuilt and underused” (G.B. Cornucopia, “Archeo-Astronomy Talk,” 7/16/10).
Today, the park’s only residents are park employees, some of whom live in an employee housing cluster adjacent to the visitors’ center.

Chaco had long been known for its “Sun Dagger” and a pictographic depiction of what may have been the “supernova” that exploded in 1054 A.D. The park also attracts visitors for its elaborate architecture, featuring solar, lunar and cardinal alignments in its so-called “Great Houses,” including Pueblo Bonito (which may have housed as many as 800 people at one time). Groups that are drawn to Chaco include European and American New Age enthusiasts, such as followers of the Mayan calendar and members of the Harmonic Convergence. In comparison to other southwestern parks such as Zion, Canyon de Chelly or Mesa Verde, Chaco also draws fewer outdoor enthusiasts and more spiritual seekers and archeoastronomy enthusiasts. Many of these visitors have seen Robert Redford’s film, “The Mystery of Chaco Canyon,” and cite that as one of the reasons they made the pilgrimage to Chaco.

The park’s cultural significance for area Native societies is multi-faceted, and points to the complicated and often fraught politics of knowledge embedded in daily life at Chaco. For locally affiliated pueblo tribes, such as Acoma and San Juan, Chaco is the point from which their ancestors originated, eventually migrating southward.

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2 Made famous by Anna Sofáer in Robert Redford’s film, “The Mystery of Chaco Canyon,” the “sun dagger” refers to a solar alignment on Fajada Butte in which the sun astoundingly creates a “dagger” of light at noon and other strategic times of day.

3 Archeoastronomy is defined as "the interdisciplinary study of astronomical practice in its cultural context" and focuses on the relationship between archeology and (what appear to be pre-planned) astronomical alignments (http://www.archeoastronomy.org/who-we-are/our-objectives.html, accessed 2/02/2012).
to settle at the present-day locations of these respective pueblos.⁴ For individuals such as Rina Swentzell (Santa Clara Pueblo) and poet and author Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), returning to Chaco is a way to directly understand the past and commune with one’s ancestors. Returning to Chaco, for Swentzell, gives her the opportunity to touch the ochre-colored handprints of her predecessors, such as the handprint painted on the overhang of the cliff wall on the “Peñasco Blanco” trail (Rina Swentzell, Visitor Center film 2002). Comparing past architectural styles of the Great Houses to the present-day dwellings of pueblo peoples today and thereby solidifying the perceived link between Chaco’s residents and modern day pueblo peoples, Ortiz notes that

When you look at the present stone and adobe structures at Acoma, Hopi, Taos, Zia, Zuni...you see in them the grand constructions at Chaco canyon. Conversely, when you see the constructions—too conveniently called “ruins” by tourists, anthropologists, archeologists, and others—at Chaco canyon you see the present-day pueblos (Ortiz 1994: 69).

For local Navajos, Chaco, called “Tsé Bíyah Anii’áhí” or “Rock-Under-Which-Something-Extends-Supporting-It” (Young & Morgan 1991) is the home⁵ of an important character from the Navajo creation stories⁶ called Nááhwííphíhí⁷ in Navajo (literally translated as “He Always Wins” or “The One Who Won Them One

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⁴ This southward migration is corroborated by the Navajo story of the Great Gambler, mentioned ahead.

⁵ Another Puebloan “Great House,” Pueblo Alto, which sits on top of Chakra Mesa, is also called the “Home of the Great Gambler” or Nááhwííphíhí Bikin in Navajo.

⁶ The Navajo Creation Stories are collectively referred to as the “Diné Bahane.” “[The people, Their stories].”

⁷ There are a variety of spellings for the Great Gambler. For Navajo orthography throughout the dissertation, I choose the spellings for Navajo words found in Young and Morgan’s The Navajo Language: A Grammar and Colloquial Dictionary ([1987]; 1991).
After Another”) and known as the Great Gambler in English (Begay 2004). At what is now Pueblo Bonito in the Fifth World of the Navajo cosmology, Nááhwíbįįhí gambled and won against other visitors to the area. In some stories these visitors were Navajos and in others they represented two pueblo tribes. However, regardless of tribal affiliation, each individual eventually had to use his/her own life as a wager and, in every case, they lost, becoming slaves or indentured servants to Nááhwíbįįhí for the remainder of their lives. Presuming himself to be a Diyín Dinéé—a Holy Person—Nááhwíbįįhí used these servants to build his “great house” (“Tsé Bįyah Anii’áhi”) under the ledge of what the Park Service named “Threatening Rock.” Finally beaten at his own game and paying the price for his own arrogance, the Great Gambler eventually took his people southward, perhaps to present-day Mexico, it is said (Zolbrod 1984: 99-112).

Showing Threatening Rock’s importance from the Navajo perspective, today the Navajo name “Tsé Bįyah Anii’áhi” describes both Threatening Rock and is also the name denoting all of Chaco Canyon. Since many Navajo place names are descriptions of the most salient landscape feature in an area—for example, the town of Chinle, Arizona in Navajo is called “Ch’inílįį” [“water flows out of the rock”], a description of Canyon de Chelly—Navajo linguistic usage of “Tsé Bįyah Anii’áhi” as synecdoche for “Chaco Canyon” shows the importance of this rock in the mental landscape of the canyon from a Navajo perspective.

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8 The rock used to extend out as part of the cliff above Pueblo Bonito and fell and shattered part of this Great House on January 22nd, 1941. Threatening Rock was the NPS term to describe a very large rock buttressed with a hand-made retaining wall from underneath.
Also the site of a famous 1911 murder, it was in Chaco Canyon where sometime pothunter, self-taught archeologist and rancher Richard Wetherill,9 was shot and killed. Wetherill’s murderer, the story goes, was Chischilling Begay, a local Navajo who had been cheated by Wetherill’s right-hand man; to this day Chaco Canyon continues to be a site of intrigue, drama and mystery for many of its visitors. Thus, for Navajos who hold the story of the Great Gambler to be true, and for some of the current Navajo employees who are descendents of Chischilling Begay, Chaco is a site where great evils happened and greed took control of powerful individuals, both in the ancient and more recent historical past. The story of Nááhwíílbį́į́hí has often been used in the last ten years, for example, as a rationale against starting Navajo tribal gaming, although the tribe did decide to open its first casino, Fire Rock, in the fall of 2009. As a result, in addition to the Navajo taboo (ch’íindi or “doo ajit’į́į́ da”) against having prolonged contact with ancestral Puebloan dwellings,10 there is also a more specific taboo about visiting the ancient house of the Great Gambler because of its associated evils in the past.

Nonetheless, Navajos also assert a spiritual and historical claim to Chaco Canyon in much the same way as do contemporary Pueblo people. Thus, although the Navajo historic connection to the canyon is through a traditional story and not through ancestry, Chaco, for both Navajos and Pueblos, represents an important piece of cultural patrimony. What is different, however, are claims to time-depth,__________________________

9 Wetherill, known for his unfair business practices, was also the only individual to ever own and operate a trading post inside the canyon.
10 This is usually attributed to a more general Navajo taboo against having prolonged contact with death or with objects affiliated with death such as houses of the deceased.
since, according to most archeological accounts, Pueblos can date their occupation in the canyon back much further than Navajos. Even so, relations between contemporary and ancestral Pueblos aren’t necessarily straightforward, as evidenced by the fact that some Pueblos (Acoma, Zia, Laguna, Zuni, Hopi, Santo Domingo, San Felipe) do indeed trace their lineage back to Chaco while Jemez clearly does not. How these claims to patrimony are made, and the effects these claims have on major archeological decisions such as whether to “backfill” a site after excavation or leave it fully visible above ground after consulting with the Chaco American Indian Consultation Committee, make navigating the cultural politics in Chaco particularly fraught and contested. Because of these multiple and competing claims, Chaco is a particularly apt site for studying a cultural politics of difference among contemporary American Indian communities and between Natives and non-Natives in the American southwest. In this way, Chaco Canyon becomes, for Navajos, Pueblos, Park staff and visitors alike, what phenomenologist Edward Casey calls an “intensely gathered landscape,” a geographic location where a “sense of place” is deeply meaningful to myriad groups of people (Casey in Basso and Feld 1996: 25).

Lost in Translation: Navajos, Pueblos, and the Politics of Park Service “Interpretation”

11 My thanks for Russ Bodnar for clarifying which tribes trace their ancestry to Chaco and which do not.
In a park where Pueblo voices often hold sway over Navajo ones yet all but two Native staff members are Navajo, Navajo sentiments and resentments about the commemorative erasure of Chaco’s Navajo history, fused with more recent tensions about Navajo forced removal from the park in 1949, are seen and sensed on an intense and often visceral level in daily staff interactions. Moreover, although many major park sites have names with Navajo origins—“Wijiji” from Diwozhii (“Greasewood”), Kin Kletso from “Kin Litso” (“Yellow House”) and Kin Klizhin from “Kin Lizhin” (“Black House”) to name but a few—Pueblo cultural interpretations of the canyon are often chosen in favor of Navajo interpretations. This is likely (and perhaps justifiably) so in part because of the NPS understanding that contemporary Pueblos, as descendants of the ancestral Puebloan, are their closest living relatives and therefore should have the most authority in such decisions. For example, in my employee instruction manual I was asked to

...avoid using the [Navajo] term ‘Anasazi.’ If folks ask, explain that we do not use it out of respect for the wishes of the Pueblo peoples who take offense. “Anasazi” is sometimes translated as “Enemy Ancestors.” Better terms are: the Pueblo builders/people, Pueblo ancestors, ancestral Puebloans, prehistoric Pueblo people, the Chacoans, the people who lived here (New Employee Orientation a.k.a. “The Big Talk,” 2009: 4; emphasis in original).

Similarly, in an effort to be sensitive to Pueblo understandings of the canyon as a living entity where ancestors still dwell, we were also asked to avoid using the terms “ruin,” “abandoned” and “skeleton” (2009: 4).

12 Navajos comprise about one half of staff members at Chaco, although the majority of upper level administrative positions are held by non-Navajos.

13 Many of these placenames were given prior to Park Service occupation of the canyon by early Spanish explorers who, in turn, used Pueblo, Mexican and Navajo guides and Navajo placenames to learn their way around the canyon.
However, names carry power. Thus, one way to understand the superfluity of Anglicized Navajo place names in the canyon is as a method to substitute or even compensate for the erasure of actual living Navajo people in this place. As writer Rebecca Solnit discusses in her stunning, collaborative photo essay, Yosemite in Time (2005), the Central Sierra Miwok have been similarly commemorated in absentia at Yosemite National Park, such that a prominent lake, Lake Tenaya, is renamed after the leader (named Tenaya) of the indigenous inhabitants of Yosemite Valley, thereby replacing the original Miwok place name for the lake, “Pyweack” or “Shining Rocks.” In announcing the name change to Tenaya in the 1850s, a member of the Mariposa Battalion\(^{14}\) writes with irritation that Tenaya expressed disdain for it and cognizance of its implications for his tribe’s loss of land and political autonomy: “Upon my telling him that we had named it Ten-ie-ya, because it was upon the shores of the lake that we had found his people, *who would never return to it to live*, his countenance fell and he at once left our group and joined his family circle. His countenance indicated that *he thought the naming of the lake no equivalent for his loss of territory*” (Solnit 2005: 98; italics mine). Moreover, although the soldier-cum-explorer, Lafayette Bunnell, tries to explain to Tenaya that the new name will give him a kind of immortality, what Bunnell is really doing, Solnit deduces, is “obliterating Tenaya’s culture from the place and beginning its history over again. Rather than immortality, he is promising Tenaya oblivion” (2005: 99). In this way, Bunnell at Yosemite and early Spanish explorers at Chaco are paying a sort

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\(^{14}\) The Mariposa Battalion was a group of volunteer soldiers who in 1851 removed and annihilated the Central Sierra Miwok.
of lip service to indigenous occupation of the canyon while simultaneously sentencing its peoples to oblivion, “beginning its history over again.”

Such selective interpretations of canyon history also resonate with larger hierarchies of indigeneity in the American southwest. For instance, Spanish colonial views of southwestern indigenous peoples saw Pueblo communities as inherently more “civilized” than their Southern Athabaskan (Navajo, Apache, Kiowa) neighbors.\textsuperscript{15} This is because, based on their pre-existing religious beliefs, Pueblos proved easier to convert to Catholicism\textsuperscript{16} and because they lived in tightly clustered, communal villages similar to those of the colonists. In contrast, conquistadores in particular saw Navajos as bellicose raiders (the term “Navajo” is Spanish for “razor,” “knife” and “cutthroat”),\textsuperscript{17} nomadic “primitives” who knew neither God nor sedentary methods of crop cultivation. Thus, when given a choice, Spanish colonists privileged Pueblo cosmologies and histories over Navajo ones.

In the twentieth century a similar privileging of Pueblo lifestyles continued to be the litmus test for authentic, “civilized” Native identity in the policies of the Indian New Deal mastermind, Indian Commissioner John Collier. Prior to becoming Commissioner under Roosevelt, Collier, an anti-industrialist who saw modernization as leading to a loss of communal identity in American society, had

\begin{footnotes}
\item[15] I thank anthropologist Thomas Guthrie for bringing the significance of the Spanish colonial context to my attention.
\item[16] Although many Pueblos successfully incorporated Catholicism into their syncretic religious worldview, the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 also clearly shows that Pueblos resisted colonial incursion and were by no means passive in the face of Spanish cultural and religious domination. During this period, from 1680-1696, Pueblo peoples sought refuge within Navajo and Hopi communities and many intermarried with Navajos and Hopis. The result is that, culturally speaking, Navajos and Pueblo communities share much in common.
\item[17] Concise Oxford Spanish Dictionary, “Navajo/Navaja.”
\end{footnotes}
lived with Pueblo communities (Taos Pueblo in particular) in New Mexico. As a result of his own anti-modernist views and his affinity for Pueblo culture, Collier saw Pueblo society as the ideal model to which all tribes, Pueblo or not, should aspire. He then modeled his main federal program, the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA, 1934-1945), on these same tenets. For instance, based on his idealized notions about “correct” grazing practices, Collier specifically targeted Navajos for the disastrous Stock Reduction program of the 1930s, mentioned ahead.18 Similarly, in our own privileging of Pueblo pasts over Navajo presences, the Chaco Interpretation Staff also unwittingly reinforced and reiterated some of these same hierarchical legacies of Spanish colonization.19

Showing yet another layer of complexity to the politics of Park Service interpretation, during my three months working at Chaco, some Navajo staff members were extremely reluctant to discuss anything having to do with Navajo traditional culture or language with non-Native staff or inquiring visitors. Thus, rather than something incorporated as a part of “local culture” for visitor edification, Navajo culture for these staffers became a topic of exclusive patrimony for Navajos alone. At issue here, then, were two differing perceptions of Navajo as a public

18 In direct response to the carnage of Stock Reduction, Navajos, the second largest tribe in the nation, refused to reorganize under IRA, a rejection Collier found professionally devastating.

19 At the same time, based on numbers alone (332,129 citizens versus under 10,000 members in the case of each New Mexico Pueblo), Navajos today have a clout and an ability to throw their weight around, for example in natural resource politics such as water rights, that Pueblos do not have.
language versus Navajo as an object of private cultural patrimony connected to having Navajo blood and “being Navajo.”

Perhaps in an attempt to regain control over inaccurate representations on the part of “Interp” staff in the past, one permanent Navajo staff member, understandably I think, effectively vetoed any public presentations that pertained to Navajo language or traditional culture unless she did them herself. Since this staffer only rarely conducted formal interpretive programs due to the fact that she was instructed by a medicine man to avoid contact with Puebloan ruins, the result was a bizarre void of interpretive presentations dealing with any contemporary Native peoples or really anything but a strictly ancient and sanitized non-Navajo past. In contrast to the approach of the all-Navajo Interpretation staff at Canyon de Chelly National Monument, where I also worked as a seasonal ranger for one summer and where senior staff\(^{21}\) guided interns such as myself to material on Navajo culture that was seasonally relevant and culturally sensitive for our public presentations, at Chaco these Navajo/non-Navajo cultural interchanges were effectively eliminated. Rather than wanting to correct the record, Chaco’s Navajo staff, much fewer in number than at Canyon de Chelly and in positions with less administrative power, have in essence made Navajo culture off-limits to non-Navajo visitors and staff members alike.

\(^{20}\) The cultural politics behind speaking Navajo and Navajo identity are themes I discuss at length in Chapters Three and Four.
\(^{21}\) During my time at Canyon de Chelly (summer season 1997), all year-round Interpretation Staff were Navajo, though not all were from the Canyon de Chelly area. Currently, there are four full-time Interpretation staff members, three of whom are Navajo. The Assistant Superintendent or second-in command, Wilson Hunter, is also Navajo and a lifelong canyon resident.
Thus, presentations about Navajo-related topics and who has permission to talk about them are presented as issues of cultural property and entitlements by blood and not as part of a park mandate where Navajo history is seen as part of a greater, U.S. cultural patrimony or shared national “heritage.” Similar to the way commemorative politics have evolved in other American national parks, today at Chaco, “as far as Chaco guests are concerned, living Indians have disappeared” (Keller & Turek 1998: 192). There are no longer any Native residents of Chaco living in the canyon outside of the Park Service housing area, and, with the exception of one Navajo family, most of the local Native staff do not (or perhaps choose not to) live in park housing, living in off park premises in nearby communities like Pueblo Pintado, Nageezi, Dziłná’odilii, Whitehorse Lake, Counselor and even Aztec, New Mexico (over an hour’s drive from the park). The result is that, from my perspective, Park Service housing felt strangely segregated and emptied of Navajos, almost ghostly in this respect.

Designated as a UNESCO “World Heritage Site” in 1987, in this same year Chaco also established the Chaco American Indian Consultation Committee, which meets biannually and represents all “culturally affiliated” tribes. The timing of this

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22 A notable exception to this statement is the recent excellent Interpretive film designed for visitors, which features interviews with many contemporary Native peoples, Pueblo and Navajo alike, and discusses contemporary meanings of the canyon through their eyes.

23 As of 2000, Chaco’s culturally affiliated tribes include: Hopi Tribe of Arizona; Navajo Nation of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah; Pueblo of Acoma, New Mexico; Pueblo of Cochiti, New Mexico; Pueblo of Isleta, New Mexico; Pueblo of Laguna, New Mexico; Pueblo of Nambe, New Mexico; Pueblo of Picuris, New Mexico; Pueblo of Pojoaque, New Mexico; Pueblo of San Felipe, New Mexico; Pueblo of San Ildefonso, New Mexico; Pueblo of San Juan, New Mexico; Pueblo of Sandia, New Mexico; Pueblo of Santa Ana, New Mexico; Pueblo of Santa Clara, New Mexico; Pueblo of Santo Domingo, New Mexico; Pueblo of Taos, New Mexico; Pueblo of Tesuque, New Mexico; Pueblo of Zia, New Mexico; and
initiative significantly anticipated the federally mandated Native American Graves, Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990, which stipulated that grave goods and human remains in federally funded museums (such as the one at the Chaco visitor center) must be repatriated to Native tribes if they so desire and can claim cultural affiliation to the objects in question. At these meetings, many of the decisions are made about tribal access to park ceremonial locations, Native plant harvesting, and about which tribe specifically lays claim to what areas in the canyon.

While consensus is often not reached at these meetings, one issue about which park archeologists and Navajo and pueblo communities have successfully compromised at Chaco is the Park’s decision to “backfill” or re-bury newly excavated buildings. In keeping with both Navajo and Pueblo beliefs about not disturbing human remains, after excavation Chaco’s archeologists now typically rebury these sites so that they are mostly hidden from public view. While these meetings are often fraught, tense and can go on at great length, the park staff has taken this important first step in consulting with—and acting as sounding board and mediator for—the many tribes who claim cultural affiliation with the canyon.

Natives and Non-Natives: Consuming Indian Culture at Chaco Canyon in the Twentieth Century

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24 Conversation with Chaco Superintendent, Barbara West, fieldnotes July 2009.
From the early 1700s until the late 1940s, many Navajos made their lives in Chaco Canyon. Evidenced by traditional male and female hooghans, clay ovens and defensive structures (“pueblitos”) still sprinkled throughout the canyon, Navajos see themselves as the most recent Native protectors and caretakers of *anaasází* dwellings such as Pueblo Bonito prior to the canyon becoming a National Park. Indeed, Park Service officials today credit *Diné* with preserving the dwellings, particularly during the period of Spanish military raids into the southwest and into Navajo country in particular.

Following the passage of the American Antiquities Act of 1906, Chaco was proclaimed a National Monument in 1907. Immediately following its inauguration, park administrators and BIA officials began to worry about what to “do” with local Navajo residents whose occupation of the park was seen as incompatible with the “pristine” and unpeopled image of an American national park. Originally planning to make the canyon into a sort of “living history” museum and reasoning that “they [the Navajos] would not only add picturesqueness but protection to the objects of scientific interest” (Keller & Turek 1998: 190), Park administrators ultimately

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25 Although *Diné* oral tradition tells otherwise, archeological evidence shows that the *Diné* arrived in *Dinétah*, the greater cultural region in which Chaco is located, around 1500. Traditional Navajo stories, on the other hand, tell of a people that have a much longer time depth in the southwest than archeological evidence would have us believe.

26 A “hooghan” is a traditional Navajo dwelling place; there are male, “forked-stick” hooghans, traditionally used for ceremonies, and female “whirling log” hooghans, traditionally used as the primary place of residence (Shirley Bowman, class notes, Navajo 102).

27 This legislation was specifically created to deal with the rampant pot hunting at Chaco and similar places at the time.

28 Hough has termed these living history parks “human zoos” (Hough in *Resident Peoples and National Parks*, 227).
decided Chaco should be an “unpeopled” park. By 1934 the NPS decided to fence off the park and actively remove local residents due to alleged concerns of overgrazing, siltation and sheep grazing in the ruins (Ibid: 190). At the same time, a decision was made to raze all buildings on the canyon floor—including Wetherill’s historic trading post, Navajo shade houses and hooghans—that were not a direct product of the ancestral Puebloans, once again privileging an “ancient” material culture over more recent canyon histories and peoples.29 Thus, while today most Chaco employees agree that park interpretation would have greatly benefitted from leaving these razed structures intact and strongly disagree with the forced removal of Navajo canyon residents, their collective erasure is indicative of a larger theme behind Chaco preservation politics and in what the park—at that time at least—considered to be “history” worth preserving versus histories which could be rewritten and rebuilt. From this earlier perspective, the park’s significance on the scale of the U.S. nation was its past and not its present.

Similar to arguments made for the removal of Navajos from Lake Mead in the era of the Hoover Dam,30 “overgrazing” thus became the rationale for doing the unthinkable: forcibly removing Native canyon residents from areas already designated as Navajo allotted lands (Deloria & Lytle 1998). Identifying the NPS with John Collier’s disastrous “livestock reduction”31 program of the same decade, which

29 Similar razings also took place at this time in National Parks and Monuments across the country.

also used the same rationale of “overgrazing” to dispossess Navajos of their livestock and self-sufficiency, Eastern Navajo’s distrust of Wááshíndoon\textsuperscript{32} [Washington] solidified into an even deeper dislike and resentment of the National Park Service, the local and most identifiable arm of the federal government (Keller & Turek 1998: 191).\textsuperscript{33}

Today, this dislike is only calcified by the actions of unwitting Park visitors, who have been known to “dump” their R.V. sewage on the roadside outside the park, thinking that these areas are a “no man’s land.” In one instance in particular, I overheard one (understandably outraged) local employee tell another how a “visitor” had dumped his sewage on their allotted land in plain sight of their house the afternoon before. After confronting them, the visitors told the employee that they thought it was public land and that no one was “using” it (Jacobsen fieldnotes, August 2008).

Thus, the net effect of razing and erasing Navajo buildings from public view is that more recent Navajo occupation is not only rarely discussed in park literature and public presentations, it is no longer self-evident to visitors. This has therefore literally rendered Navajos and Navajo history invisible for Park visitors and staff.

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\item[31] In American Indians and National Parks, for example, authors Keller & Turek compare Collier’s stock reduction program of the 1930s as “an atrocity ranking with the [Navajo] Long Walk” (1998: 191).
\item[32] This is the Navajo gloss for “Washington,” a term now denoting the U.S. federal government or any other government [for e.g., Naabeeho biwááshíndoon, the Navajos, their government].
\item[33] For another perspective on how non-Native rug collectors catalyzed the need for Navajos to own more sheep/produce more wool during this same decade, see Donna Haraway’s 2011 presentation, "Staying with the Trouble: Becoming Worldly with Companion Species," available for viewing at: http://ondemand.duke.edu/video/27189/fifth-annual-feminist-theory-w (Duke University, 5th Annual Feminist Theory Workshop, March 18 & 19\textsuperscript{th} 2011).
\end{itemize}
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alike. Through these and similar erasures, a Navajo social citizenship—defined as the ways in which citizens use voice to create an “effective presence in the public space” (Balibar 1988:724)—is denied to local Navajos in the space of the park. Thus, following Sturm (2002), the canyon’s “public” face is informed less by its actual demographic and history and more by its imagined, ancient Indian “center” (2002: 107).

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There’s a photo from 1934 that particularly captures my attention. It is of an older Diné man, Tomacito, a “jish” or medicine bundle slung around his shoulder, and his wife, dressed in a traditional “crinkle” skirt, a velveteen top, shawl and squash blossom necklace.

They stand, together with their three young grandchildren, in front of their “cha’a’oh” (shade house) and traditional female hooghan, with a picture of the canyon and Chakra Mesa in the background. Tomacito is one Navajo Park resident who fought removal from the canyon, eventually losing, but not until 1949. He and his family were the last Navajos to leave the canyon, resulting in a “thirty-four-thousand-acre NPS unit from which all Indians have been removed” (Keller & Turek 1998: 188)

What strikes me is how different the canyon captured in this photograph is from the one I came to know and work in; so different because it was populated with people, their stories, residences, idiosyncrasies and lifeways, and because the
history is surprisingly recent and still so raw and unresolved. When I first saw this picture, it gave me insight into why my own interactions with Navajo staff felt awkward and strained, and why asking about history in the canyon felt like a loaded gun that didn’t need much to set it off again. It makes it look like a “living canyon” in a way that natural areas without people, to me, cannot otherwise be alive. Describing how he and his wife lost their allotted land to the park service in 1932, Tomacito states that “Now the land is all fenced in. We have our hogans on all our land...We are very poor now, hungry most of the time and thirsty all the time” (Tomacito in Keller and Turek 1998: 191).

Figure 15. Tomacito in Chaco Canyon. National Park Service Historic Photograph Collection, Harpers Ferry Center for Media Services, photographer George A. Grant; Used with Permission.

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34 I borrow this term from my host parents, Jane and Kee Tom of Rough Rock, Arizona, who used a similar phrase to describe how a hooghan needs a fire in order for it to become a “living hooghan” or a true home and not just a house.
There are multiple interpretations of this privileging of past over present, deceased peoples over living ones, and, as it’s sometimes perceived from a Navajo perspective, of Pueblo over Southern Athabaskan histories. In her discussion of amateur archeology’s role in helping to shape a regional, southwestern identity for itself, anthropologist and activist Dana Powell teases out the “invented tradition” behind such masquerades. Symbolizing a “lost past” which loses its cultural specificity and comes to represent a broader “human” past which belongs to the U.S. nation—symbolized by its becoming a “national” park with the mandate that it is for
all to explore and enjoy—places like Chaco “have become emblematic of the region, geometric signs of a mysterious past and distinct place,” and places of pilgrimage for New Age seekers (Powell 2010: 16). Thus, what is “authentic” to the American popular imagination about Chaco today is not its living indigenous residents; rather, it is the canyon’s ancient past and the predecessors who built the “ancient” structures which remain today. “Using Diné (and Pueblo) landscapes to assuage alienation and insecurity among the settler population, developing a distinctiveness simultaneously dependent upon Native material culture and yet rendered meaningful by non-Native archaeologists,” a power imbalance between Native residents and non-Native archeologists was created that “persists today in contestations over cultural patrimony claims and historic preservation” (Ibid: 16).37

Yet it is not just archeologists who are deeply drawn to Chaco. Interrogating what types of history are considered “worth preserving” by anthropologists and showing how prescriptive types of Indianness are reified at Chaco, anthropologist

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35 As per the National Park Service mission statement on public accessibility, which reads, quoting Franklin Delano Roosevelt: “There is nothing so American as our national parks... The fundamental idea behind the parks...is that the country belongs to the people, that it is in process of making for the enrichment of the lives of all of us” (http://www.nps.gov/pub_aff/access/index.htm, accessed 10/21/2011).

36 Tribal entities such as the Navajo Nation Archeology Department are now entering into such discussions, as well. For example, during my summer working there, the archeology staff from The Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department visited Chaco in order to learn about the canyon from an archeological perspective.

37 Interestingly, this type of pilgrimage stands in sharp contrast, for instance, to contemporary pilgrimages to “Indian Villages” in the southwest, where the goal is to see living (albeit caricatured and displaced) depictions of American Indian culture through Indian “dances” and other expressive cultural forms. Driving along west I-40 (the old Route 66) through the Navajo reservation in New Mexico and Arizona, for example, one can see numerous Plains-style teepees, large plastic bison nestled in sandstone cliffs and signs which incongruously boast “Meet Geronimo’s Granddaughter.”
Christine Finn\textsuperscript{38} analyzes the offerings left by New Age visitors to Chaco. In her article “Leaving more than footprints’: modern votive offerings at Chaco Canyon prehistoric site” (1997), Finn astutely questions what anthropologists consider “junk” (offerings left by New Age visitors) as opposed to what they classify as “ethnographic evidence” (offerings left by American Indians, past and present), showing how New Age spiritual material evidence draws on traditional American Indian archeological evidence found in Chaco Canyon. In particular, Finn shows how the votive offerings of modern replicas of original artifacts (e.g. quartz crystals and symbolic offerings) excavated and documented in Pueblo Bonito and in Great Kivas like Casa Rinconada are a strong indication of Chaco’s primary meaning as an “ancient” site with spiritual cachet for New Age visitors today. This was true for an event Finn attended, when members of the “Harmonic Convergence” visited Casa Rinconada in 1987 (Finn 1997). Now kept as contemporary archeological evidence and catalogued as “modern artefacts” in the ‘AlterNative’ Chaco Collection, modern votive offerings thus help us to reconsider what is “ethnographic” and “historical”\textsuperscript{39} and to reassess our own academic and interpretive biases in the process.\textsuperscript{40}

Moreover, in an interesting twist, if votive offerings aren’t replicas of excavated original Chacoan artifacts, they often imitate contemporary pan-American

\textsuperscript{38}I thank Chaco’s Interpretation Staff for bringing this article to my attention while working there.

\textsuperscript{39}These biases also reflect an earlier anthropology’s assumption that Indianness was more “worthy” of study than, say, the study of whiteness, which was considered to be merely a “lack” or culture or a blank slate to be inscribed upon. Thus, Indians had culture in “excess” and non-Indians had a “lack” of it.

\textsuperscript{40}Christine Finn, “’Leaving more than footprints’: modern votive offerings at Chaco Canyon prehistoric site.” \textit{Antiquity}, 1997: 169-78.
Indian ritual practice instead. Examples of such items range from smudgesticks, “crystals, burnt string [suggesting effigies] and shells, to feather and wood constructions” (1997: 169). For example, in attending the Harmonic Convergence event, she observed: “Some objects—bundles of twigs or string—were found burned or charred, possibly indicating a role in contemporary ritual practice. In the early hours of the spring Equinox 1994, I observed a young German couple incorporate a Native American Indian ritual practice of burning sagebrush into a ceremony in Casa Rinconada” (Ibid: 174). Through their choice of symbolic offerings and performance of a blurred, pan-ethnic identity, Chaco New Age visitors reify the “ancient” or the spiritually “traditional” Indian over other forms of Indianness as what is most central to them about the Chaco pilgrimage.41

However, members of the Harmonic Convergence are also exercising their right to religious freedom in a National Park and recently designated World Heritage Site, places which are supposed to be publicly available and equally accessible to all. Thus, although certain Pueblos have objected to this use of Casa Rinconada based on its specific spiritual significance for its citizens, leveraging their claims based on AIRFA,42 as a federal entity the park can only respond by stating that places like Casa Rinconada are either available to everyone, or to no one. As such, the interior of Casa Rinconada has since been closed to any and all visitors. Thus, there is an intrinsic contradiction between, on the one hand, designating a

41 For a discussion of these themes in another context, see Michael Brown’s Who Owns Native Culture? Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003

42 American Indian Religious Freedom Act. These rights include, but are not limited to, access of sacred sites, freedom to worship through ceremonial and traditional rights and use and possession of objects considered sacred.
space as a national park and, on the other, trying to work with individual groups in order to grant them special religious access, on the other. As Kathleen Fine\textsuperscript{43} has noted about similar issues of cultural resource management at Mesa Verde National Park, the trouble with designating the canyon as a federally managed heritage area is that “the bestowal of ownership to all denies it to any but the national agencies which control it” (Dare 1988: 181).\textsuperscript{44}

As Finn delineates above, quartz crystals also permeate both visitor and staff experience at Chaco. On one occasion during my tenure there, a shaggy Anglo visitor offered me a small “sacred” quartz crystal for my own spiritual protection. Votive offerings are also a weekly occurrence. For example, one week an anonymous visitor made the pilgrimage to Pueblo Bonito in order to leave, against strict park policy, an urn with the cremated remains of a loved one. Symbolizing the conflicts over how Chaco is understood and the potency of spiritual meanings ascribed to this place, Park headquarters was immediately radioed by the head of the preservation crew, since his workers, comprised of mostly Navajos many of whom identify as “traditional,” were working at the site and refused to continue working there knowing that there were cremated human remains in the workspace. A non-Native ranger, who noted that this was not the first time such an offering had been made at Pueblo Bonito, quickly removed the urn. Whereas for this park visitor Chaco represented a destination point where personal effects could be left to decompose

\textsuperscript{43} Now Kathleen Fine-Dare.

in a peaceful place with strong spiritual “meridians,” for the preservation crew, these remains posed a hazard to their health and their ability to continue applying mortar to the walls in the site area.

Finally, visitors’ ideas of the spiritual nature of the canyon and its “allochonic” Indian residents are also at times buttressed by the Interpretation staff’s Guest Speaker series, of which Native Country’s performance was also a part.45 In one performance, a highly skilled Native American Plains-style flutist was invited to do a lecture-demonstration in the park Visitor Center auditorium. Of unidentified Native ancestry himself, “Wolf’s Robe,” who resides in Sedona, Arizona, travels the NPS and other southwestern performance circuits, lecturing about mostly Oklahoma Cherokee cosmologies and spiritual connections to the earth and playing his wide array of beautifully crafted Indian flutes. Stating in his most recent album that his music “honors the Ancient Peoples of the South West so that their Spirit may continue to teach and guide us” (http://www.akaflutemanent.com/bio.cfm, accessed 12/13/10), Wolf’s Robe makes allusions to contemporary American Indian culture and “the Native American” that are non-specific and general, himself impersonating ideas of the romantic and “timeless” Indian at Chaco.

45 As a nice antidote to this performance, as part of this same series Interpretation also hosted Jemez Pueblo flutist, “Aluaki” (a.k.a. Marlon Magdalena), to play and sell his handmade flutes, one of which is a hand-carved replica of a flute excavated at Pueblo Bonito. Interestingly, Marlon doesn’t limit himself to playing Native flutes and also plays, among others, the Japanese shakuhachi, an endblown wooden flute. To see a picture of this flute and hear Marlon play it inside Room 33 of Pueblo Bonito, visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiGw9WiDkyQ, accessed 11/23/11.
Figure 17. “Wolfs Robe,” (picture taken from website: http://www akaflutemanent com/home.cfm, accessed 12/17/2010); Used with Permission

In his discussion of imperialist nostalgia on the Rosebud Sioux reservation, anthropologist Thomas Biolsi highlights how non-Native appropriations and selective interpretations of Native culture allow non-Natives to regain what has been lost in their fall into modernity and “civilization.” He states that

Many such consumers of things “Indian” believe that “real” or “authentic Indians” have disappeared or are “fast disappearing,” and that “mixed bloods” or “assimilated Indians”—which is to say, living Indian people—are inauthentic Indians. It is the “traditional Indian” that is the object of consumption for imperialist nostalgia (Biolsi 2005: 404).

In the selective interpretation of the canyon which privileges Indian pasts over Indian presences we see more subtle forms of imperialist nostalgia also at play. Building on Biolsi’s discussion of the “traditional Indian” as the desired object of consumption, at Chaco the “traditional Indian,” the one that visitors are seeking spiritual communion with, is really the convergence of two distinct “ideal types” of Indianness: it is both the ancestral Puebloan who built the dwellings, the “ancient
Indian,” the one who mysteriously (and erroneously) “disappeared,” never to return to his/her beloved canyon; and it is also the nineteenth century pre-reservation Indian, the one whom many visitors imitate, Collier idealized, and Wolf’s Robe impersonates through wearing long braids, buckskin clothing and by using smudgesticks and other spiritually “traditional” Native ritual paraphernalia. Even in the cases where Park visitors travel to “living” pueblos (most often Acoma or Laguna) in the greater southwest before or after their visit to Chaco, Pueblo people, I argue, are still more often consumed as relics of the past rather than as American citizens of the present.

In contrast to this unsullied image of the ancient Indian of yesteryear, living Navajo residents who surround the park, drive pickups and shop in Farmington, come to play the role of the “assimilated” Indian. In this way, one could argue that one of the most recent occupations of Chaco—one in a long line of occupations subsequent to that of the ancestral Puebloans—is by both archeologists and New Age spiritualists themselves, who leave their own excavations and offerings as a way to also “become a piece” of the canyon. Linking Biolsi’s use of “imperialist nostalgia” to Park Service Interpretation’s tendency to safely interpret the physical remains of “removed populations” only in their absence, we can thus see how “Indianness” at Chaco is commemorated and reinvented through similar processes of selective memory, rarification and romanticization.46

46The major exception to this is the mandate that all trail guides, visitor center films and tours link Chacoans to modern Pueblo descendents. This link is drawn most successfully, perhaps, on the day of the summer solstice, where each year the park invites a different Pueblo dance troupe to perform traditional social dances in the plaza of Pueblo Bonito (http://www.nps.gov/chcu/parknews/2007solsticenr.htm, accessed 2/05/2012).
Dirt Roads and Country Music: Conservation Politics Meets Native Country

Most recently, during my own stint as a ranger at Chaco, tensions between past and present, parks and people were played out in the park’s controversial consideration of whether to pave one of the dirt access roads to the park. These tensions were also felt in the Chief of Interpretation’s decision to hire my band, Native Country, to play the first electrified music concert in the canyon, outside in the park amphitheatre under the full moon. In the case of the dirt road, the conflict is between two nominally “good” things; paving it allows local Navajos to commute to border towns of Farmington and Bloomfield and to get to their jobs at Chaco much more quickly and with less wear and tear on their vehicles. Accordingly, most local Navajo Chapter residents living near the park boundary, along with the Navajo Tribe, support paving or substantial improvement to the current road [http://www.chacoalliance.com/docs/road-summ.htm, accessed 10/21/2010].

From the perspective of the local county and the Park Service (national office), paving County Road 7950 is also an accessibility/taxpayers’ rights issue, and about San Juan County’s desire for increased revenues that increased tourism to the canyon would bring to the local economy.

Since Chaco is part of a National Park system funded by taxpayer dollars, the thinking from the perspective of the NPS, Washington Office, is that Chaco’s access shouldn’t be limited to people who, for example, have 4x4 or high clearance.

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47 To my knowledge, the paving would be jointly funded by San Juan county and federal highway funds.
vehicles. As per the NPS mission statement, the primary mission of National Parks is that parks be made equally accessible to all if possible. On the other hand, not paving it allows for more protection of park resources based on lower visitation numbers, and preserves the tactile experience visitors’ can still have with ancestral Puebloan dwellings by visiting the dwellings without a guide. As such, paving the road is fiercely opposed by the more conservation-minded members of the Chaco staff and Chaco’s various associated non-profits, such as “The Friends of Chaco.” However, as West and Brechin, in their anthology *Resident Peoples and National Parks* point out, “the greatest and most troubling conflicts are not between good and evil, but between good and good” (1991: xix). How this struggle is waged, and the ways it plays out at Chaco as this decision about the road is debated and contested, offers insight into the nuances of preservation politics and indigenous peoples more broadly; it also shows us how economic development and contemporary human rights are pitted against ecological preservation mandates and historic preservation of the ancient past more specifically. In this way, at its most basic the dirt road debate symbolizes conflicts over people versus nature, past versus present, and authentic versus inauthentic Indian lived experience.

**The Long Dirt Road: County Road (CR) 7950**

The road that Tommy got lost on is called 57 South or BIA 14. The southern access road to Chaco canyon, it is deeply rutted, often “washboarded” depending on the time of year, and at times impassable. Eighteen miles of dirt, there are portions that are sheer rock face, and it takes about thirty-five minutes to drive it, start to
finish. It is the closest way to get from the park to local Navajo communities on the Checkerboard living south and southwest of the park along State Highway 371, towns such as Crownpoint, Thoreau, Whitehorse Lake and Lake Valley. Since very few park visitors visit the park using this road and it predominantly serves as an access road for local community members trying to cut from 371 to U.S. Highway 550 or for those who wish to fill up their water tanks at the park’s free water pump station, this road will likely remain unpaved for the foreseeable future.

The park’s north entrance, however, is a different matter. The main access road for visitors to the park off Highway 550, County Road 7950 currently consists of three miles of paved road and thirteen miles of dirt. In infinitely better condition than its southern counterpart, San Juan County (New Mexico) is considering paving this road in order to make the park more accessible to visitors and, secondarily, for the sake and safety of (mostly Navajo) local residents who also live on and use the road. Having already paved the first three miles in 2005 (Upchurch 2005: 5), things are now at a stalemate due to a lack of funding and the resistance of local environmental groups, including the New Mexico Sierra Club, the San Juan Citizens’ Alliance, and a non-profit in which some Chaco employees are involved formerly called “stop the Chaco road,” now called the “Chaco Alliance.” While each of these groups opposes the paving of the last thirteen miles for similar conservation-minded reasons, I am particularly interested here in tracing the terms of the debate and in particular how it is currently being played out between and among Park Employees, on the one hand, and between the Park and local Navajo residents, on
the other. Thus, tracing this debate is important for what it tells us about whose identity counts and when.

Complicating decisions about paving CR 7950 is the fact that part of it passes through Navajo tribal trust land (http://www.chacoalliance.com/docs/road-summ.htm, accessed 10/21/2010), meaning that the Tribe has to also be consulted and give permission for the go ahead (which it has now done), and a 2005 New Mexico Governor’s Executive Order which states that “all affiliated tribes” of Chaco Canyon and similar places in the state of New Mexico also need to be consulted on anything (like road surfacing) that might “adversely [impact] Native American cultural and historic sites and sacred places” in a long-term or potentially adverse way (http://www.chacoalliance.com/docs/road-summ.htm, accessed 10/21/10).48 Further, there is a difference in opinion on the impending road surfacing between NPS National Office in Washington, which wholeheartedly backs the paving project, and local NPS employees working at Chaco, many of whom are personally against it. Because the wishes of the national office hold sway over the desires of one small (and not very powerful) park unit in New Mexico, it is likely that the road in fact will eventually be paved. This was most clearly evidenced during my time there by the two University of Montana graduate students who came to the park for one month to conduct “feasibility studies” and take opinion polls with park visitors about paving the road. From their perspective, at least, paving the road was a fait accompli.

48 Additionally, federally funded projects using federal highway funds require NEPA and NHPA 106 compliance.
However, because of some non-Navajo Chaco employee opposition, local Navajo perception is that everyone within the NPS is against paving the road, and the ensuing debate is once again perceived as a decision which will privilege park conservation needs over the needs of former Park residents and their descendants. In this sense, it seems significant that there has been no consideration whatsoever, by San Juan or neighboring McKinley counties, to pave the southern dirt access road, only the road which is most serviced by park visitors, such that national and visitors’ needs are privileged over the Navajo Nation and potential “local” needs. Seen from this perspective, building on years of park history, the dirt road debate becomes merely the most recent fissure in a long series of “town-gown” tensions at Chaco.

Pro-Paving

Evidence that many local Navajo residents want the road paved is both anecdotal—in particular through conversations I had with local park employees and neighbors who do not want their names used—and also found in Navajo Nation Chapter resolutions and Navajo Nation correspondence with San Juan County roads department. For example, a document prepared by the New Mexico Historical Preservation Division mentions that, due to the road passing through Navajo tribal land, the Navajo Nation was consulted and that Window Rock “expressed support for the proposed improvements.” In addition, this document states that “no

49 For example, a Nageezi Chapter Resolution from 2008 states that Chapter residents support the surfacing (paving) of the road (Phone conversation with Nageezi Chapter President, Ervin Chavez, 12/09/10).
traditional cultural property issues, or other issues, were identified by the Navajo” (http://www.chacoalliance.com/docs/road-summ.htm, accessed 10/22/10).

**Anti-Paving**

Opposition to paving CR 7950 is revealing for the embedded ideals about what national parks “should be,” and whether they should be understood as habitats for wildlife and/or for human beings. In particular, the language used by various non-profits such as the Chaco Alliance to bolster their argument against road surfacing reveals the ways in which, similar to rationales used to remove Tomacito and other Navajos from the canyon, the ancient past and conservation mandates are used to override contemporary local residents’ needs or desires (in this case, the desire to have CR 7950 paved).

For example, stating that “The paving of the road will be a disaster to this World Heritage Site” and that “Increased visitation will overwhelm the staff and infrastructure, threaten sacred/archaeological sites, and change the nature of the visitor experience forever,” the language employed by the Chaco Alliance foregrounds the “intimate” nature of the visitor experience and the sacred and ancient nature of the ancient dwellings in the canyon (http://www.chacoalliance.com/, accessed 10/22/10). In this way, groups that oppose CR 7950’s paving portray Chaco as being something “other,” an “absolute
space” (Lefebvre 1991: 45) set apart even from other national parks and from this entity we know as the United States National Park Service (Ibid: 45).

Nowhere is this view expressed more clearly or articulately than by veteran ranger and “guru” to many rangers-in-training, G.B. Cornucopia. A social worker by training, G.B. fell in love with Chaco back in the 1980s, eventually landing a permanent job with the Park Service as a way to stay in touch with what has become his favorite spot in the whole world. Deeply attuned to the nuances of season and climate in the canyon and always abreast of the most recent archeological research pertaining to Chaco, G.B. has close and sustained relationships with many local Navajo staff members, and himself desires to live in Chaco until he also one day passes, or until they pave CR 7950.

The single-handed creator of Chaco’s now-renowned “Night Sky” program and a knowledgeable archeoastronomist in his own right, G.B. is fiercely opposed to paving CR 7950. Although he has now worked at Chaco for nearly thirty years, G.B. uncategorically and without drama states that he will immediately seek employment elsewhere if the road is actually paved. Bridging the gap between the environmental perspective and local Navajo needs, G.B. is one of the few employees who, although in no way neutral or silent on this issue, seems to still act as a liaison and mediator in the ongoing debate about the road and its many meanings.

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50 Hénri Lefebvre defines absolute space as “natural space occupied by political forces” (1991: 45). It is the space which predates capitalism and the production of man-made space.

51 A practicing Buddhist from Walla Walla, Washington, G.B. has also become a Chaco “destination” in his own right, such that visitors not infrequently show up and specifically request to be on “his” tour of Pueblo Bonito, or to talk to the man with the memorable Greek last name “Cornucopia.”
However, what is perhaps most subject to critique in the debate about the road—the paving of which, to be sure, would change visitors’ experience and would also, based on study results, likely increase visitorship at least fivefold (Upchurch 2005)—is how the Chaco Alliance and similar non-profits discount the desires or needs of local residents. Because local residents’ population numbers are small and they live in a geographically dispersed community due to the effects of checkerboarding (described in chapter one), Navajo residents do thus far not have the voice, the force or the political savvy of a New Mexico Sierra Club or a Chaco Alliance to press their concerns. For example, in one telling statement, the Chaco Alliance writes that “There are simply no significant statistics to support the “hazardous” road argument presented by San Juan County, no fatalities except on roads that have already been paved, and too few local residents to justify the increased visitation threat to a World Heritage Site (http://www.chacoalliance.com/, accessed 10/22/10, emphasis mine). Dangerously (and perhaps unintentionally) echoing other nationalist rhetorics of exclusion around the globe in which the “good of the nation” or the “good of the world” must be put before the needs of a “few [often indigenous, often poor] local residents,” Chaco Alliance here pits the idea of a “UNESCO World Heritage Site” against the desires of a small, fragmented indigenous Navajo community living on the Checkerboard. Thus, as it is voiced here, the small number of local residents simply doesn’t justify San Juan County paving this road, regardless of what these residents’ opinions on the matter might be.

Using a logic which resonates with earlier, more elitist Park Service perspectives on the “less-than-desirables” that visit national parks when easy park
access is accommodated, groups like the Chaco Alliance see the esoteric and remote nature of the park—what Foucault would call its “rarification” (Foucault 1989 [2005]: 134)—as synonymous with restricted access and as a way to ensure that only “good visitors” frequent the park. This limited access, in turn, is symbolized here most concretely by keeping the remaining thirteen miles of road dirt, and is also the reason the road itself has become the lightning rod for such debates.

For example, in *The Administrative History of Canyon de Chelly National Monument* (Brugge & Wilson 1976), O.F. Oldendoerph writes that “Nothing discourages the overnight campground-hopper as much as fifteen miles of dirt road. Nothing else is so welcome to the truly interested visitor, for he knows that at the end of the rough road he will be camping with people who share his interest in the park” (Oldendoerph quoted in Upchurch 2005: 9). According to this logic, the dirt road is what makes Chaco visitors self-select and keeps the park somewhat exclusive. The park, in effect, becomes an esoteric rite of passage, a pilgrimage into America’s pristine (yet actively managed) “wilderness.” Moreover, in Oldendoerph’s model—one seen in more contemporary Park Service discourse, as well—“good visitors” are those that are “truly interested,” willing to rough it on dirt roads, and “bad visitors” such as the “overnight campground hopper” he alludes to are more casual in their trip planning and environmental commitments (such as picking up after themselves and not littering). Ultimately, then, paving or not paving the road becomes a question of accessibility, by whom and for whom, with the ultimate fear—something which I heard over and over again as an employee—that Chaco will become “just another Mesa Verde [National Park]” (Jacobsen field notes, July-
August 2009). It is in this context that statements like the following should be contextualized:

Because CR7950 is currently unpaved, the number of visitors to Chaco remains moderate. The result is that those who do make the effort have an experience that cannot be duplicated at highly impacted sites such as Mesa Verde. There is no need to sign up for “tours.” One can drive their own vehicle on the park roads, hike or bicycle. Permits for backcountry walks are readily available, free with Park admission and unencumbered with quota systems (http://www.chacoalliance.com/, accessed 10/22/10).

Ending this section by warning that “All of that may soon change!” and bleakly stating that “The quality of the visitor experience will also be irrevocably altered,” such perspectives fit neatly with Burnham’s assessment that people do indeed visit National Parks to experience a type of “pristine,” unsullied wilderness—surely an idealist construction to begin with—which is only “marred” by the presence of other people (Burnham 2000: 11). Echoing larger ongoing debates within the Park Service about how to preserve wilderness areas while keeping it “accessible” to the public at the same time, with the dirt road in its current state parks like Chaco are indirectly able to proscribe visitation and preserve the wilderness experience without officially restricting park access.

While my point here is neither to point fingers at local non-profits or Chaco NPS employees who oppose paving CR 7950, nor to espouse a policy for this infamous dirt road, pro- or anti-, I do hope to add breadth and perhaps give historical and ethnographic context to what is today a highly divisive and bifurcated debate. This is to say, as a former park employee who believes deeply in the mission of America’s National Parks, and also as a current, former and future guest resident
of the Navajo Nation who cares deeply for Navajo people and communities I have come to know, it seems that there might be a way to find common ground between parks and tribes. For example, in continuing to avidly protect park resources, the Park could also begin making room, literally and symbolically, for contemporary Navajo and other Native views, day-to-day needs, and perspectives about the canyon.

Highlighting the complementary role of tribal land ownership, cultural preservation—and, I might add, natural resource preservation as well—the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe of Death Valley National Park state that "Unfortunately, the National Park Service and Department of Interior [sic] either does not understand or chooses to ignore the importance and relationship between tribal land ownership and cultural preservation. This is ironic for an agency that purports to be America’s cultural preservation guardian" (http://www.thepeoplespaths.net/news/timbisha.html, March 1996, accessed 10/29/10; italics mine).

Thus, although there are no easy solutions, I believe there is room for rapprochement. The stakes are simply too high on both sides to not at least make the attempt. Whether Chaco Alliance’s suggestion that the dirt road be simply graded, better maintained and better sign-posted represents such a compromise remains to be seen. But I think employees like G.B., despite having his own passionate view on this matter, offer a good way forward, balancing ecological and

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52 In some small ways, this has already begun. For example, local residents who are without running water are now encouraged by the Park to fill their water tanks at the Park’s pump station rather than driving a longer distance to fill up at the local Chapterhouse.
historical preservation concerns with day-to-day human relationships and commitments.

But neither is it the case that all national park systems remove local residents in order to fulfill their respective missions as parks. Indeed, in the case of some British, continental European and Asian national parks/protected areas and in contrast to our own national system, local residents are sometimes seen to add to “landscape value,” the focus of their park system, which is privileged over “nature conservation value,” the focus of American National Parks. Thus, as Harmon shows us in “National Park Residency in Developed Countries” (West & Brechin 1991), local residents in Britain, for example, are not only encouraged to continue living in park-designated areas but they are strongly supported to continue using the land in ways that sustain them, in this case, through farming. While Britain is, of course, much more densely populated and its parks formed much later than those in the United States, the British approach toward “conservation” has something to offer American National Parks, both in terms of policy and analytic approaches for how we as a nation think about conservation, preservation, and local populations heretofore living in park-designated areas.

**Singing down the Moon: Native Country Comes to Chaco**

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53 Parks which work with local residents are sometimes referred to as “partnership parks.” In the U.S., these parks include Michigan’s Keweenaw National Historical Park, Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, and New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park in Massachusetts. Internationally, partnership parks are increasingly the model upon which parks are designed and operated.
One way to understand the Chief of Interpretation’s decision to hire my band, “Native Country” of Many Farms, Arizona, to play at Chaco, then, is as just such an attempt at rapprochement. Less formal a venue than the Chaco American Indian Consultation Committee and less loaded a conversation than the dirt road debate, hiring the band represented an attempt on Russ’ part, I believe, to provide a “local” form of entertainment in the park—i.e., a “rez country” band—that would appeal to Navajo staff and local residents and to also put a more human face on the Park Service and its non-Navajo employees in particular. From this perspective, then, the rapprochement was successful. It was in this context, then, that Native Country played on Friday night, August 7th, 2009, as part of the park’s “guest speaker” series alongside the Friday night “Night Sky” program with G.B. Cornucopia. Investing a great amount of enthusiasm and energy into advertising the “gig” on all local Navajo-language radio stations and making handmade signs (see picture below) on plywood placed at strategic turnoffs (for example, between 550 and Country Road 7900), my boss offered this free concert as a conciliatory move between the Park Service and descendants of the park’s former residents.

54 In general Chaco employee parlance, “local” often becomes shorthand for “Navajo” or sometimes even “local Navajo descendant of former park residents.”

55 The inspiration for the gig also stemmed from Russ’ genuine interest in my band as well as his own deep love of live music.
For example, in talking to Russ, G.B. and Navajo members of the Preservation crew about the event afterwards, I got a sense from both of them that the first stones in a preliminary bridge had been laid. Satisfied and happy with the turnout and the course of the evening in general, Russ talked about possibly making similar events an annual occurrence, billed as some sort of “community outreach” to improve town-gown (or, in this case, town-uniform) relations. Mentioning the employees by name that showed up and who typically “won’t set foot at Chaco outside their strictly working hours,” Russ seemed thrilled that the park had
managed to cross this divide. G.B., similarly, seemed satisfied that some local children—many of whom are living ten, fifteen miles away but have never visited the park—were able to look through the “scopes” for the first time, overriding certain Navajo taboos about looking at celestial bodies through magnifiers and clearly enjoying what they saw. Preservation employees, on the other hand, enjoyed the band and the opportunity to show their families where they worked. The event, according to each, was a “success.”

Conclusion

National Parks come to symbolize and be shaped by our own, idiosyncratic ideas of what we think they should be. As such, they are products of creation, fantasy and imagination in much the same way as ideas of authentic “Indianness” have also been understood from at least the nineteenth century to the present. In part, and as examples of “partnership parks” in the U.S. and elsewhere show us, a national park need not necessarily be void of human inhabitants in order to fulfill its various missions as a place to preserve habitat and ecosystem, and to educate and provide sanctuary for humans and animals alike. It is much more a question of how we frame our interpretations and expectations of what a park is, should be or could be.

With some notable exceptions, Canyon de Chelly among them, the American park system has developed quite differently, with local populations

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56 Examples of other parks which, early on, accommodated living communities/park residents include Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Cape Code National Seashore.
largely being seen as a hindrance rather than as an opportunity to enrich park Interpretation programs. While this view has been gradually changing since the early 1990s in American National Parks (Phillips 2003), parks like Chaco have historically privileged “nature conservation value” over people, to the detriment of many former local inhabitants of what are now park-designated areas today.

In *The Production of Space* (1991), Hénri Lefebvre posits three types of spaces that have come to characterize spatial experiences of modernity: representational spaces, or aural spaces of the natural world outside the “built” environment like those idealized by early naturalists such as John Muir and even by Lefebvre himself; absolute spaces, or spaces of nature that span the gap between representational and abstract spaces, which are impacted but not dominated by manmade interventions; and, finally, abstract spaces, places such as “the great empty spaces of the state and the military” (1991: 50), where individual “users” and ideas of social and ethnic difference are erased (Ibid: 1991). In each of these three categories of space, Lefebvre underscores the user and thus the human relationship to places and environments, both ‘natural’ and ‘built,’ tracing how human beings have, over time, become alienated from the various spaces they inhabit. Linking Park Service perspectives on “empty” wilderness and the obliteration of Native inhabitants that had to first take place for an idea of “wilderness” to be maintained and perpetrated (Spence 1999), for Lefebvre space is not something which starts off as “empty” and is later “in-filled” by various inhabitants and social meanings (Lefebvre 1991: 13). In contrast to the way in which Australian settlers described
Australia as a *terra nullius* upon encountering its Aboriginal inhabitants, space for Lefebvre is actively created and recreated by its users; “physical space has no ‘reality’ without the energy that is deployed within it” (1991: 13). In keeping with Lefebvre’s perspective, Chaco Canyon, and all the human occupations deployed within it both before and after the ancestral Puebloans, is a space that is created and recreated by its users, from the early Basketmakers, Navajo and Spanish Sheepherders to Park employees, New Age practitioners and Jemez flute players today. To truly understand Chaco is to write all these stories and occupations into active canyon history, to admit that, as Solnit has put it, “we don’t truly belong in a place until we’ve given it our ghosts” (2005: 110).

To my reading, “absolute spaces,” defined as “natural space occupied by political forces” (Lefebvre 1991: 45), best describes the politicized landscape of National Parks such as Chaco. While groups who oppose the paving of CR 7950 choose to understand and define Chaco as more of a representational space, as a space set apart from human use where people are actively written out of the landscape, I think it behooves us as anthropologists and Park Interpreters—for me these are really, in many ways, one in the same profession—to see National Parks for the highly constructed, deeply politicized “working landscapes” they have always been (Solnit et. al 2005: 101). National Parks are indeed “intensely gathered landscapes,” and not only for the various indigenous communities who have

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57 *Terra Nullius* means “empty land,” a state policy which argued that Australian lands were “empty” prior to settlement by British convicts in 1776.

58 Phillips also evocatively refers to partnership parks, including those in Australia, Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia and Samoa as “lived-in landscapes” (2003: 8-32).
occupied their arroyos and mesa tops for at least the last one thousand years. These myriad meanings converge at times around singular issues such as the paving of a road or a musical performance, crystallizing a community in time and allowing us a bird’s eye perspective on the various positions and attitudes, expectations and hopes that exist for the many people who today call Chaco Canyon “home.”

In writing about rephotography\(^{59}\) and the multiple histories of Yosemite National Park, ancestral home to the Ahwahechee (a subgroup of the Central Sierra Miwok), Solnit observes that to truly discover a place for oneself is to start by acknowledging its historical ambiguities and multiple lives. Discovery, she emphasizes, not of “the untouched and truly unknown, but of traces of histories, conjunctions, overlaps, patterns, meanings in the steep, intricate, hallowed, scarred landscape of Yosemite” (2005: xiv). In this way, we recognize that, in Solnit’s co-author Mark Klett’s words, “culture could indeed be seen as a part of the landscape...We’re seeing the formation of a new relationship between culture and nature, one less adversarial in focus, one defined by the human need for close connection to place...and that’s as social as it is personal” (Mark Klett in Solnit et. al 2005: 107).

To understand the “uneven geographic development” that exists in areas where parks rub up against American Indian reservations (Harvey 1996: 310) is to acknowledge the intertwined histories of these two entities, both the brainchild of

\(^{59}\) Spearheaded by Mark Klett as a form of photographic documentary in the 1970s, rephotography is defined as “the act of repeat photography of the same site, with a time lag between the two images; a "then and now" view of a particular area” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rephotography, accessed 2/01/2012).
the Department of the Interior. It is also to acknowledge that righting these inequities and putting one’s best foot forward in addressing the injustices of the past for someone like Tomacito—still within living memory for some—will likely not be redressed through some singular, grand gesture of “renunciatory virtue” on the part of person or park (Solnit et al. 2005: 111). Rather, as Solnit herself suggests, these inequities “will instead by redressed by demographic change, gentleness, careful attention, shifts in the collective imagination, and time itself” (2005: 111). More concretely, and attending to Solnit’s reference to the need for “shifts in the collective imagination,” these geographies of inequity will likely be more adequately addressed by the work of Native Rangers such as Don Whyte. Don, mentioned previously, has worked with the NPS national office to recruit Native youth from Tribal Colleges for jobs as Rangers with the Park Service, something he believes the Park Service deeply needs. In this way, local residents-turned-Rangers become the public educators and interpreters—the “contact points”—for visitors to national treasures such as Chaco, Yosemite and the Badlands. Thus, tours and information are not only offered by “well-fed, uniformed, seasonal employees on summer vacation from college” (Burnham 2000: 10), but also by indigenous Rangers whose progenitors may have intimately known this park in particular and regarded its arroyos and canyons as simply “home.” As Don sees it, Native Park Service Rangers are simply continuing practices of land stewardship and cultural preservation that have existed in Native communities for centuries. In his words,60 “...By

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60 Personal email correspondence with me, 28 December 2010. Quoted with permission.
incorporating a percived hinderence\textsuperscript{61} into what ancestral relatives would see as a responsibility of being a caretake of the land, water, resources in modern times with modern tools and skills,” Native Rangers are able to learn more about their respective ancestral homelands and bring back that knowledge to their home communities, communities which are often located directly outside Park boundaries. He continues:

“I as a park ranger, keep continuing/maintianing that relationship. (…) I think that American Indians have a present day opportunity to patrol the ancestral lands as modern day warriors and becoming a part of the green and gray tribe\textsuperscript{62} or lone wolves for the green and gray. Always caring for the land, but having the freedom to travel back to thier community to participate in ceremonial obligations and share new stories of their adventures on past ancestral homelands” (2010).

With more Native Rangers at the helm, parks like Canyon de Chelly, Badlands, and perhaps eventually Chaco as well, are able to control the quality and appropriateness of the information visitors receive, creating boundaries where questions are too personal or probing and teaching, in the process, respectful communication patterns for visitors, many of whom will admittedly be having contact with a so-called “real Indian,” as Arlondo jokingly put it in Chapter One, for the first time. Thus, history and knowledge about a park, and in this case the Navajo stories that go with that place, again become a question of cultural patrimony, but where Navajo employees are not so much on the defensive, protecting it from misinterpretation, as they are on the offensive, teaching other non-Native Rangers

\textsuperscript{61} i.e., the stigma of “selling out” by working for the federal government/NPS.  
\textsuperscript{62} “Green and Gray” is code-speak for National Park Service employees.
like myself and visitors alike what is considered accessible, public knowledge and what is better left untouched, literally and symbolically. Navajo history is a part of Navajo cultural patrimony, but it’s also a part of U.S. patrimony and our shared history as Americans. From this perspective, while there is much power in speaking, explaining, and “interpreting”—anthropological biases and predilections, to be sure—there may also be power in silence.
Chapter Three

Radmilla’s Voice: The Politics of Race, Blood and Belonging

~for Bidtah and Paul~

Star Spangled Banner
[in Navajo]¹
"Dah Naat’a’í Sọ’ Bit Sinil"

Yá’aashgóó dadísóh’íí’
 Háyoołkáát biyi’deé’
 Bádahwii’níihgo át’é
 Dah naat’a’í éí yéego nihíl nilínii
 Noodóóz dóó bışq’ diswos
 Naabaahii yitah íí’á
 Bits’áhoníyée’go deinílí’í
 Nihich’i’ índídh ndi baa íniiidlí
 Ah hool’áágóó bine’ neidá
 Báhádzidii dahólóq’ ndi
 Éí t’éiyá bee sihasin
 T’óó nihá dah sítssooz ndi
 T’óó shíí élí so’ bił sinilgo
 Dah naat’a’áh hool’áa doo
 Nihikéyah bikáa’gi
 K’ad nihíl hodéezyéél!²

~as performed by Radmilla Cody~

¹ To listen to this performance while you read the Navajo words, please visit:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntn9LE16d2g&feature=related

² Navajo language translation provided by Katherine Duncum,
Radmilla

In 1996, a twenty-one year old woman named Radmilla ran for the title of Miss Navajo Nation. Strikingly beautiful, fluent in Navajo and possessing an in-depth knowledge of Navajo traditional culture, Radmilla was the first Navajo-African American contestant to compete for the title of Miss Navajo.  

From the rural community of Falls Lake, Arizona, just within the western boundary of the Navajo Nation, Radmilla was raised by her Navajo maternal grandmother, her masání. There she learned to speak Navajo and to butcher a sheep. African American on her father’s side and Navajo on her mother’s side, because of her beautiful singing voice Radmilla also became known as the “Navajo Whitney Houston” (Thomas 1998: 3).

In the week long pageant that took place prior to the final selection in September 1997, contestants competed against each other at the annual Navajo Nation Fair in Window Rock, AZ, in events as diverse as sheep butchering, fry bread making, corn grinding with a traditional mortar and pestle, and traditional cultural performances such as song and dance (http://www.missnavajocouncil.org/history/missnn/1997-1998.htm, accessed 1/24/11). Contestants were also tested rigorously for their linguistic abilities, asked to translate questions asked by the judges from Navajo into English, queried in

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3 Although Radmilla was the first Navajo/black contestant, there have been other biracial Miss Navajo contestants, including women of mixed Navajo/Anglo and Navajo/Asian heritage.

4 In keeping with the idea of Navajoness (or Indianness) as a nationality rather than a racial category, I choose to capitalize “Navajo” and “Indian,” similar to the way American and German citizens are denoted, while using lower case designation for racial designations such as “white” and “black.”
Navajo about traditional teachings such as the stones, colors and symbolism of the four Sacred Mountains, and asked to fully introduce themselves, their interests, their Navajo clans, their community of origin and the reason they were running for Miss Navajo Nation, all in Navajo. Radmilla trumped the other contestants in all respects; in particular, her ability to butcher in a floor-length gown and her comfort in the Navajo language far exceeded the other contestants. On September 6th, 1997, based on popular vote, Radmilla “Millie” Cody was crowned the 46th Miss Navajo Nation, 1997-98.

![Radmilla Cody, Miss Navajo Nation, 1997-1998; Used with Permission](image)

**Figure 19. Radmilla Cody, Miss Navajo Nation, 1997-1998; Used with Permission**

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5 To learn more about the pageant in depth, see filmmaker Billy Luther’s 2007 documentary, *Miss Navajo*.

6 Particularly impressive to the Navajo crowd was Radmilla’s ability to "butcher a sheep with surgical precision’ while dressed in a lavishly decorated velvet blouse and skirt that covered her almost completely from neck to ankles” (Denetdale 2006: 19).
The formal Goodwill Ambassador for the Tribe for one calendar year, a Miss Navajo must be knowledgeable about traditional Navajo culture and fluent in Navajo and English. Physical attractiveness is not supposed to be included as an official criterion for a future Miss Navajo Nation; instead, “the Miss Navajo Nation pageant is supposed to be about beauty ‘within.’” (www.missnavajocouncil.org/, accessed 12/23/10). In these ways, the Miss Navajo competition is less a “beauty” pageant than a “cultural pageant,” one where Navajo cultural knowledge and language are more highly prized than looks.

However, from the onset there was public resistance among Navajos to Radmilla’s crowning. Much of the opposition was couched in the language of race, and specifically in reaction to Radmilla’s Navajo-black admixture. And, although a cultural pageant more than a beauty pageant, the Miss Navajo contest also follows certain norms found in many American and international beauty pageants, including a strong emphasis on the contestants being single and “available.” As Navajo historian Jennifer Denetdale notes, “Although Miss Navajo Nation embodies Navajo cultural values associated with ideal womanhood, we must also acknowledge that beauty pageants are rooted in white middle-class values that present femininity as values of chastity, morality, and virtue” (2006: 20). In other words, the Miss Navajo pageant reflects both a very Navajo emphasis on women as culture bearers but also reflects the larger gendered ideal types of American society, relegating them instead to beauty and culture pageants where their cultural skills and looks take first place in demonstrating their need to remain chaste, available and “pure.”
Yet at the same time, these pageants obviously also reflected larger assimilated ideas of beauty very much in keeping with 1950s, McCarthy-era American culture. Thus, while performing cultural distinctiveness on the one hand, the Miss Navajo pageant also reflected a broader assimilationist notion that emphasized cultural homogeneity and sameness. Similar to what I call contradictory mandates of Navajoness (discussed in Chapter One), this tension between distinctiveness and sameness is best seen in the fact that, from 1956-1963, there were originally two categories for Miss Navajo, a “Traditional Queen” and a “Modern Queen.” In the commemorative picture below, the former Traditional Queens are draped in hand-woven Navajo rugs, wear ankle-length satin or velveteen skirts, turquoise-and-silver jewelry, kélchí or leather moccasins and have long hair pulled back in a traditional style at the nape of their neck; the Modern Queens sport short, styled hair cuts, spaghetti-strap dresses or poodle skirts, pumps and rhinestones. Tellingly for the dual roles Miss Navajo must now play and balance between, Miss Traditional and Miss Modern are now fused into the one category of “Miss Navajo,” today


7 From what I can gather, the split between two Miss Navajo contestants—Miss Traditional and Miss Modern—began in 1956 with the crowning of Emma Louise Anderson as Miss Traditional Navajo and Geraldine Morgan Pete as Miss Modern Navajo and ended with the crowning of Anna Mae Begay Fowler in 1963 (http://www.missnavajocouncil.org/history/pageanthistory.htm, accessed 4/28/11).
Indeed, the development of the Miss Navajo pageant in the 1950s, the decade when the policy of federal “termination” of Indian tribes also began, is probably not coincidental. Many other Native beauty pageants were also created during the 50s and 60s, including the Miss Florida Seminole and Miss White

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9 The Miss Navajo pageant began in 1952 [http://www.missnavajocouncil.org/history/pageanthistory.htm](http://www.missnavajocouncil.org/history/pageanthistory.htm), accessed 2/22/11.)
Paradoxically, these quintessentially mainstream American contests allowed tribes to celebrate their own identity and cultural distinctiveness, yet also reflected the power of assimilationist ideals. Thus, pageants also revealed American Indian tribes’ perceived need to “prove” themselves as “socially authentic” Indians to non-Indians through public cultural performances in order to avoid being slated for federal termination. Such contests also reflect the larger historical trend of tribes performing their Indian identity for outsiders, traceable to the federal recognition process for Indian tribes and dating back over 100 years, and the fact that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in particular has long relied on outsider depictions of tribes to determine who is “Indian” and who isn’t (Maynor Lowery in Wiethaus, ed. 2007: 57-96).

In this context, the fact that there are “Miss” but not “Mister” pageants in the U.S. and Navajo-specific contexts also reflects a uniquely gendered emphasis in Navajo matrilineal society, where Native women are held responsible for transmitting and teaching Navajo language and culture. Reflecting this trend, the majority of Navajo language and culture teachers at elementary and secondary

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10 The Miss Florida Seminole Pageant began in 1957 (Chris C. Jenkins in Seminole Tribune, August 27, 2010).
11 Although not a federally recognized tribe and therefore not slated for termination, The Miss Lumbee Pageant began slightly later, in 1968, as part of what is known as “Lumbee Homecoming.” Buttressing the point that this and similar pageants were created in part by the need to show one’s cultural distinctiveness, executive director James Hardin states that “Lumbee Homecoming is...about celebrating our uniqueness as a tribal body politic and our unique cultural foundations that shape also how we internally behave politically as a tribe and people” (James Hardin, “Executive Message,” http://www.lumbeehomecoming.com/executive.html, accessed 2/22/11).
12 In contrast, Samuels (2004a) shows how, in the San Carlos Apache context, beauty pageants can also be community focused and directed at insiders.
schools on the reservation are women. Thus, at some levels of discourse, women are considered to be “more Indian” than men (de la Cadena 1995).  

Radmilla’s story as Miss Navajo ended with the closing of her reign in September 1998 and the crowning of a new Miss Navajo (a former student of mine at Diné College, Seveleah Tsosie), but she remained very much in the public eye. In 2002, news broke that Radmilla had been caught smuggling cocaine through Sky Harbor International Airport in Phoenix, AZ; she was convicted as an accomplice to a large international drug smuggling ring and, in January 2003, sentenced to twenty-one months in a federal prison (di Giovanni 2002). Radmilla would later assert that her long-time boyfriend from Phoenix had habitually abused her and that, in order to avoid physical punishment, she had been commandeered into trafficking drugs as his accomplice. Radmilla served her time in prison with grace, was awarded a Nammy (Native American Music Awards) for her album, “Seed of Life” (2002) while in prison and was also approached multiple times by filmmakers interested in telling her story.

After returning to the reservation from prison, Radmilla was once again met with trepidation and some anger, much of it stemming from the feeling she had not lived up to the role model responsibilities of a Miss Navajo. As Navajo Times

\footnote{In her article “Women Are More Indian: Ethnicity and Gender in a Community near Cuzco,” Marisol de la Cadena notes a similar phenomenon in an indigenous (Quechua) community where property is passed down patrilineally. In the context of rural Peruvian village life, she notes that, for structural and economic reasons, women are confined to “the ideological sphere of rural Indianess” more often than are men (de la Cadena in Larson & Harris, ed. 1995: 337).}

\footnote{Now Seveleah Tsosie-Begay.}

\footnote{Best Female Artist.}
journalist Marley Shebala explains it to filmmaker Angela Webb, “She was Miss Navajo. She was Radmilla Cody. Do you understand what I mean? She was...that perfect person that was imperfect” (Marley Shebala quoted in *Hearing Radmilla*).

Attributing her “downfall” to her blackness and to stereotypes of crime and drug-smuggling associated with her African American boyfriend, certain members of the tribe “were saying: “See. We told you so,” such that, for a time, “Her name and image became defined as the black sheep of the Navajo Nation” (Celia Naylor in Jodi Rave, *Bismarck Tribune*, 12/03/2005).

Issuing a widely publicized apology at the Fair Grounds in Window Rock—as well as in a letter to the *Navajo Times*, something that, as Orin Starn points out, is an American phenomenon and very much expected of our national athletes, politicians and celebrities alike (Starn 2011b: 10)—Radmilla sought public forgiveness. For the most part, it was granted to her, and she has once more become a popular figure across the reservation, among both young and old.

In 2007 Radmilla began working on a film about her life with Angela Webb, an African American filmmaker and schoolteacher. The result is the stunning documentary, first screened in September 2010 at the Navajo Nation Museum, *Hearing Radmilla: A New Film about Old Questions* (http://www.hearingradmilla.net/home.html). The film allowed Radmilla to confront and explain her part in both the drug scandal and the domestic abuse head on and to apologize for not upholding her strict public persona as prescribed by the Miss Navajo Council. But the production of *Hearing Radmilla* is also a way in which
Radmilla attempts to claim a certain kind of voice, specifically through reasserting “narrative authority over one’s own circumstances and future” (1996: 393).

In her essay on Rwandan and Buruti refugees, Liisa Malkki (1996) highlights the way in which refugees use a politics of voice in order to maneuver in a crowded field of humanitarian actors. Noting how refugees both assert control over the representation of their individual stories and in the ability to “claim an audience” (Ibid: 393) through vocalization, Malkki shows how these vocal deployments can effectively emplace and historicize their users, creating space and the ability for refugees to speak with increased authority about the particularity of their circumstances (1996: 377-404). Speaking with this kind of authority thus creates a form of what T.H. Marshall has called “social citizenship” (Marshall 1950: 10-14).

Similarly, Radmilla also successfully claims an audience and a kind of social citizenship, in her case specifically through her artful use of language. Speaking (and singing) elegantly and persuasively in Navajo and English about the issues that matter to her, she has become a spokesperson for domestic violence awareness and campaigns for greater tolerance and acceptance of Afro-Indians such as herself on the Navajo reservation and across Indian country. At the first screening of Hearing Radmilla in Window Rock, for example, she spoke at length in Navajo about race and racial stereotypes on the Navajo reservation. One of the most stunning—and heartbreaking—parts of the film is the section where a maternal uncle she lived with as a child discusses his perception of Radmilla, whom he called his “chocolate mama,” and his dismay in realizing when her mother first brought her home that she was part “zhinii.” Stemming from his own experience of perceived
discrimination at the hands of African Americans while he was working construction jobs in Phoenix as the low man on the totem pole, he candidly describes his resentment and anger at having a visual, daily reminder of that difficult period in his life brought into his own home. Zhinii, a Navajo slang-word which translates as “Black One,” is a shorthand for African Americans on the reservation in both English and Navajo. Though not necessarily an insult, zhinii is often used in derogatory ways, as when both Radmilla’s uncle and her childhood schoolmates would taunt her with the moniker, “zhinii zhinii coco puff” (Rave 2005: 1).

Building on her ability to successfully claim an audience, Radmilla is now on a linguistic mission to eradicate the usage of the term “zhinii” from public parlance on the reservation. As she explained in Navajo to the elderly women sitting in the audience after the film screening, it is a term that has really hurt her over the years and which always singled her out and made her feel less Navajo and ultimately, less human. Instead, she is calling for the introduction of the word “Nahitii,” a more descriptive and, to her ears, respectful term denoting African peoples which translates to “the black ones that came across, persevered and have become one.”

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16 The term “Zhinii” comes from the Navajo word, “Lizhin.” [transl: black as a color] to which a nominalizer or noun-maker, “ii,” is then added, so that the word would literally translate as “the one that is black” or “black one.” The “Li” part of “Lizhin” is simply elided.

17 For a view outlining the pros and cons of banning racial epithets, see Randall Kennedy’s Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word (2002).

18 In a personal email from Radmilla from March 1, 2011, she writes that “the new term that I now use for African Americans is Nahilii which is broken down in the following way: Na (across), hil (dark, calmness, have overcome and persevered and we’ve come to like), ii (oneness)” (personal correspondence, 3/01/11).
Radmilla’s public persona has also been sustained through her successful recording career as a singer. During her reign, she was taken under the wing of another uncle, the well-known traditional singer and songwriter, Herman Cody. Herman began teaching her traditional Navajo social dance songs (skip dance songs, round dance songs) and composing similar-sounding pieces for her to sing, specifically Navajo songs that are “secular interpretations of sacred ceremonial songs” (Herman Cody in Contreras 2010: 1). Subsequently, Radmilla began incorporating these songs into her public presentations as ambassador to the Navajo Nation and also singing American patriotic songs in Navajo. In 2000, for instance, she recorded the national anthem and also, in 2005, “My Country, ‘tis of Thee” in Navajo, adding hip-hop inspired vocal melismas, to great local and national acclaim (CD, Within the Four Directions, 2000; Spirit of a Woman, 2005). Radmilla’s singing style thus critically fuses and embodies two parts of her identity—her African American heritage and her Navajo heritage. Many of the social songs Radmilla sings are traditionally sung by men, performed in a nasal, compressed voice described by some listeners as “a monotone, with almost no flourishes” (Contreras 2010: 1). In contrast to these male voices, as NPR commentator Felix Contreras notes, “Radmilla projects more and uses techniques

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19 For example, in 2010, Radmilla was included in National Public Radio's “50 Great Voices” series. To hear song clips and the interview, visit: http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyld=126638085 (accessed 5/06/11).

20 To hear Radmilla singing the National Anthem in Navajo, please visit the following website: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntn9LE16d2g&feature=related

21 As McAllester noted in Enemyway Music (1954), Navajo ceremonial songs were traditionally sung by men.
like bending notes: common among blues, jazz and pop singers” (Ibid: 1). Thus, in her singing, Radmilla adds what her uncle Herman refers to as “‘Navajo soul’ to Navajo spirituality” (Herman Cody in Contreras 2010: 1).

Using the language of vocal physiologists, Radmilla’s singing style fuses traditional Navajo vocal techniques—singing in a higher (soprano) pitched “head” voice and employing a compressed, nasalized sound—to sounds more often associated with contemporary R&B, blues and soul singers, such as singing in her “chest” voice using a lower vocal range (alto). These two ranges also have contrasting timbral or tone color qualities, described by vocal coach Ellen Hemphill as “metal” (head voice) and “wood” (chest voice). For example, chest voices are often glossed as sounding “warmer,” meaning that they are harmonically fuller and more supported by diaphragmatic breathing; head voices are often described as “thinner,” meaning they are less diaphragmatically supported and can sound more strident since they're higher in pitch. Thus, expanding on Herman’s metaphor about soul and spirit, Radmilla combines the warm wood of the “chest voice”—African American soul—to the compressed, metallic “head voice” of Navajo spirituality.

Radmilla, linking vocal timbre to racial ideologies about voice, notes that “the soul comes from the black side,” and that the “spiritual” side of songs springs from their ability to showcase the beauty and aesthetics of the Navajo language (Contreras 2010: 2).

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In his collection of essays *Image, Music, Text* (1977), Roland Barthes searches for a way to talk about classical song beyond the standard analyses of lyrics and their textual content. Theorizing that there is something ineffable and almost indescribable in the human singing voice in particular, he calls this the “grain” of the voice, which he describes as the “friction” or “space of the encounter between a language and a voice” (Barthes 1977: 181; 185).Parsed as more than simply tone color or “timbre,” the “grain” of the voice is a way to describe in sound how the singing/speaking voice is both singular—emanating and possessed by one particular body—and cultural, in that a voice is also made audible using a language that (presumably) is also a socially acquired, learned behavior. The grain, therefore, is vocal texture, tone color (timbre), and that which is “deep down:” material and embodied, grain is at once singular to an individual and also deeply socially and historically emplaced. Voices are publicly performative and privately intimate, they are both exterior (performed for others) and interior (produced from within the body). In this way, “the ‘grain’ of “the body in the voice as it sings” is inimitably unique to each individual speaker or singer (Ibid: 188).

In applying Barthes concept of “grain” to Radmilla’s voice, part of what her listeners repeatedly emphasize as uncanny and uniquely compelling about her singing style is the way she specifically collapses a tone color (timbre) and a singing style often understood to index R&B and hip-hop—genres often (and sometimes incorrectly) associated with African American vocalists—with a genre of Navajo

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23 These themes have more recently been further nuanced and elaborated upon in the work of Fox 2004a, Feld 1996 and Feld et. al 2004, in which specific polysemic and polyphonic utterances are ethnographically analyzed.
music, sung specifically in Navajo, that for some indexes a “traditional” Navajo identity. Thus, her voice and her singing style is both singular—idiosyncratic, unique to the individual and the body that possesses it—and yet at the same time also deeply cultural, with a lyrical content reflecting Radmilla’s own learned cultural values, connection to her place of origin, to sheep and to the maternal grandmother that raised her. The “grain” (elsewhere defined as “the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs” [Barthes 1977: 188]) of her voice quite literally becomes the platform where Navajo identity politics converge.24

This grain or “geno-song”25 can be heard, for example, in her eclectic mix of songs, from “Chídí Nahínnih” [“Buy a vehicle”], written by Herman about going to “town” (Flagstaff, AZ) to buy a truck [“Four wheel drive, it’s no jive, dad’ll co-sign/Big quad cab, the one in the ad, over in Flag”] to songs in English influenced by popular music genres such as “Old School Sheepherder’s Rap” and the “Fry Bread Song” (“Radmilla Cody: Precious Friends, Songs for Children,” 2007).26 An analysis of Radmilla’s voice—as singular and cultural, material and symbolic, soulful and spiritual, head and chest, metal and wood—can therefore help us to understand

24 For example, in Samuels’ discussion of how Marshall from the Pacers refused to diphthongize or “twang” the word “Vietnam,” he shows how in the choice not to twang politics are similarly marked/expressed (Samuels in Feld et al 2004: 239).

25 Building on Kristeva’s idea of pheno-text and geno-text, Barthes defines the geno-song as “the volume of the singing and speaking voice...not what it says but the voluptuousness of its sound-signifiers...it is the diction of the language (1977: 182-183).

some of the larger internal politics of difference at work within Navajo social spaces today.

Figure 21. Radmilla Cody, album cover, “Precious Friends” 2007; Used with Permission

The remarkable story of Radmilla introduces the questions of Navajo identity, race, and phenotype that I take up in this chapter. These questions also speak to a larger politics of sameness and difference that is the subject of this dissertation. How, I ask, is social belonging determined for and by Navajo citizens, and why does it matter? What are the different ways in which inclusion and exclusion are performed, and where do blood quantum and racial admixture fit into this assessment? With these questions in mind, I examine three principal definitions
of Navajo social citizenship and belonging—definitions based on matrilineal clanship, phenotypic and “cultural” criteria. While legal citizenship in the Navajo Nation bounds these other categories and applies to the individuals, including Radmilla, who populate my pages throughout, I argue that social citizenship—that which exists over and above legal citizenship—also matters. Legally, Navajo forms of belonging are calculated through a combination of a $\frac{1}{4}$ minimum blood quantum and having at least one parent enrolled in the tribe (Spruhan 2008: 5, 11).27 These criteria are then measured and double-checked against the 1940 B.I.A. “base roll” for the Navajo tribe. By contrast, the criterion of clanship depends on the mother being Navajo, in which case the child takes her clan and becomes Navajo. There are also definitions of Navajoness that rely primarily on one’s phenotype (physical appearance) and degree of Indian blood possessed in assessing how Navajo someone is or is thought to be. Finally, there is the way of being Navajo by virtue of cultural knowledge, and in particular through speaking in one’s heritage language and singing country music as a man, two themes I expand upon in Chapters Four and Five. Within this third, “cultural” definition, place of residence is often also considered a salient index of being Navajo.

27 As per a 1953 resolution passed by the Navajo Nation Council:
“The membership of the Navajo Nation shall consist of the following persons:
(a) All persons of Navajo blood whose names appear on the official roll of the Navajo Tribe maintained by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as of the date of adoption of this constitution, provided, however, that corrections may be made in said roll for a period of ten years hereafter.
(b) Any person who is at least of one-fourth (1/4) degree Navajo blood, but who has not been previously been enrolled as a member of the Tribe, is eligible for membership and enrollment.
(c) Children born to any enrolled member of the Navajo Tribe subsequent to the adoption of this constitution shall automatically become members of the Navajo Tribe, provided they are at least of one-fourth degree Navajo blood” (quoted in Spruhan 2008: 5).
Because of these multiple, overlapping and often competing definitions of Navajoness, Navajo identity becomes a plural, contested entity which works across at least three crisscrossing axes over and above the legal citizenship that is already in place for most Navajos.\(^\text{28}\) Taking my cue from Maynor Lowery’s observation that “the category of “Indian” itself shifts, both over time and within moments and conversations” (Maynor Lowery 2010: xv), I focus ethnographically on how Navajoness as a category also shifts; this process is mirrored through daily discourse and also historically through the administrative record. Thus, in the context of today’s Navajo Nation, while one’s citizenship in the strict legal sense may not be questioned—having the minimum blood quantum or not is fairly cut and dried—one’s Navajo identity, cultural authenticity and “social citizenship” as a Navajo often are.

Defined as a form of extralegal citizenship, “social citizenship” is the affective part of civic belonging and includes the right to earn a living and the hope/expectation that one’s history will be commemorated and acknowledged in public monuments and statues. Thus, in this analysis I focus on identities that get formed around race and blood—the latter defined in this chapter as both a biological substance but also symbolically deployed by my interlocutors to connote ideas of heritage, genetics and as an intangible “essence” of Indianness—and the way these identities conjoin to create (or marginalize) forms of Navajo social citizenship.

\(^{28}\) I am grateful to anthropologist Jean Dennison for bringing this distinction to my attention.
In her monograph (2002), northern Athabaskan anthropologist Phyllis Ann Fast discusses the way Alaskan Athabaskans use various and fragmented ethnic tropes—namely racial purity, bloodedness, linguistic knowledge and place of residence—as a cultural litmus test for determining authenticity within the small village of Gwichyaa Zhee. Ultimately viewing these tropes as a lose-lose sum game because no one can ever measure up to the standards created, Fast cites the way language, race and place of residence in particular serve as legitimizers of authentic Gwich’in identity. She observes, “Each of these labels is used by Athabascans to exclude or shun each other. At best they are tools of a political armature used against outside intervention. At worst, they destroy morale and relations between family members and friends” (2002: 23).

Building on Fast’s concept of “ethnic tropes,” I focus here on how tropes of Navajo cultural distinctiveness are employed by Navajo citizens to create what Salamishah Tillet has called “civic estrangement” from the Navajo Nation (2009: 125). From this vantage point, Radmilla’s reign as a fully fluent, bilingual and biracial Miss Navajo shows us, on the one hand, the ambivalence with which Navajos today view the importance of place of residence, language and cultural knowledge as criteria for Navajo belonging, and the need to have a certain amount of Navajo blood (over ¼) and look prescriptively “Navajo” and not “black,” on the other.

In keeping with Radmilla’s very public persona, I have focused primarily on publicly available sources, namely newspaper editorials, public websites, radio interviews and professional recordings of Radmilla’s music. I use these sources as examples of the complicated ways in which blood is used as a multipart index of
phenotype, race, the ability to speak Navajo and is also used to indicate one’s “possession” of a Navajo identity more broadly. Moreover, each of these definitions represent both insider (Navajo) and outsider (non-Navajo) perspectives on Navajoness, such that community-internal and community-external definitions are tangled up with and often mutually inform one another. As Maynor Lowery\(^\text{29}\) notes in the case of Lumbees determining their own Indian identity, criteria for determining Indianness “had kinship and place at their foundations,” but over time, other “layers accumulated as the internal and external conversations changed” (2010: xiv). Thus, my Navajo interlocutors often link “culture”—a term introduced by community-external anthropologists which was then internalized and became part of local discourse—with ideas and knowledge about one’s Navajo “tradition.” Such usages, which conflate ideas of blood with appearance and blood with race (“blood race”), also explicitly contradict more recent anthropological understandings of race as a social construction;\(^\text{30}\) the idea of a “blood race” also goes against the Boasian idea that race, culture and language do not necessarily go hand in hand.

I conclude by discussing how definitions of Navajoness that rely on blood, language and phenotype are often an internalization and transmutation of federal Indian policy’s definitions of Indianness rather than emic or pre-colonial Navajo categories of belonging \textit{per se}. Instead, I argue that these categories are a partial

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\(^{29}\) Formerly Malinda Maynor.

\(^{30}\) The American Anthropological Association’s “Project Race,” for example, states that “physical variations in the human species have no meaning except the social ones that humans put on them” (Audrey Smedley, “AAA’s Statement on Race,” 5/17/1998, [http://www.understandingrace.org/about/statement.html](http://www.understandingrace.org/about/statement.html), accessed 2/22/11).
product and carry-over of the anxiety and fear created by the federal Indian policy of (the ominously named) “termination,” a program from the 1950s which “terminated” certain Indian tribes that were no longer considered culturally and phenotypically distinct enough as Indians. Similar to what Sturm shows in the Cherokee Nation context (2002: 3), in this way Navajos have internalized larger settler-state, non-Indian social constructions of blood, nation and what makes one “authentically” Indian.

At the same time, through these discussions of belonging and social citizenship, Navajos are revealing a legitimate anxiety about maintaining cultural continuity in the face of sometimes devastating cultural loss and undeniable language shift (House 2002; Webster 2009). The diversity of responses to both Radmilla’s blackness and to her own wealth of “cultural” knowledge, broadly defined, is a reflection of radically differing views within the Navajo citizenry about how to best confront and make whole such losses in the twenty-first century. Thus,

31 One of the most destructive periods in federal Indian policy, Termination, occurred between 1954-61. With this policy, the federal government decided to end its trust relationship with certain tribes that it no longer considered distinct American Indian nations. Initially run by the mastermind behind Japanese internment camps during World War II, Dillon Myer, beginning in 1954 the government moved tribal land from trust status to privatized land, changing individual tribes from the legal status of Indian to non-Indian (Deloria 1969: 61). Factors that determined “readiness” for termination included “cultural distinctiveness,” socioeconomic status, and “race.” As a result of Termination the idea that tribal citizens are a racial category needing to show “cultural distinctiveness” lives on in the minds of many American Indian tribes today (Valerie Lambert, class notes from “American Indian Societies,” “Termination,” 9/19/07). As a “treaty tribe,” The Navajo Nation was never directly threatened with termination, although there were attempts by states to take jurisdiction via Public Law 280 (Austin 2009: 311). As Lerma notes, “Navajo policy makers also successfully retained tribal jurisdiction during Termination era activity, including the attempt by states to take jurisdiction via Public Law 280” (Lerma 2010: 310-314).

32 However, language shift (in this case the shift from Navajo to English), as Lotman (1990) has noted, is not always a process of loss. Shift and translation can also be processes of additive cultural meaning.
while Navajos who have chosen to embrace Radmilla and the “mixture” she represents can be seen, on the one hand, as reverting to pre-colonial, local epistemologies of kinship for assessing citizenship and belonging, on the other hand these views can also be seen as reflecting more recent settler-state policies of multiculturalism, racial inclusion and anti-essentialist notions of identity more broadly.

Blackness and Mixture in the American Southwest

The debate surrounding Radmilla reflects elements of dominant race-thinking in settler colonies\(^33\) such as the United States. The very concept of race, of course, dates in full force only to the 1800s as a method of rationalizing both Native conquest and widespread slavery of African Americans.\(^34\) In particular, discussions about Radmilla reveal how, to some Navajo Times readers, her African American blood indexed her primary identity as “black” and hence “less Navajo” or even non-Navajo, in this way following important precedents seen in U.S. racial politics. From this perspective, critics unwittingly used the “one-drop rule” or law of hypodescent, viz. that to have any African American blood means that you are culturally and socially considered to be black, in order to justify their perspective that Radmilla should be hailed as black rather than Navajo. In this way, her black identity served as the justification for exclusion from a very public role in Navajo civic life.

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\(^33\) “Settler colonialism” and “settler states” are terms used by Beckett (1982), Povinelli (2002) and Cattelino (2008) to describe the process of colonialism specific to nations that were settled on lands already inhabited by sizable indigenous populations before “discovery.” These terms are used to apply to the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and sometimes Scandinavia.

\(^34\) See Smedley, [http://www.understandingrace.org/about/statement.html](http://www.understandingrace.org/about/statement.html), accessed 2/22/11).
Moreover, Radmilla’s critics were following a racial paradigm in which Indian-white admixture and Indian-black admixture are understood in dissimilar and contradictory terms. In the case of Miss Navajo past and present, Indian-white contestants (and also Indian-Asian contestants, both of which existed prior to Radmilla’s reign), are considered to be “Navajo,” while Indian-black contestants are understood to be “black.” In this way, blackness subsumes Navajoness and Navajoness subsumes both whiteness and Asianness. As anthropologist Thomas Biolsi notes, the one drop rule has the “effect of producing discrete, mutually exclusive, “black” and “white” [and Indian] races in the social and legal imaginaries. It is, in a classificatory sense, easy to be black; one cannot be a little bit “colored,” since any amount of “black blood” makes one black” (Biolsi in Nugent & Vincent, eds., 2005: 409).

Thus, blackness becomes the marked racial category while whiteness (or Asianness, in this case) remains unmarked and is merely subsumed and incorporated into Navajoness (Omi & Winant 1994; Sullivan 2006: 22). Extending this line of thinking, whiteness in relation to blackness is understood as a mere “absence of pigmentation”—a sort of blank slate—with blackness as its inverse (Roediger in Goldberg and Essed, eds. 2002: 326). In applying these categories to Indianness, then, within the logic of the one-drop rule, Indianness is seen as more vulnerable to subsumption within blackness than within whiteness (Welbern in Brooks, ed. 2002: 13; Biolsi in Nugent & Vincent, eds., 2005). As McMullen notes: “White ancestry is less compromising to “Indianness” than is Black descent” (McMullen in Brooks, ed. 2002: 13).
Offering a context for Navajo responses to Radmilla’s crowning, Jennifer Nez Denetdale (Diné) notes in response to one of her critics; “It seems that some Navajos...have conveniently forgotten that Navajos claim an ancestry that includes the adoption of and intermarriage with neighboring Pueblos and Mexicans” (Denetdale 2005: 19). Moreover, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Navajo Tribe count these “adopted clans” 35 as “Navajo” when it comes to issuing CIB (Certificate of Indian Blood) cards or tribal ID cards (8 ½ x 11 sheets of green paper, in this case) 36 to Navajo citizens. For example, someone with three non-adopted Navajo clans and one adopted clan such as “Naakai Dine’é” [the Mexican people clan] is considered 4/4 or a “full blooded” Navajo, according to her CIB card at least. In this way, blood quantum is more an arbitrary reflection of the period when it was implemented and bureaucratized than an accurate assessment of one’s actual “Navajo” blood or DNA.

There is also a long and deep history of specifically Indian-black mixture and intermarriage in the indigenous Americas. In the U.S., this history is exemplified through both maroon communities harbored by Native tribes in the southeast such as the Seminole Tribe of Florida (Cattelino 2008) and also through Native tribes

35 “Adopted” Navajo clans include the Mexican clan (Naakai Dine’é), the Tewa (Pueblo) clan (Naashhashí), the Mescalero Apache Clan (Naashgali Dine’é) and the Chiricahua Apache Clan (Chíshí Dine’é). “Adopted” clans thus are no longer considered separate ethnic groups from Navajos and are subsumed under the Navajo clan system, losing their separate status as an indicator of an ethnic or racial group and seen as merely one of many “Navajo” clans. Almost all of these adopted clans, however, came about as a result of contact, intermarriage and sometimes hostage-taking with the groups the clans are named after (Mexican, Tewa Pueblo, Apache, Zuni, Ute, Jemez Pueblo, Hopi, among others).

36 As of 11/17/2011, the Navajo Nation Division of Human Resources has begun issuing its own tribal ID cards. The card “lists the person’s tribal enrollment number and Navajo officials say it is an acceptable replacement for the federal Certificate of Indian Blood to prove tribal membership” (http://www.navajotimes.com/news/2011/1111/111711ids.php, accessed 2/06/2012).
using black as slaves such as in the case of the Cherokees and Choctaws. Interaction with individuals of African descent also probably occurred quite early in the history of Navajo-European contact, as some of the first Spanish explorers to the American southwest—Spain’s northernmost colony—were of mixed Hispanic and African descent (Brooks 2002; Smallwood 1999). Thus, a significant number of the conquistadors who conquered the Aztecs, Mayas, Incas, and the southwestern Indians were also African (Smallwood 1999: 19-20), resulting in prolonged contact and eventually some intermarriage between southwestern Native peoples and individuals of African descent.

However, as the colony matured as a protocapitalist, caste-conscious society, African descent tinged *limpieza de sangre* (purity of bloodlines) to such an extent that both Indians and Europeans suppressed memories and evidence of Black forebears (McDonald in Brooks, ed. 2002: 7). For example, by 1821 memories of African mixture in southwestern Pueblo communities are almost completely repressed in the historical record, such that in most Pueblo communities today there are virtually “no references to historical interaction with Africans and their descendants” (Ibid, 8). Beginning in 1866, Southwestern tribes—and, according to Arwin Smallwood, Navajos as well—also had extended contact with African Americans who served as “buffalo soldiers” during the so-called Indian Wars. The

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37 The alliances this mixture created are highlighted, for example, in a current exhibit (as of February 2011) at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C., called “IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas” (http://www.nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/indivisible/introduction.html, accessed 2/10/11).
38 Early conquistadors included Estevanico (Smallwood 1999) and the “Black Moor,” Esteban de Dorantes de Amazor. De Amazor was killed by members of Zuni Pueblo in 1539 (McDonald in Brooks 2002: 7).
buffalo soldiers, according to Smallwood, “fought Indians throughout the West, including the Apache, Navajo, Comanche, Crow, Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Sioux” (Smallwood 1999: 22). According to conversations I had while living on the Navajo Nation, there is still a collective memory and some resentment about the role of the Buffalo Soldiers in participating in American colonial expansion onto Navajo lands.39

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, prolonged contact between Navajos and African Americans has occurred in two primary places: on jobsites in urban areas—often cities targeted during Indian relocation, such as Phoenix, Arizona, Albuquerque, New Mexico and Denver, Colorado—and through the disproportionately high number of Navajos (and American Indians in general) who serve in the U.S. military alongside African Americans, beginning in significant numbers during World War II and continuing through the current U.S. occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan (Clevenger 2010: 9). Additionally, among Navajo youth today there is also an affinity for African American popular culture and cultural products, augmented perhaps by the global “political economy of cool”40 (Ito 2005: 212) associated with these products. This is seen in younger Navajos’ love of urban black clothing (in the late ’90s when I taught at a reservation high school this was Tommy Hilfiger in particular), and in the many teenagers and individuals, including Radmilla, who listen to (and perform) hip hop, R & B and rap music. This affinity is also heard on the local radio stations, such as KWRK (96.1 FM) out of Window Rock,

39 For example, interview with Candice Craig by author, July 21 2010.

40 Ito defines this as “a central source of cultural capital in kids’ peer relations. Spectacle and fun are mobilized as devices to enlist other kids and to demonstrate style and status, as well as a way of demarcating a kid-centered space that is opposed to the progress goals of adults” (2004: 212).
AZ, that specifically program these more black-identified music genres.\textsuperscript{41} Finally, for many of these youth—and young male Navajo rap groups in particular—expressing affinity for African American musical styles also seems to express an alignment with a greater power struggle against oppression by settler-state, dominant society and historical forces that goes beyond a specific identification with rights-based claims as American Indians.

At the same time, however, many of these teenagers are not reticent to use racial epithets, including use of the term \textit{zhinii}, and to question the Navajo identity of those who are part black.\textsuperscript{42} Thus, not unlike dominant American cultural attitudes toward African American culture more broadly, on the Navajo Nation there is sometimes an ambivalence towards African American people, on the one hand, and a strong affinity for African American cultural forms, on the other (Lott 1995).

Discussing this idea of racial affinities, anthropologist Charles Hale shows the phenomenon of “Anglo affinity” among the Miskitu Indians of Nicaragua, explaining that, in that context, an Anglo, North American affinity stems in part from pointed Miskitu opposition to the socialist Sandinista government and its historic mistreatment of Miskitus (Hale 1996: 12, 54, 58). In the Navajo context, cultural and racial affinities are exemplified through the way musical taste is often (though not always) divided up generationally. While many older Navajos—say, those forty and over—are deep and passionate fans of older “honky tonk” country music, suggesting

\textsuperscript{41} KWRK calls their formatting "hot adult contemporary."

\textsuperscript{42} This is something I frequently observed, for example, for the lone Navajo-black student at Rough Rock High School (total student body 224 students), where I worked as a social studies teacher during the 2000-2001 school year.
a rural Anglo musical affinity to some extent, the popularity of hip hop and rap among Navajo youth (teens and twenties) suggests more of an affinity for urban African American culture, instead. For example, there are now Navajo rap groups such as “Ethnic Natives“ out of Rock Point, Arizona, who rap in both urban English and in what my Navajo teacher refers to as “slangy” Navajo. On the other hand, heavy metal is also extremely popular among another subset of Navajos, mostly teenagers, but also including women such as one of my former Diné College students, a middle-aged mother of four. This again suggests a stronger affinity for an Anglo, specifically northern European culture and habitus. This widespread popularity of heavy metal music is evident in the sizable number of Navajo metal bands including “Clan-Destine,” “Segoreth,” and “Shadow Remain;” and the wide age appeal is seen, for example, in the fact that the drummer for “Shadow Remain,” Edmund Yazzie, is also a middle-aged Navajo Council Delegate for the Navajo Chapters of Church Rock/Iyanbito/Mariano Lake/Pinedale/Smith Lake and Thoreau. Yazzie plays in all Navajo band with his teenaged son, rhythm guitar player Darius Yazzie, another teenage guitar player, and a middle-aged bassist, Gerald Sleuth.43

Similarly, those who listen to “pan-Indian” musical forms, such as “peyote” music (a genre associated with the Native American Church) and powwow music, or

43 For more on Navajo metal music, see the forthcoming dissertation of Jagna Cyganik, a graduate student at the University of New Mexico Department of Anthropology (UNM, Albuquerque).
those that listen to traditional Navajo music such as “skip dance” and “round dance” songs, also represent a wide age range, from teenage to old-age.44

In the case of Radmilla’s voice, these racial affinities become somewhat muddied. On the one hand, her racial mixture and her singing style/vocal timbre attract younger Navajos who can identify with her inclusive definition45 of Navajoness and her embrace of cultural elements representing a world beyond a more racially conservative Navajo cultural purview. On the other hand, the genre of songs she sings—particularly the ones written by her uncle Herman—appeal to a mostly older Navajo audience for whom this genre remains salient and affectively rich. Finally, as seen on her website, Radmilla’s style of dress reflects her own cultural affinities and represents a mixture of African American, Anglo and Navajo influences (http://www.radmillacody.net/, accessed 5/06/11). For example, in her publicity shots she alternates between outfits sporting a checked beret, silver earrings, dark clothing and a sleeker, urban image; rural depictions of her in a felt cowboy hat and a western-style work shirt, hair down to her waist; and pictures of her in traditional Navajo attire (crushed velvet shirts and skirts), where her hair is tied back with white string in a traditional Navajo women’s hair bun (tsiitl’óó). In these images she is portrayed wearing a heavily beaded necklace of red coral, a

44 For example, my host parents, Jane and Kee Tom, both in their seventies, often liked to listen to peyote songs.
45 For example, in a 2/22/2011 interview titled “Black, Red and Proud” with Cynthia Gordy for the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis, Radmilla notes about her dual identity: “I spent more time in the Navajo community growing up because my grandmother raised me. When I would come into town in Flagstaff, Ariz., to see my mom, who had black friends, and my dad’s relatives, I was in the black community more. I went to high school in Flagstaff, and one day a friend was wearing a T-shirt with a big "X" on it. I said, "That’s cool! I should get one that says ‘R’ for Radmilla!" I didn’t know anything about Malcolm X. He told me to join the black student organization. I had a lot to educate myself about and embrace, because I come from two beautiful cultures” http://www.theroot.com/views/black-native-american?page=0,1, accessed 2/06/2012).
sacred Navajo stone, or carrying Navajo stirring sticks (ádistsiin), the personal sticks first used to mix one’s puberty cake (alkəːd) for the Kinaaldá.

In James Brooks’ edited volume, *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America* (2002), he opens with a passage about a Southern Ute matriarch, Euterpe Cloud Taylor, a member of the “Black Ute clan.” In her selective interpretations of her mixed Ute, Navajo, African American and Hispano “blood,” Brooks shows how Mrs. Taylor understands her African identity as a sort of primordial essence, a “blood” identity of which she is extremely proud, while her Native (Ute, Navajo) identity is understood as a more situational and negotiated “cultural” identity (Brooks 2002: 4). Thus, although the Southern Ute “Black Ute clan” is now “only 1/32 African American, while containing equivalent or larger percentages of Ute, Navajo, and Hispano ‘blood’” (2002: 5), Taylor’s black and Ute identities are at the forefront of her consciousness much more than her Navajo and Hispano “blood.” In this way, Taylor’s primary racial identities are not so much reflective of her actual blood or respective blood percentages; rather, they are the product of historical Ute—and perhaps larger settler state—categories of race and “racial technologies” (Biolsi in Nugent & Vincent eds., 2005: 400).

Similar to the artificial separation of Indian histories from black and Hispano histories in the Southern Ute context, Navajo Nation citizens also sometimes put an asymmetrical emphasis on African “blood” and Navajo “culture” over other more nuanced or integrated histories of racial mixture. This is seen, for example, in the ways that Radmilla’s voice is differentially described in what Herman refers to as her black “soul” and her Navajo “spirituality,” such that her voice is
compartmentalized into a “blood” identity, on the one hand, and a “cultural” identity on the other. In this particular paradigm, blackness is represented as “soul” and as interiority, that which lies inside in the “blood;” blackness is expressed from within and is then refracted through vocal timbre and singing style. Navajoness, on the other hand, is represented as “spiritual,” a culturally negotiated identity that is externally performed and heard through Radmilla’s traditional songs in the Navajo language. At this level, language is spiritually and socially acquired, blood is innate.

Asymmetrical and racialized understandings of identity also erase and elide other Navajo histories of mixture with Spaniards, Hispanos and, more recently, with Anglo Americans. Iberian contact and mixture is seen, for example, in the many Navajo words of Spanish origin, Spanish clothing styles, Spanish first and last names (last names Largo, Trujillo, García, Barbone, Ramone; first names of famous Navajo leaders such as Manuelito, Barboncito, Narbona, Delgadito). The very name “Navajo” comes from the Spanish for “razor,” a deceptive term that measured colonial views of the tribe as dangerous cutthroats. The Navajo also quickly adopted both the horse and sheep, brought by Spaniards to the American Southwest. These erasures indicate that some Navajos have also internalized the larger historical views of settler society towards African Americans today, using the one-drop rule to ascertain who is “black” through blood and who is “Navajo” through culture. Thus, as Denetdale notes in her discussion of the Cherokee

46 This particular portrayal of Navajoness as “spiritual” is in keeping with many stereotypes as Native peoples as inherently spiritual or as “first environmentalists.”

47 I distinguish Spaniard from Hispano by place of origin. Whereas Hispano refers to individuals of Spanish descent living in and raised in the American Southwest, Spaniard references those who come/came from Spain.
freedmen case, in which the freedmen have until recently\(^{48}\) been denied Cherokee citizenship by the Cherokee Supreme Court based on their mixture of Cherokee-black descent, “Just as Cherokees have responded to U.S. racism in ways that are unique to their own history and nation building, so too have Navajos reproduced, reinterpreted, and redeployed dominant race-thinking” (Denetdale 2006: 19-20). As reporter C. Thomas noted upon Radmilla’s crowning as Miss Navajo, “Many Navajos who never considered themselves to be racist have searched their souls upon seeing Radmilla” (Thomas 1998: 2).

At the same time, however, it is also crucial to recognize the importance of historicizing race within more local and nuanced indigenous contexts, understanding racial politics as more than a simple reflection of larger settler-state race technologies. Thus, while undoubtedly the one-drop rule is at play in some Navajo assessments of Radmilla’s identity, we must also maintain a “willingness to look within local societies for the micropolitics that give racial difference (or mixture) an autonomy within that field of power relations, whether at the level of family, tribe, or village” (Brooks 2002: 7). That is, as anthropologists we need to also look at more local histories and understandings of race, identity and social belonging by analyzing specifically Navajo interpretations of mixture in order to ultimately determine Radmilla’s—and other mixed blood individuals—senses of belonging to the Navajo Nation.

\(^{48}\) This decision was reversed as of September 2011 and the Freedmen were allowed to vote in the most recent Cherokee Nation tribal election (http://www.cnn.com/2011/10/19/opinion/stremlau-cherokee-vote/index.html, accessed 2/08/2012).
For example, Navajos consider themselves to be a highly "blooded" tribe compared to many other U.S. tribes. Supporting this claim, Lloyd Lee (Diné) notes: “In the 2000 U.S. Census, 298, 197 people identified themselves as Navajo, of which 269,202 identified as only Navajo and no other racial group” (Lee 2006: 79-80; italics mine). The net effect of this “total social fact” (Mauss 1989 [1923-24]) is that blood quantum, Navajo Nation citizenship and a relatively large population of Navajo speakers are naturalized as a given for many Navajos. Thus, from the perspective of other American Indian nations, Navajos in comparison are sometimes understood to have an abundance or even a “superfluity” (Mbembe 2004) of Navajo blood and Navajo speakers. Because the majority of enrolled Navajos (85.2%) have 1/2 Navajo blood or more and therefore exceed the minimum blood quantum of ¼ required by the tribe for Navajo citizenship, I argue here that the criteria for belonging often shift away from one’s percentage of Indian blood. Instead, as was the case with Radmilla, public attention often rests on other ethnic tropes of social belonging such as language or the need to look phenotypically Indian and not “black.” While “blood” is activated less frequently as a trope of belonging, “race” on the other hand gets activated more frequently, for example when Navajo racial “purity” is perceived as being under attack. Thus, examining the micropolitics of

49 Elaborating on Mauss’ definition, Sedgwick defines the total social fact as "an activity that has implications throughout society, in the economic, legal, political, and religious spheres" (Sedgwick 2002: 95).

50 Begay has compiled the following figures from the Navajo Office of Vital Records (NOVR) to support this claim: out of a total sample of 52,800 enrollees, as of 1998 (the most recent figures available) 37.8% of enrolled Navajos were listed as having a blood quantum of 4/4; 47.4% were listed as having a blood quantum between ½-31/32, and only 13.3% were listed as having a blood quantum of between 3/16-1/4 Navajo blood (Begay 2011: 24).

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racial difference in the Navajo case requires an understanding not only of the one-drop rule but also of Navajos as a highly “blooded” tribe with many citizens who are actively or passively fluent in the Navajo language.

In contrast, for many allegedly less “blooded” tribes (at least as this is determined by a CDIB card), blood often acts as the signifier par excellence of authentic Indianness and is fetishized as such (Sturm 2002). Here, “bloodedness” becomes coextensive with not only citizenship but also with ideas of Indian authenticity. In contrast, what I show here is how the specter of Navajo authenticity fixes its sights, instead, on less tangible tropes of cultural belonging which, in some ways, are even more delimiting and difficult to quantify or “prove” than one’s blood quantum. In this way, the anxiety to perform one’s Indianness for American Indians residing in the United States remains a constant, albeit, in the Navajo context, through transmuted forms and foci.

Readers Write In: Sovereignty, Representation and Affect

The questions of blood and belonging persisted through Radmilla’s saga, despite her tremendous talent and cultural knowledge. Several months after her crowning, some Navajos began publicly voicing concern about Radmilla’s “lack” of 100% Navajo blood and challenging her “legitimacy to represent the Navajo people” as their Goodwill Ambassador (Thomas 1998: 2). No one questioned her legal citizenship—she is indisputably enrolled as a citizen of the Navajo Nation—but rather, her social citizenship in the broadest sense: her right to be “listened to,” to claim an audience, and her ability to act as a phenotypically “representative” citizen
of the Nation. Following Balibar (1988), this is the distinction between "citizenship understood in its strict sense as the full exercise of political rights and in its broad sense as cultural initiative or effective presence in the public space (the capacity to be 'listened to' there)" (1988:724).

In applying this broader notion of citizenship to Radmilla, what Navajo citizens were calling into question was her Navajo "appearance" (or, according to some, lack thereof), how this should be "performed," and her ability to "accurately" represent the public face of Navajoness. In other words, the criteria that were activated in this context became her blood and her phenotype, over and above her enrollment as a Navajo citizen, ability to speak Navajo, or her "rez town" place of origin. Voiced most openly in letters to the editor in *The Navajo Times*, the main weekly newspaper to the Navajo Nation, what most concerned naysayers was the fact that Radmilla had African American blood and not, for example, the "blood" of Anglos or that of another southwestern tribe, such as Pueblos or Apaches. In this way, Radmilla's identity for some was not "culturally distinctive" enough while for others she looked "too distinctive," i.e. she didn't "look" Navajo in a very phenotypically prescriptive way. Given the clearly stated position that the Miss Navajo contest is less about one’s physical appearance and more about what one possesses “within” and the ability to externalize this knowledge through public performances of Navajo culture—areas in which Radmilla excelled most—Radmilla and her supporters found this voiced resistance by self-purported “traditionalists” to be particularly ironic and disconcerting. Moreover, although at times representing themselves as the Navajo majority, these naysayers were actually only
a handful of very vocal individuals, all of whom live on the reservation. What followed in the wake of these comments, however, was a remarkable and in depth Navajo nationwide debate about what constitutes tradition, being Navajo, and the role that blood and language in particular play in configuring the meaning of belonging for citizens of the Navajo Nation today. Revealing the large number of Navajos who live off-reservation (approximately 1/3 of total population) and yet actively participate in Navajo civic life, many of these letter writers and Radmilla supporters hail from urban centers such as Phoenix, Albuquerque and Denver.

Radmilla’s supporters, the majority of Navajos, insisted on Radmilla’s right to belong and represent using a variety of broader and more flexible definitions of Navajoness not premised on phenotype and blood. For many of these supporters, Navajoness is something one carries “on the inside” and is decoupled from one’s race or physical appearance (Thompson in Navajo Times, 29 January 1998: A-4).

And yet, Radmilla’s critics problematically shifted the focus back to ideas of a pure “blood race” and her citizenship as a Navajo, stating that suddenly ½ (50% blood quantum) isn’t “enough” to represent the external face of Navajoness, and then upped the ante by linking her crowning to an erosion of Navajo “tribal sovereignty”—defined as a bundle of inherent rights tribes use to assert control over land and citizenry and to determine their own internal affairs—a loaded and highly fraught term in Indian country in any context. In this way, naysayers too conveniently used sovereignty and blood quantum as a way to obfuscate their more general discomfort with her African American heritage in particular and ideas of Navajo racial plurality more broadly. Moreover, from this perspective, having the
“right” amount of Navajo blood becomes coextensive with having political
citizenship, such that, as in other tribes such as Cherokee Nation, Radmilla’s political
and racial identities became fused.

For example, in a controversial editorial entitled “Sense of Identity,” written
three months after Radmilla’s crowning, Orlando Tom of Blue Gap, Arizona, links the
erosion of Navajo sovereignty to the “genetic loss” of full-blooded Navajos on the
Navajo Nation, noting that “the erosion of Indian sovereignty...can be quite subtle”
and “can manifest itself in seemly [sic] innocent activities...as when the Navajo
Nation recently crowned Radmilla Cody as “Miss Navajo” (Tom in Navajo Times
[Window Rock], 13 December 1997: A-4).51 Using a line of thinking similar to that
of the Cherokee Nation in its resistance enrolling its former citizens known as the
Cherokee freedmen based on their non-Indian blood (Sturm 2002; discussed
ahead),52 Tom problematically couples Cody’s race to her citizenship as a Navajo
(Lambert 2007: 201) and stipulates his own criterion for the physical appearance of
Miss Navajo in the process. Critiquing the judges who selected Cody as Miss Navajo
and accusing them of being unable to grasp the significance of Indian sovereignty
and thus senselessly “giving it away,” he states: “When the Navajo people select a
person to represent their nation as “Miss Navajo” that person must possess the
appearance and physical characteristics of the Navajo people...It appears that those

51 I spell Tom’s argument out in detail because I want the reader to have a good sense of the specifics,
since the ensuing letters were often in direct response to one specific part of his fairly long letter.
52 This perspective, representative of some but not all Cherokee, often links the need to have
Cherokee blood in order to enrolled. It is also an issue of tribal sovereignty and tribes having the
right to determine their own membership rules. For example, Jodie Fishinghawk, a Cherokee Nation
citizen who is against the freedmen gaining voting rights, stated that: "It’s an Indian thing, we do not
want non-Indians in the tribe, our Indian blood is what binds us together"
judges who selected Miss Cody have problems with their own sense of identity” (Navajo Times, Ibid). Calling inter-racial unions, such as the one that created Radmilla, a form of “ethnic genocide,” Tom states that “The very essence of the genetic code which is passed down from generation to generation...makes us who we are" (Ibid). Finally, Tom finishes by linking assumptions about race to assumptions about gender and beauty, noting that Radmilla should in essence “do what she does best,” which is, according to Tom, focusing on her “looks” and being proud of her black identity instead of her Navajo one. Refusing to refer to her as “Miss Navajo,” he notes: “Miss Cody is a very pretty black lady, and this is the aspect of her life she needs to focus on, and to be proud of” (Ibid.). Employing more prescriptive definitions about the social role of beauty pageants and their queens, Tom’s tirade implies that Miss Navajo winners are simply dabbling in politics but shouldn’t be trusted to engage in the real politics of politically representing and acting as ambassador for a Native Nation.

More importantly, Tom specifically uses blood quantum—a discourse used by many other tribes but less by Navajos for reasons previously explained—in a way that seems to reflect an underlying discomfort with specifically Navajo-black admixture. Portraying blackness as a primordial, non-malleable “blood” essence, Tom suggests that Radmilla focus on this inner identity to the exclusion of her more malleable, Navajo “cultural identity.” Language, from his perspective, is something that can be learned and is socially acquired. Blackness, however, is inherited and as such is considered to be inalienable. And, although Radmilla is proud of her African American heritage, she did not know her father growing up and identifies first as a
Navajo, and second as an African American. In other words, Tom was not so much concerned with Cody being a “half blood” (Strong & Van Winkle 1996: 558) as with her being partly black, thus employing the one-drop rule in his assessment of her racial identity. Thus, in calling for racial purity in the name of blood quantum, Tom conflates certain kinds of blood with physical appearance and also with “race,” specifically.

In keeping with Tom’s perspective, then-Navajo Nation President Albert Hale also publicly questioned Radmilla’s biracial heritage and allegedly “harangued pageant officials about the unseemliness of Cody being crowned Miss Navajo (Hale in Weyermann 1999: 166, italics mine).” In this case, we can understand Hale’s use of the term “unseemliness” as similar to Tom’s euphemistic reference to blood quantum; “unseemliness” becomes a linguistic code for racial difference, in this case the admixture of Navajo and African American blood.

In response to the strong statements of Tom, Hale and a few others, in the following weeks and months a deluge of readers—Navajo and non-Navajo, young, old, on reservation and off—wrote back in defense of themselves and Radmilla, using headings such as “Disturbed by Racial Attack,” “Equally Navajo and Proud,” “Interracial Marriages have Deep Ties,” “Less than 100%,” and “Sovereign Racism.” These letters and their headings attest to both the diversity of The Navajo Times’ readership and a general high level of engagement and climate of healthy debate in

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53 Debra Weyermann, ”Little Big Woman: Meet the Real Miss America, the Queen of the Navajo Nation,” Mirella, October 1999.
Navajo Nation political life; letters also point to the many ways in which ideas of race and belonging are not seen as given natural facts and are actually highly debated and contested in Navajo communities today. For example, resisting the tendency to use 4/4 blood quantum as the litmus test for Native identity, Daphne Thomas of Leupp, Arizona, insists that racial mixture is part and parcel of the Navajo experience: “If he [Tom] thinks that all Navajos are full-bloods, he’s mistaken. Where do you suppose all the last names of Navajos who reside in Navajoland that are spelled in Spanish originate from? There have been many interracial marriages among Navajos with the Spanish, Paiutes, Utes and Hopis in the last century,” such that, “genetically, a significant portion of the Navajo population has become a mixture of many tribal groups” (Thomas in *Navajo Times*, 30 December A-4).

Similarly, Tish Ramirez of Holbrook, Arizona (a reservation border town), in response to another controversial attack on Radmilla by Leona Begay of Kirtland, New Mexico (26 March, 1998: A-4), states that “A 100% full-blooded Navajo does not exist...Bi-racial children are not a product of the 90’s. Those very traditional Navajos who made the long walk to Ft. Sumner brought back some bi-racial children. I think their mothers loved them all the same” (Ramirez in *Navajo Times*, 16 April 1998: A-4). Ramirez goes on to call Tom out for what she sees as his

54 This climate of civic engagement and debate was also evident in another more recent event in Navajo political life (November 2010) with the campaign for the Navajo Nation President, which was decided between Lynda Lovejoy/Earl Tulley and Ben Shelley/Rex Lee Jim (Ben Shelley/Rex Lee Jim won).

55 Data show this racial diversification is especially true for the Navajo Nation, where according to demographer Yolnya Begay (*Diné*), 49.1% of Navajo births reported in New Mexico between 1990-2003 were to babies of “inter-tribal and inter-racial” partnerships (Begay 2011: 4). Thus, “although the *Diné* population is increasing over time, there is a parallel trend of racial diversification” (Begay 2011: 24).
skewed racial politics, and accuses him of applying the one-drop rule to Radmilla’s racially mixed background. “I don’t believe that the racist attitudes being expressed towards Ms. Navajo are really about being “bi-racial” as it is about her being of African American descent” (Ibid.).

Other readers also criticize Tom for using sovereignty as the red herring for his racial myopia. In “Sovereign Racism,” Sean Walker, a non-Navajo, of the NAACP, Gallup Branch, criticizes both President Hale and Orlando Tom, stating: “We know all too well that racism and discrimination can start in something as subtle as...“preserving Navajo sovereignty” (Walker in Navajo Times, 22 January 1998: A-4). Similarly, Abasta states that “In an assimilated tribe, it’s ridiculous for Mr. Tom to hide behind the blanket of Indian Sovereignty as a means of justifying his racially biased attack” (Abasta in Navajo Times, 30 December 1997: A-4).

Emphasizing Cody’s strong command of Navajo, letter writers also reinforce the perceived connection between being Navajo and speaking Navajo. These comments also reveal a concern for the rapid language loss among younger Navajos in particular. Ryan Battles of Window Rock, Arizona, for example, notes the decline in Navajo speakers and criticizes Navajo parents for not teaching Navajo in the home. “It is commendable that the Navajo language and culture are being taught in the schools because otherwise the knowledge would disappear quickly into the night...The last time I check I am acquainted with only three people under the age of 56

Ironically, speaking Navajo is something Orlando Tom disparages as simply “learned” behavior and less legitimate than one’s “innate” characteristics such as blood. For example, he states: “Language, weaving, beading and being able to dance is all culturally correct in being part of a tribe, but nonetheless, it is still learned behavior” (Orlando Tom, “Sense of Identity,” 12/23/1997, A-4, italics mine).
who have learned the Navajo language at home. Miss Radmilla Cody is one of those three” (Battles in *Navajo Times*, 2 April 1998: A-4).

Another theme in readers’ letters is the expectation that those with “full blood” should be able to speak better and more fluent Navajo than those with only “partial” blood. As such, readers observe that Radmilla breaks this expected linguistic mold and should be applauded for (literally) speaking against these expectations. Paradoxically however, in an effort not to focus exclusively on blood and blood quantum, these comments end up substituting one type of essentialism—blood—for another—language. For example, Dorothea Lynch of Tempe, Arizona, wrote in to add that Radmilla “puts a lot of our “full bloods” to shame because many do not talk or understand the language” (Lynch in *Navajo Times*, 15 January 1998: A-4).

Tom and Begay’s controversial letters prompted others to join the debate about Navajo identity. Readers remind Tom that Radmilla is Diné because as a Navajo woman her clan is inherited from her mother, and others state that “she is a Navajo on the inside as well as in her blood” (Thompson in *Navajo Times*, 29 January 1998: A-4). In this metaphor, then, Thompson conflates blood, something which often can’t be seen and is unique to each individual, with genetic material, something which can be seen and is passed down from parent to child, insisting that being a Navajo is what’s on the inside and “blood” or what you “see” is what’s on the

\[\text{57 The ways in which language becomes coextensive with blood is a theme I take up more fully in the following chapter (Chapter Four), ““They Call me a Generic Navajo:’ Language, Identity and Social Citizenship.”}\]
outside. Speaking against the many ways in which blood is portrayed in greater American society as innate and that which lies deep within (heard in expressions such as “it’s in the blood”), blood in Thompson’s metaphor is something external and even superficial: blood is simply artifice. Reversing Herman Cody’s metaphor where blackness is inside and Navajoness is outside, Navajoness here is interior—the “geno-song” or that which is “deep down” (Barthes 1977: 182)—and speech, as its external corollary, is merely the outward form or expression of thought (Witherspoon 1977: 29-32).

Finally, readers critique Tom and Begay for mentioning blood quantum at all. These Navajos point out that notions of blood, race and nation are white imports to Indian Country and not emic Navajo cultural categories to begin with (Sturm 2002; Purdue 2005; Dennison forthcoming). Echoing the work of various anthropologists, Rick Abasta of Saint Michaels, Arizona, opines “Quantitative measuring of Indian blood was originally a means by the Federal Government to control and maintain dominance over Indian people during the Allotment Act”58 (Abasta in Navajo Times, 30 December 1997: A-4). S. Nathan Shorty of Ganado, Arizona, wrote in to give a definition of Navajoness that is also antithetical to blood quantum and which criticizes understanding Navajo identity as a performative “lifestyle,” a trendy costume that can arbitrarily be put on and then conveniently discarded, willy-nilly. In “Indian and Proud,” he writes, “Being Navajo is not a lifestyle, nor is it a choice...Our ancestors did not wake up one morning and say “I think I’ll be Navajo

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58 In fact, as legal scholar Paul Spruhan points out that, blood quantum was invented much earlier than this and was actually used in pre-colonial times in Europe as a means of determining royalty. It was then brought to the American colonies (Spruhan 2006).
today!" (Shorty in Navajo Times, 22 January 1998: A-4). Shorty goes on to criticize the way in which some Navajos, from his perspective, rely on Native “paraphernalia” or a C.D.I.B. (Certificate Degree of Indian Blood) card as a way to validate being Navajo:

I have met many people who have different ideas of what being Navajo is. Who spend their waking hours attempting to live a certain “lifestyle” made trendy. They wake up, decide which moccasins to wear, which choker with beads to put on, and what turquoise to put in their hair, Why? Because they assume that being Navajo is a lifestyle. That it is something that can be attained by an Indian blood certificate [C.D.I.B.] or a dream catcher that hangs from a rear view mirror” (Ibid; italics mine).

Shorty thus criticizes the idea that Indian identity is even linked to one’s blood quantum, or indeed that Indian identity can be externally performed at all (through one’s clothing, jewelry, or a dream catcher in one’s car); like Derrick Thompson, for Shorty “being Navajo” is a feeling, an affective identity; it is an ineffable “essence” you either have inside you, or you don’t.

As the diversity of readers’ age, gender and geographic locations attests, there is no single working definition of Navajoness nor of what makes one authentically “Navajo.” Although certainly blood and phenotype play a role in readers’ responses, these criteria are clearly less important for most readers than the affective attachment one has to one’s Navajo “culture” and what one carries “on the inside,” although what constitutes this inside is itself highly contested. In this way, “Navajoness” is similar to conceptions of Radmilla’s voice, discussed earlier: it is interior, something which originates in and emanates from the body, but is made
external and audible through speaking and singing. Like the human voice, Navajo identity is both publicly performative and privately intimate.

Similarly, while letters to the editor are not necessarily a representative sample, the large number of writers around the Radmilla “debate” was telling. The issue was clearly a social trigger point of sorts, allowing readers to discuss the explosive and yet for that very reason sometimes avoided question of race and belonging. Indeed, the back-and-forth tapped into underlying anxieties surrounding ideas of nationhood, racial purity and the fear that treaty rights may indeed be “taken away” if Navajos (or other Indian tribes) no longer “look” Navajo enough (Lambert class notes, fall 2007). All of these anxieties, for example, are very evident in Tom’s “sense of identity” commentary where Navajos are either fully blooded or fully assimilated into dominant society and thus will “never be part of anything specific” (Tom in Navajo Times, 13 December 1997: A-4).59 And, although citizenship in a tribal nation, as Lambert, Sturm, Purdue and others have made explicit, is a political affiliation—a nationality—rather than an ethnicity or a race (Lambert 2010),60 since termination an underlying fear often remains among Native communities that federal criteria for indigenous citizenship will shift from the first category of nationality back to the second of race. In other words, although

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59 This idea of specificity versus being “generic” is an important theme I take up in the following chapter, Chapter Four.

60 For example, in a presentation at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association, Lambert noted that American Indians aren’t—and perhaps never have been—mono-racial, mono-ethnic or mono-national; like the rest of the U.S. nation, Navajo and other American Indian nationals represent a complex, multifaceted and heterogeneous citizenry (Lambert, “Anthropologizing Indians,” AAA panel “Native Voices, Disciplined Practices,” 11/19/2010).
sometimes portrayed as such in popular and academic literature, tribal sovereignty isn’t contingent upon cultural distinctiveness.

Finally, this very public debate attested to Navajo willingness to openly engage in honest and sometimes painful dialogues about the very real challenges of retaining one’s Navajoness in the face of daily reminders and incursions of non-Navajo, settler society onto sovereign, Navajo reservation spaces. While certain letter writers above rely on an isomorphic definition of Navajo language and culture—i.e., Navajo language or Navajo blood works as a “diagnostic” of being Navajo, most sharply resist this inclination, insisting instead that “being Navajo” is a political citizenship and an affective identity, a nationality in the fullest sense. In understanding Navajoness today, then, many Navajo Times readers insist that these classic indices and diagnostics of Navajo “culture” be muddied and unmoored from their historical and anthropological tethers, assessed by what you can’t hear or see as well as by what you can.

**Blood Fractions: Blood Quantum, Race and Nationality**

Ultimately, while Navajo “blood” is used less as a way to show Navajoness internally—between and among Navajos—it is also sometimes employed instead as a way to show Indianness externally, in comparison to tribal citizens of other nations. We can see this, for example, in a comment Arlondo made to me that, since

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61 This isomorphic understanding is what David Samuels calls a “transparent” approach to indexicality: “One could find a diagnostic of “a” culture in that culture’s expressions. Navajos spoke/speak Navajo, Cree spoke/speek Cree. Iroquois lived/live in longhouses, Pequots in wigwams, Navajos in hogans, Hopi in pueblos, and Cheyenne in teepees” (Samuels 2004a: 6).
I’m white and I’m from North Carolina, the band will market me as either Cherokee or Lumbee because, to him, citizens of those tribes “look white.”

In this sense, just as blackness always exists in relation to whiteness and to logics of white supremacy (Maynor Lowery 2010), ideas of Navajoness, too, are relational and are defined by their “others.” Just as the idea of “full blood” can only be quantified and exist in relation to the “half blood” or racially mixed individual of Indian heritage, Arlondo shows us in his story that Navajos use the idea of Cherokees and Lumbees—and the perception that they are less “blooded” and hence look “white”—as the foil against which Navajos can define themselves in specific times and places. But first, some background on how blood quantum in the United States came about.

Across Native America, blood has come to mean many other things besides one’s actual percentage of Indian blood—a disputable science to begin with based less on one’s actual percentage of “Indian” blood and more on what was or wasn’t selectively recorded in the administrative record at a given point in time. In this way the measuring of one’s percentage of Indian blood, since its invention and application in Native communities as early as 1705, has become a sort of empty

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62 For example, in the case of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Tribe in North Dakota, when the BIA first assessed and recorded “full bloods” in the late 1800s, most Chippewas had been intermarrying with French fur trappers for more than two hundred years, and thus were already quite racially mixed. What was determined as full blood is thus more a frozen slice of time in the administrative record, but blood quantum for subsequent generations of Chippewas is based on the blood quantum of their ancestors whose blood quantum was first recorded (Joni and Jordan Henry [Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa], ANT 225 class presentation, July 2010, Chinle, Arizona).

63 As Spruhan also notes, it is important to understand that the concept of blood quantum predates its application to individuals of mixed-race ancestry and was used by the British, for example, for purposes of inheritance for their fellow Britons. Thus, “the use of fractional amounts of blood to describe ancestry long predates the question of mixed-race ancestry” (Spruhan 2006: 4).
signifier in many Native communities that often stands in for both everything and nothing (Spruhan 2006: 4-5).

As we know from her research, Circe Sturm shows us how the concept of blood, like language and phenotype in the Navajo context, has been used to both unify and thoroughly divide Cherokee communities. Blood, Sturm explains, is treated as something both metaphorical and “real,” and is often fractionated down to the smallest amount. And, as with many other tribes, CDIB cards for some citizens of the Cherokee Nation act as important validators not just of enrollment in a federally recognized tribe but also of cultural “authenticity,” knowledge and sense of belonging within a community. In this way, citizenship becomes conflated with phenotype; the more Cherokee one “looks,” the more Cherokee one is assumed to be by other Cherokees (and perhaps non-Cherokees, as well). In contrast to the Kahnawake Mohawk Nation, for example, whose citizens must have 50% Mohawk blood or more in order to be enrolled, citizens of the Cherokee Nation determine tribal membership based on ancestry or lineal descent from a base roll, rather than through a minimum blood quantum. This means that the citizens of the Cherokee Nation are a much more racially heterogeneous population than tribes with higher blood quantum requirements, say, the Navajo Nation or a New Mexico pueblo such as Taos Pueblo.

Defined as “a numerical percentage given to one’s mix of Indian and non-Indian ancestry,” blood quantum today is occasionally conflated with ideas of “culture” and Native authenticity (Dennison forthcoming: 8). As Sturm notes, “At

64 In this case, the Dawes Roll of 1906.
the heart of [racial ideologies] are the sociohistorical categories of blood, color, and race, which are conflated with each other and with culture at national and local levels in a variety of sociopolitical discourses and legislation” (Sturm 2002: 2). In this way, those who publicly “represent” the nation—Cherokee tribal leaders, for example—are chosen for their Cherokee “appearance” but do not actually reflect actual blood demographics of most Cherokee communities today, such that “the public face of the Cherokee Nation reflects not the tribe’s demographic reality but its imagined center” (Ibid: 107).

Further, American Indians are the only group in the United States whose blood is quantified as a prerequisite to being counted as a member of an ethnic or racial group (Sturm 2002: 3). This is seen, for example, in the case of college-level affirmative action programs, in which applicants “who identify themselves as Native American are required to provide documents proving their tribal affiliation. This is not the case for other underrepresented groups” (Ibid: 3). And, although tribes, not the B.I.A., today determine their own citizenry, Sturm also points out that the use of blood quantum as a measurement for Native identity was first systematically implemented by a federal entity (the B.I.A.) during the period known as Allotment. As anthropologist Jean Dennison (Osage) has noted, “From this moment [Allotment] onward the federal government created a connection between being

65 Most scholars today refute this claim, noting that blood

66 The Allotment Act, also known as the Dawes Act, was implemented in 1887. As Dennison notes, “The Federal Government currently recognizes the sovereign right of American Indian Nations in the continental United States to determine their own citizenship. During the period of allotment, however, when private property in the form of land was at stake, the federal government did attempt to take over authority for deciding who was an Indian” (Dennison forthcoming: 8).
Indian and having “Indian blood,” a substance that was understood as fundamentally different from both white and black blood” (Dennison, forthcoming: 8). These federal criteria, one argument goes, have been internalized and naturalized by tribes themselves, themselves “dupes” of the colonial process, such that today many tribes such as the Navajo choose to utilize a “minimum blood quantum” as a method for reckoning tribal citizenship.

The way in which Indian blood is fetishized for different ends, described by Biolsi as one half of the “two-part” test to prove one’s Indianness, is also seen in perhaps its most basic form in the present-day phenomenon known as the CDIB (Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood) or CIB card. This card, issued by tribes themselves or by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and owned by most card-carrying citizens of a U.S. federally recognized tribe, quantifies one’s “Indian blood” with amazing specificity, but completely ignores Anglo, African American or any other “non-Indian” blood (Sturm 2002: 87; 90; 109). Thus, “While the various tribal connections are stated with mathematical precision, the remaining non-Indian blood quantum is not provided” (Sturm 2002: 87). Mohawks of Canada’s

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67 LaVelle and Kauanui, for example, strongly refute this claim that blood quantum is merely a reproduction of colonial policy. In his work, LaVelle works to “untie the use of blood quantum from the ongoing federal project of indigenous dispossession” (LaVelle in Kauanui 2008: 89).

68 Although tribes determine tribal membership themselves, blood is still a factor regardless of how citizenship is reckoned, whether through a minimum blood quantum or through the use of “lineal descent.” In other words, with some notable exceptions including the freedmen, one must be able to prove one’s possession of some amount of Indian blood in order enroll as a member of a federally recognized tribe.

69 On the Navajo Nation this is referred to as a CIB card.

70 As noted in the introductory chapter, for American Indians in the United States a government-issued CDIB card is first required in order to receive one’s tribally issued ID card.
Kahnawake Reserve, for example, are issued a CDIB card from their own tribal government specifying their “Indian blood” with incredible (if sometimes inaccurate) degrees of precision, such that Lauren in the film Club Native is issued a tribal I.D. card reads that she is “90.34% Mohawk” (Deere 2008). To someone like cultural critic Paul Chaat Smith, CDIB cards represent “the lonely angst that comes from being, since the fall of apartheid in South Africa, the only people on earth who walk around with government cards that verify our percentage of blood, which we’re happy to present to anyone who asks” (Smith 2009: 65). At the same time, CDIB cards are only a measurement of one’s Indian “blood” from the last 100 years (or less) and a “full blood” even in 1890 was often someone of mixed descent who lacked a translator to inform documenting officials.

Navajo Iterations of Blood

Indeed, in the Navajo context these calculations are often far from reflecting one’s actual degree of Indian blood, if such a thing can indeed be measured. For example, a child’s degree of Indian blood is calculated based on lineal descent but relies on the birth certificate as the starting point to calculate a child’s blood quantum (Begay 2011: 21). This means that, if the [Navajo] father is absent at the birth or chooses not to sign the birth certificate for any other reason, the blood

71 For example, the Navajo Office of Vital Records uses a base roll created by the Department of the Interior from 1940 to establish lineal descent for tribal enrollment today (Begay 2011: 5).

72 For more on this, see Yolynda Begay, “Historic and Demographic Changes that Impact the Future of the Dine and Developing Community-Based Policy,” B.A. Thesis, University of New Mexico, 2011: 5.
quantum of the child will be calculated using the mother’s Indian blood alone. Thus, “the child may legitimately be a full-blooded Navajo, but due to the father being absent, the child is considered one-half or less depending on the mother’s blood quantum” (Begay 2011: 22). Thus, bureaucratic mechanisms for measuring Indian blood are often far from being biologically or administratively accurate.

At its worst, this process of quantifying one’s Indian blood to determine social belonging can be deeply divisive in Indian communities, what journalist Marc Anthony Rolo (Bad River Band, Ojibwe) has elsewhere termed a “unique form of branding” (Cornsilke et. al 2006). In dividing the “culturally authentic full bloods” from the “assimilated mixed bloods” (Sturm 2002: 18), blood quantum can be the salt in the wound to what Mohawk filmmaker Tracey Deer calls “the secret ugliness of belonging” (Deere 2008).

Criticizing the use of blood quantum as primary determinant for tribal citizenship, Dennison notes that using blood (jus sanguinis) as opposed to, say, territory or birthplace (jus soli), to determine tribal citizenship can also actively work to “limit the future of a polity” (Dennison, forthcoming: 3). This is because when territory and citizenship don’t overlap—i.e., when Osage citizens live away from their Oklahoma reservation in California or elsewhere—it becomes easier for the federal government to argue that individuals are either no longer culturally distinct as “Indians,” or citizens of political entities accorded unique treaty rights and responsibilities by the United States government. Therefore they are no longer “entitled” to a reservation, tribal homeland or other government services based on

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73 During the Dust Bowl, many Osage, like so many other Oklahomans, relocated to California.
said treaty rights. In this way, using the body—and “blood” in particular—to
“bureaucratically mark a polity” (Dennison, forthcoming, 3) ultimately
bring[s] the authority of the [tribal] nation into question. In defining
citizenship through the body, particular power dynamics are written into the
citizenship criteria. Whether exclusion is based on race, practice, or a
biologically based kinship, such definitions require that the citizen body be
monitored and controlled (Dennison, forthcoming, 32).

At its best, however, blood quantum can unify and create a sense of
community and commonality for those who have “enough” blood to be included. In
addition, advocates for the use of blood quantum in determining tribal enrollment
see it as a fairly “neutral” method to define tribal membership “when consistent
with the policy goals of a tribe” (Spruhan 2006: 3). For example, blood quantum is
now used to police more recent and frequent claims to Indianness, in particular with
the rise of Indian gaming from the 1980s-present. That is, in part because Native
identity has, in the last thirty years in particular, become appealing and exotic for
non-Natives to claim as their own—and not in small part because of the per capita
checks that some “casino tribes” provide to enrolled tribal citizens—individuals
who never identified as Native or claimed Native ancestry have started to make
attempts to claim tribal citizenship in communities where they are often strangers.
74 Similar to how some Navajo youth embrace black culture but not, necessarily,
black people themselves, this phenomenon is similar to what American Studies
scholar Eric Lott, writing about blackface minstrelsy, calls the “love and theft” of
claiming part-time, and often temporary, performative racial identities (Lott 1995).

74 For a fairly balanced discussion to both sides of this phenomenon, see Jack Hitt’s “The Newest
Such claims are often seen by Indian communities as simply a more contemporary form of the centuries-old practice of “playing Indian” (Deloria 1998). This recent upward demographic spike in those claiming a Native identity is seen, for example, in the case of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and the Cherokee Nation, where the website for the Sequoyah Birthplace Museum (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma) states that

In the 1990 census,\(^{75}\) 308,132 people identified themselves as Cherokees. Only a fraction of these are federally recognized members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in western North Carolina or the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. The Eastern Band has approximately 9,800 members who are descendants from approximately 1,000 individuals who avoided forced removal in 1838. The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma has more than 140,000 members” (http://www.sequoyahmuseum.org/index.cfm/m/7, accessed 1/28/11; italics mine).

Thus, as Thomas Biolsi points out, “Tribal governments have also found blood quantum useful, not for liquidating tribal membership, but for limiting citizenship in the face of overwhelming recent demands on tribal enrollment, especially in the wake of the recent take-off in tribal gaming” (Biolsi in Nugent & Vincent, 2005: 412-413). From these perspectives, the case for creating biological criteria for tribal membership appears justifiable and sometimes even necessary, so that Indian identity isn’t something one can selectively choose parts of, discarding the rest. In these ways, Strong and Van Winkle note, blood quantum can act as both a burden and a resource, a “tragic absurdity and a persuasive claim,” but something that many tribes today nonetheless choose to use as a primary criteria for citizenship (1996:

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Indeed, blood quantum is truly, as Strong and Van Winkle conclude, “a double-edged sword” (1996: 559).

And yet, despite its salience for legally determining Indian citizenship, sometimes even blood isn’t “enough” for reckoning tribal citizenship. In the case of the Navajo Nation, blood quantum is the main criterion today for tribal citizenship but, in the case of Navajos with ¼ or more blood whose parents are Navajo but aren’t enrolled with the tribe, blood isn’t the only criteria required to enroll. Thus, as legal scholar Paul Spruhan points out, even in the 1950s there were also other non-biological criterion used to determine membership in the Navajo Nation that are still used to this day that apply to those who parents are “unenrolled Navajos.”

Prompted by concerns that the “uranium boom” would increase tribal membership due to anticipated tribal per capita payments,76 Navajo legislators were also concerned at the time that “opportunistic Navajos” would apply for tribal membership in an effort to get money from the tribe without reciprocating their civic duties as Navajo citizens (Spruhan 2008: 4). Thus, legislators implemented additional criteria: children of unenrolled Navajos now have to go through the “Enrollment Screening Committee,” which mandates that, in addition to ¼ minimum Navajo blood, their legitimacy as a potential enrollee is also determined by “how long he [or she] has lived among the Navajo people, whether he is presently living among them, whether he can be identified as a member of a Navajo clan, whether he

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76 The Native American Community Development Corporation defines per capita payments as: “Payments made to individual tribal members from income received by the tribe for activities such as gambling casinos” www.nacdc.org/financial/glossary/index.htm, accessed 2/09/2012.)
can speak the Navajo language,\textsuperscript{77} and whether he [or she] is married to an enrolled Navajo” (Spruhan 2008: 9).

As seen in the above criteria, language and clan are used as additional factors in determining citizenship and social belonging, just as they were with Radmilla. In this way, as Spruhan notes, “persons of one-quarter or more Navajo blood are not automatically enrolled...but must prove \textit{cultural and physical connections} to the Navajo Nation to be worthy of membership” (2008: 10; italics mine). As a result, criteria for citizenship (1/4 minimum blood, descent traced to a base roll and an enrolled parent) have, for select Navajos, become mixed with today’s broader criteria for Navajo identity (appearance, language, place of residence), such that in public discourse there is sometimes a slippage in general understandings between actual criteria for Navajo citizenship and the more slippery cultural criteria for Navajo identity more broadly. From the perspective of the Enrollment Screening Committee, ¼ blood is assumed to be the bare minimum required to apply for enrollment and, although a crucial first step, is sometimes not “enough” to become an enrolled Navajo citizen.

However, recent scholarship in American Indian Studies insists that neither blood nor race should be the primary criterion in determining Indian political identities. For example, in her ethnography of Oklahoma Choctaw sovereignty and nation building, Choctaw anthropoligist Valerie Lambert discusses the ways in

\textsuperscript{77} Beginning as early as 1950, language use played a key role in determining both tribal enrollment and in less tangible tropes of belonging and identity. Like the two-part “Rogers-St. Cloud test” referenced in Chapter Two, for the Navajo Nation Council, blood, although important, was also sometimes not “enough” in determining who is legally Navajo and who is not.
which Choctaw citizens use a pre-Oklahoma statehood, older Choctaw rhetoric which specifically decouples “race and nationality,” such that “‘Choctaw’ is a political affiliation, specifically a nationality. It is not a race” (Lambert 2007: 201). Thus, in contrast to the way that larger, non-Indian society “treats the categories of white (or black) and Choctaw as mutually exclusive,” many Choctaws with less than a quarter blood quantum—approximately 75% of the tribe—may racially identify as white but politically identify as Choctaw (2007: 200). Lambert elaborates on this perspective: “A Choctaw can thus assert a racial identity as white (or black) without compromising his or her political identity as Choctaw...A Choctaw can thus be a Choctaw whose race is white, a Choctaw can be a Choctaw whose race is black, and a Choctaw can be a Choctaw whose race is Indian” (2007: 201).

Yet Lambert also notes that, as in the Navajo Nation, “blood” is still salient in this older Choctaw rhetoric. For example, ideologies of both blood and race—ideas that Lambert notes were imported from U.S. settler society to begin with—rather than replacing a non-racialized view of Choctaw identity, have simply been layered on top of it. In this way, Choctaws “came to see themselves as Choctaws not simply on the basis of their political and social ties to and citizenship in the Choctaw Nation but also on the basis of their Choctaw ‘blood’” (Lambert 2007: 201).

Like Oklahoma Choctaw citizens, many Navajo nationals also argue for a decoupling of race from nationality and yet still see blood as an index of something unique to them as Navajos. This is seen in letters written in to the Navajo Times in defense of Radmilla, where readers insist that being a Navajo citizen is a political

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78 Oklahoma became a state in 1907.
and not a racial identity and yet, in the same letter, go on to purport that blood is linked to the ability to speak Navajo and perform one’s identity as a Navajo.

In applying a Navajo rhetoric which simultaneously decouples race from nationality and yet “races” Navajo identity to Radmilla’s story, we can see some of the internal contradictions about what constitutes “being Navajo” that circulate within Navajo social spaces today. Moreover, we can also see how the meanings of Navajo blood differ from the ways blood is treated by citizens of other American Indian nations such as Oklahoma Choctaws and Cherokees. While, on the one hand, Radmilla’s blackness is something that in no way compromises her formal citizenship—or right to politically belong—as a Navajo, the fact that she appears phenotypically “mixed”—her racial identity—became an obstacle in her perceived right to represent the public face of Navajoness as the Nation’s Goodwill Ambassador. Her social citizenship as a Navajo was questioned because of her racial admixture. In turn, this resistance to having Radmilla represent the public face of Navajoness reflects some Navajos’ desire to have a Miss Navajo that, similar to citizens of the Cherokee Nation, reflects more of a pure yet imagined “center” than the racially mixed demographic that is today’s Navajo Nation.

And, although ultimately the Nation decided in her favor—as judged by the support she received while in office and the many that quickly rose to her defense when under attack—not all Navajos have the arsenal that comprises Radmilla’s public persona and renown, physical beauty, and ties to traditional knowledge, heritage language and place of residence through her másání, Dorothy, in order to speak up for themselves. While Radmilla, through her advocacy work for Black
Indians, her singing, and her domestic violence non-profit working to prevent teen
dating violence,79 literally lends her voice to the many who cannot speak (or sing)
with the authority that she can, some Navajo citizens still remain voiceless.

Conclusion

I’m left to defend
One lonely drop of blood
I might terminate
If I get nosebleed

~Marie Annharte Baker~
(“Cheeky Moon,” 1990: 38)

This poem, by Canadian First Nation’s poet Annharte Baker (Anishinabe),
shows us the sense of fragility and perception of contingency that accompanies the
use of blood quantum as a test for legal Indianness and Indian senses of belonging.
And, although Canada’s Native history differs from U.S. Native history in important
ways, citizens of Canada’s First Nations also share with U.S. Natives the experience
of termination.80 Baker’s poem also highlights the perception—inaccurate but
nonetheless powerful—that sovereignty is somehow contingent upon social
recognition as an Indian. Referencing federal Indian policy’s period of termination—
but also possibly the symbolic termination of one’s Indianness or of “terminating” a
child in utero, as well—the idea that a simple nosebleed might “terminate” one’s

79 “Strong Spirit: Life is Beautiful Not Abusive” Campaign 2012

80 However, in Canada Termination occurred even more recently, only beginning in 1969. For more
on Canadian Indian Policy, see Mark Q. Sutton, An Introduction to Native North America, 3rd Edition:
34–35.
Native identity is both a powerful visual image and a metaphor for how arbitrary using blood alone to measure cultural identities can be. That is, in the lines “I might terminate/if I get nosebleed,” we can infer that, if one lonely drop of blood is the only thing used to measure one’s Indianness—exempting all the other ways it could and should be assessed—then using blood to assess identity in the first place may be a very fragile proposition, indeed.

But Annharte’s poem also speaks to the sense of fragility and precariousness with which Native identities are reckoned not only in the legal and administrative sense, but also in the broader social sense of having to continually make legible one’s uniqueness as an Indian, to those both community-external and internal, Native and non-Native. In Radmilla’s story, we see that Navajo racial and linguistic identities and the ability to have an effective presence in the public sphere are often policed and controlled more tightly than are legal definitions of Navajo citizenship.

In the decision by some of Radmilla’s critics to treat her “black” blood as the primordial and primary essence of her identity, many subtler questions about belonging—both in the legal and lived sense—and “being Navajo” remain unanswered. For example, how phenotypically “Navajo” does one need to look to claim Navajo identity, and what might phenotypic Navajoness look like? Can it be quantified, by blood or anything else, and if so, how? Similarly, what role do language use and Navajo song play in performing and externalizing a Navajo identity, and can this compensate for a so called less-than-phenotypic “Navajo” appearance? As the case of Radmilla shows, I think it can and does, but perhaps the fundamental question remains why her racially mixed background needs to be
rationalized or overridden to begin with. Ultimately, as her "traditional" maternal
grandmother, Dorothy Cody, who took her in and raised her as her own daughter
affirms, Radmilla is Navajo because she exceeds the primary criteria of Navajoness
in operation today: she is enrolled, she has a maternal clan, and she is able to
skillfully “perform” her Navajo identity using two of the most powerful indices of
Navajoness, those of heritage language and song.

But Radmilla’s voice also helps us to understand Navajoness from other
angles. While speech and song, from a Navajo perspective according to
Witherspoon, are understood as an outward form of thought—the externalization of
one’s inner self—it is in gaining symmetry between inner and outer forms in which a
Navajo sense of personhood and kinship or k’é can be developed (Witherspoon
1977: 29-32). Thus, speech and song, as essential as they may be in assessing Navajo
belonging, are merely one half of the equation, the outer manifestation of that which
one possesses inside one’s body. Radmilla’s voice—the unique timbre, texture,
manner in which it’s projected and made audible to the world—is a performance of
her own affective and deeply internalized attachment to being Navajo. Through
sound, she externalizes the ‘grain’—the friction between language and a voice—that
lies within her own body. In this way, “voice moves in and through the body, but the
physical and emotional presence of the entire body is always in the voice” (Feld in
Basso & Feld 1996: 134). This grain of vocal presence is what listeners hear and
what, in turn, informs their own affective attachment to Radmilla’s voice. Radmilla is
Navajo on the inside as well as on the outside.

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In this chapter, I have shown how differing, often contradictory tropes of Navajoness are activated in various times and places. In Radmilla’s case, blood quantum, phenotype, linguistic ability and cultural knowledge were each used to either buttress or to deny her own claims to being a Navajo woman and social citizen. Each of these tropes, however, also worked across multiple, crisscrossing axes of identity and hovered beneath the larger debate about how Navajoness gets performed both for Navajos and non-Navajos beyond the Nation. However, as Fast (2002: 23) cautions us, the use of “ethnic tropes” as the litmus test for Native authenticity is always already ephemeral: social authenticity is something that is always and forever being approached but never really tangible and fully attainable.

Ultimately, other indices of Navajoness—ones that aren’t quite so prescriptive in form or function—can also make someone locatably Navajo. Place of origin and an affective attachment to place might be one, playing slowpitch softball, hosting Bingo (\textit{naa’ooti naalzhoodí [sliding bean]}) sessions or playing in a honky tonk country band might be another, and having a strong tie to nuclear family, extended maternal clan and “homeplace” might be yet a third. In Jacqueline Nassy Brown’s monograph, for example, \textit{Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail} (2005), a primary index of belonging is place of origin. In her book she asks whether, in the case of Liverpudlian-born blacks (LBBs) of African or Caribbean descent, their blackness or their place of birth (Liverpool, England) determined their national identity from a non-black, British perspective. Ultimately, she determines that “place trumps race,” and that LBBs are indeed considered and incorporated as British nationals in the British national imaginary.
Lowery also claims that a strong sense of place plays a crucial role in what comprises her own identity as a Lumbee Indian. She concludes that it is a groundedness in place, of having “roots” both physical and emotional, a connection and awareness of family, and a sense of continual return to that place that, for her, characterizes being a “Real Indian” (Maynor 1996). Similarly, in the context of the Navajo Nation and the Miss Navajo contest, I think that language and place, as ethnic tropes of cultural distinctiveness, ultimately trump race, although this is the subject of continued discussion and debate. In Radmilla’s case, her ability to speak and sing in Navajo—and butcher a mean sheep—both won her the title of “Miss Navajo 1997-98” and also acted to refute naysayers’ claims against her “Navajoness” when she came under attack.

Responses such as the many written to counter the comments of Tom, Hale and Leona Begay in The Navajo Times thus reveal how external indices of phenotype or blood alone—*jus sanguinis*—are inadequate to the task of determining and reckoning Navajoness today. Using older criteria for tribal citizenship—both matrilineal, affective and legislative—readers and citizens insist that Navajo identity is a birthright for those born to a Navajo mother and to someone who has ¼ Navajo blood or more. Cleverly inverting the linguistic currency of cultural distinction and indices of social authenticity to legitimize and cement Radmilla’s “right” to belong to the Nation, Radmilla’s supporters also insist that her right to represent the Navajo Nation and “Navajoness” is actually buttressed and augmented by her own linguistic and cultural know-how. In this way, Radmilla’s inner grace, ability to accept difference in others and willingness to speak on their behalf, and the way her
political identity has been wedded to her racial and linguistic identities through the “grain” of her voice, make her, for some at least, quintessentially and uniquely Diné. Just as she sang to her sheep as a little girl in Falls Lake, Radmilla now sings to and for the citizens of her beloved Navajo Nation. Kot'éego asdzání dóó t'áá Diné nilį́łá! [In this way, she walks the earth as a Navajo woman].
Chapter Four

“ ‘They Call me a Generic Navajo:’ Language, Identity and Social Citizenship”

~for Shirley~

“Walking with Language”

Some have carried it, held it close, protected.
Others have pulled it along like a reluctant child.
Still others have waved it like a flag, a signal to others.
And some have filled it with rage
And dare others to come close.
And there are those who find their language
A burdensome shackle.
They continually pick at the lock.¹

~Ofelia Zepeda~

February 16th, 2010. I take my friend’s bicycle in for a tune up at the “Navajo Cycle Shop” in Window Rock, Arizona. The Cycle Shop is located at the turnoff to the Chevron Coal Mine on the northeast side of town. Naively thinking that “Cycle” referred to bicycles—a rarity on the reservation given the terrain—The Cycle Shop turns out to be an independently-owned business that repairs Harley Davidson motorcycles, but John Yazzie, the co-owner, graciously offers to repair the bicycle just the same. Finding out that I’m a student of the Navajo language and an anthropologist, he starts to chat about his experiences living on the reservation and how hard it is to run a small business on the “rez” when everyone is habituated to

¹ Ofelia Zepeda (Tohono O’odham), *Where Clouds are Formed* (2008: 64).
doing their errands and getting their motorcycle repaired in border towns like Gallup and Farmington, New Mexico.

His mom, he says, is Taos Pueblo, his dad is Diné, but he and his brothers were raised in Taos. He recalls how relocating as an adult to the Navajo reservation, something he did because his dad has land on the Nation, has been difficult, in particular because he doesn’t really speak or understand Navajo and doesn’t know much about Navajo ceremonial life. “They call me—what do you call it?—a ‘generic’ Navajo” (Wilson 2010).

In what ways does linguistic knowledge index Navajoness, and what is meant by calling someone a “generic” Navajo? And how might this labeling be tied to Orlando Tom’s comment in the preceding chapter (Chapter Three) about so-called assimilated Navajos not being part of “anything specific” (Tom 1997)? What anxieties about language loss and, by extension, the loss of Navajo traditional culture, might underlie such a charge, and how, in certain cases, does language come to be used strategically in Navajo social spaces? Drawing on my own experiences as a non-Navajo² learning the Navajo language, in this chapter I trace the ways that language—often portrayed in Navajo communities as a key index of culture—is used as a way to assess one’s Navajo identity and social belonging over and above one’s legal citizenship as a Navajo. Thus, similar to the way that Navajo identities crystallize around race (as shown in the previous chapter), different identities are also simultaneously formed around language. We again see how Navajoness is

² In Navajo parlance I am referred to as a “Bilagáana.”
comprised of multi-layered, overlapping, sometimes contradictory markers, from
the color of your skin to the pitch of your tone and timbre of your voice.

In some cases, like Radmilla’s, language legitimizes Navajo identity. But it can
also be used to exclude. This is sometimes seen, for example, in cases of “full
blooded” Navajos who don’t speak Navajo and in the expectation that having Navajo
“blood” obliges one to activate one’s Navajo language inheritance, often regardless
of mother tongue or place of origin. In what follows, I trace the various ways that
language serves to both symbolically incorporate and exclude Navajos living on the
reservation today, creating boundaries between those who speak and understand
(full fluency), those who understand (passive fluency), and those who don’t—or
won’t or can’t—do either.\(^3\)

This chapter looks at the utterance through the lens of the everyday speaking
voice. By contrast to the previous chapter’s focus on the performative utterance in
staged performances of singing and speaking, I focus here on language use and the
voice in more intimate, everyday contexts. Such an approach complements what
Deborah House refers to as the “undiscussed yet highly visible linguistic and
behavioral practices” that inform more unconscious linguistic behavioral ideologies
(House 2002: xvi). Following David Dinwoodie’s understanding of voice as both a
culture-specific trope and also an analytic concept (1998: 3), I look at discourses of
belonging and exclusion as they are specifically revealed through dialect, oratory,
and the artful use of and aesthetic attention to language (as seen in humor and

\(^3\) In the case of Kaska language speakers, Barbra Meek makes a similar distinction between speakers,
semi-speakers, what she calls “passive users” (Meek 2010: 130).
punning) (Basso 1996; Samuels 2004b). I examine felt attachments to language, even for those who don’t necessarily speak Navajo (Samuels 2004a). As a culture-specific trope, how one uses one’s voice—whom one admonishes in public, who has the vocal authority to speak for whom, and how one does so—points to performances and hierarchies of Navajo identities, and especially to a premium on linguistic authenticity and indigenous legitimacy (Fast 2002; Nevins 2004; Meek 2010). As an analytic concept, I use the idea of voice as a framing device to analyze and understand daily discourse and ideas of linguistic performance more broadly. Thus, John’s story reveals how linguistic authority is enacted not only by who can literally speak Navajo but is also shaped by larger cultural politics of prestige, generation, social hierarchy and gender.

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The question of everyday speaking recalls the anecdote of the Navajo lady I chronicle in the introduction. Following Fast’s use of ethnic tropes, language can also be “another trope that is used as a weapon: During the early 1990s those who were not known to speak, understand, or read an Athabascan language were deemed less Athabascan than others” (Fast 2002: 23). Similarly, language can be brought to bear as a marker of internal authenticity and a weapon of exclusion in the Navajo context, as evidenced by the older Navajo lady who, frustrated at the young Navajo cashier who didn’t understand Navajo, said to him “Yáadi lá Diné!” [What kind of Navajo are you?] Thus, this older female speaker reveals her own
expectation about what being Navajo means and implies that, for her, he’s not the “kind” of Navajo he should be.

This exchange reveals the linguistic and cultural generation gap often experienced between younger, middle-aged and elderly Navajos. It also shows a language ideology in which knowledge of the Navajo language, in this instance, is being activated as a trope which exclusively indexes “Navajoness” in what linguists have called a process of “iconicization” between language and identity (Irvine and Gal [2000] in Meek 2010: 132). One problem with such iconicization is that it “denies the ubiquity of English and any corresponding bilingualism, multilingualism, or dialect differences” of any given sociolinguistic landscape (Meek 2010: 132). Even more problematically, from the perspective of speakers who consider themselves to speak less than perfect Navajo, iconicization “renders invisible the fair speakers, the poor speakers, and the non-speakers by excluding them from the linguistically essentialized “we” of aboriginal identity” (Meek 2010: 133). The above conversation also reveals the expectation—and sense of ensuing disappointment when she learns otherwise—that presumably “full blood” Navajos should speak, or at least, understand Navajo, “their” language, and the diminishment of him in her eyes (“What kind of Navajo are you?”) because he apparently does not.

The older lady’s comment also gives insight into an inter-Navajo sociolinguistic hierarchy, which, as Meek shows with Kaska language speakers, is often quite ideologically divisive, “marking heritage speakers as core members and erasing those large numbers of First Nations [or Navajo] people who cannot speak an indigenous language or who speak a “nonstandard” variety” (Meek 2010: xxiii).
Thus, as my Navajo teacher, Shirley Ann Bowman, pointed out to me in a recent phone conversation (1/25/11), embedded in this exchange we hear at least two levels of what Meek terms “sociolinguistic disjuncture” (2010: xxiii). Defined as “the breakdown between and across theories and practices” of language use, Meek uses this concept to explain the different—and often competing—ideologies about Native language revitalization in one community of northern Athabaskan (Kaska) language speakers in Canada’s Yukon Territory (Meek 2010: xxiii).

From Shirley’s perspective, the first disjuncture is that the cashier doesn’t understand the older lady’s request, and, responding to her in English (a language she may or may not understand), tells her the gas pump is already on. The second disjuncture is that it’s quite possible that the young cashier actually does speak or at least understand Navajo; even so, the word the lady was using for kerosene is an older, descriptive word\(^4\) associated with a world and a lifestyle that the teenage cashier, depending on where he was reared, may simply have no use for knowing. In other words, implied in her request for kerosene is a lifestyle typical of some older Navajos, and she specifically references her own lack of (or limited access to) electricity, hence the need for kerosene to light her lamps. Assuming that the cashier lives in the more urban environment of Chinle where the exchange took place, he may never have had the opportunity or need to a) use kerosene and b) learn the specific Navajo word for it.

Finally, the older lady’s use of the expression “Yáadi lá Diné” is, by all accounts, a strong expression and a stinging accusation to direct at another Navajo.

\(^4\) The word she used was ak’ah kq’ bitoo’ [fat, fire, its juice/liquid].
However, in sharing this encounter with other Navajo language speakers, people I spoke with were often uncomfortable and saddened to hear someone using this expression, but they also weren’t surprised at the encounter, explaining that they’ve heard/witnessed similar scenes in other contexts. It is the sort of thing you might hear, Shirley suggested, when older, heritage speakers become impatient with younger speakers—or perhaps even with themselves and their own inability to communicate in English. In frustration, older speakers occasionally lash out in this way to show their unease with these linguistic disjunctures and with the larger process of language shift on the reservation (House 2002). After all, as Shirley points out, this probably was one moment of linguistic disconnect out of many this older lady had experienced.

Moreover, since a majority of monolingual Navajo speakers are women, the speaker’s female identity and gendered social roles also play a role in this exchange. This is seen in the fact that an older Navajo matriarch strategically chastises a younger Navajo man for not “knowing” his culture. Salient here is the fact that, in traditional Navajo society, women are charged with teaching/transmitting language and “culture” to their children, and older women (“grandmas”) are associated with sheep, monolingualism and with a “prestige variety of spoken Navajo” (Peterson 2006: 123). It is less plausible—although certainly possible—to imagine an older Navajo man chastising a teenaged Navajo girl in public for not speaking or understanding Navajo. If anything, a similar linguistic disjuncture might be highlighted through extended teasing, especially if the girl were related to the joshing older man in question. Thus, similar to de la Cadena’s observation about
Quechua women’s roles as “culture bearers” in rural Peru, older Navajo women are in some ways expected to act “more Indian”—or, in local Navajo parlance, to act more “traditional”—than their male counterparts (de la Cadena in Larson & Harris, eds., 1997).

In addition, those who speak Navajo in public are often portrayed by other Navajos as being “more Navajo” than non-speakers. This is particularly true for those who run for public office. Although Navajo proficiency is only officially required for the offices of Navajo Nation President, Vice President, and Judges, some degree of Navajo fluency is usually hoped for and often expected from all public officials. Thus, social and legal requirements for Navajoness sometimes contradict each other. Using Fast’s example of the ways in which non-speakers are sometimes marginalized and made less visible because they don’t speak their heritage language, during my time in Crownpoint I often heard the Crownpoint Chapter President criticized for being a vocal and highly proactive community leader—Chapter President—and yet not speaking Navajo. In fact, in instances when their name was mentioned to me in passing, community members would often note this “lack.” Perhaps in an attempt to compensate for or assuage these criticisms and to

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5 In the Navajo Nation Election Code for each elected office it states that Candidates for President and Vice-President must “speak and understand Navajo and read and write English” (Paul Spruhan, personal correspondence; 11 N.N.C. Sec. 8(A)(4)). Similarly, candidates for Council Delegates “must be able to speak and understand Navajo and/or English” (11 N.N.C. Sec. 8(B)(8). For example, Sharon Clahchischilliage, a former Navajo Nation presidential hopeful and a so-called “urban Navajo,” was asked at a public forum to address “concerns that she couldn’t speak the Navajo language fluently” (Francis 2010).

6 Although there isn’t a similar stipulation regarding Navajo fluency for those running for Chapter president, in a de facto sense fluency is still expected, and those who run and aren’t fluent are expected to account for it.
sound “more Navajo,” this official would often add the Navajo nominalizer “igíí” [the one] to English words when they had the floor at meetings, effectively code-mixing words such as “Chapter House” to become “Chapter House’igíí” [the one that is the Chapter House]—redundant because they’re nominalizing something that’s already a noun. Through these censoring discourses, this official was marginalized and their ability to have an effective voice in the public sphere was diminished.

The expectation that a chapter president be fluent in Navajo also reveals the changing set of criteria required of those who, as community leaders, represent the “public face” of Navajoness. As Sturm shows in her research, expectations for political leaders—how phenotypically Indian they look, how fluent they are in their heritage language—often don’t match the actual demographics of the tribe they publically represent and rather constitute what she calls the “imagined” or idealized center of the tribe, instead (2002: 107). In this case, the Chapter President’s young age (mid-40s), high level of English proficiency and the fact that she’s not fluent in Navajo comprises a fairly accurate linguistic representation of many Navajos from Crownpoint. But these expectations also speak to the symbolic capital and performative aspects of indigenous language use.

At a political rally during fall 2010, Navajo Nation Vice Presidential hopeful, Earl Tulley, also noted that political leaders in particular are expected to campaign

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7 I also recognize that my own presence as a language learner may have played a role in the preponderance of these comments. To my discomfort, older Navajo speakers often compared my own Navajo as a Bilagáana to the speaking abilities of other, less fluent Navajos (often their kids or grandkids) as a way to cajole or motivate them to speak more/better Navajo.

in the Diné language, as he so eloquently did. Tulley also courageously went on to note, in English, the disjuncture caused by the fact that “we [meaning parents] didn’t teach you [kids, younger generations] our language and it’s our fault.”

Somewhat perplexingly, however, after making this note publicly, he went back to speaking Navajo, effectively excluding non-Navajo speakers from the rest of his stump speech and from the important conversation about language loss he had begun. Thus, with public oratory in particular, there is an expectation that Navajo public officials deliver their message either in Navajo, or that they code-switch between Navajo and English (as is most often the case). Most importantly, Tulley’s switch back to Navajo revealed that the message he most wanted to convey lay in the performance or what Jakobson would call the poetic function of language, where “the focus [is] on the message for its own sake” (Jakobson 1960: 356), not in the referential content (the desire to communicate a specific piece of information) of the message itself (Ibid. 1960: 356).

Earl Tulley’s apology about language loss also shows a key shift in Navajo attitudes towards Native language use more generally. Whereas sixty years ago many Native peoples were shamed by Boarding Schools into not speaking their heritage language and refrained from teaching it to their kids, in the last two decades perceptions about language loss have become intrinsically linked to cultural loss. With the accompanying renewed interest in Navajo culture and in

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9 This brief address in English was made all the more poignant because it was being broadcast overseas through the Armed Forces Network for Navajo military personnel who were presumably English-dominant.

10 Earl Tulley, Newlands Chapter House [JUA Navajo/Hopi Relocation Area], Sanders, AZ.
being Navajo, Navajo language loss is now generally publicly lamented as something to actively work against. Echoing this shift, Pominelli (2002) shows how the “cunning of recognition” in the era of neoliberal multiculturalism has led to outsider expectations about how indigenous alterity and authenticity are performed. These and similar expectations make many indigenous people—including Navajos—feel the need to apologize for not knowing their language or their culture or, in Tulley’s case, apologize on behalf of Navajo parents for not having taught this to their kids.

Those who speak nonstandard varieties of Navajo are also often linguistically and socially marginalized. For example, my Navajo language teacher often referred to newer Navajo as “slangy” Navajo and thus linguistically incorrect. Such slang was pointed out to me in words where the gerund, “go,” as in “hazhó’ógo,” is elided to become “hazhó’ó,” or code-mixed expressions such as “Há’át’íish baa nan-DOing?"11 [What are you doing/up to?] or “T’óó shił dééz” [I’m just out of it/in a daze/potentially intoxicated], contrasting these newer forms with more “correct,” older forms of Navajo.12 For instance, one will sometimes hear middle-aged and younger Navajos refer admiringly to certain (often older) Navajos as individuals who speak “the old Navajo” or Saadsání [“old words/old

11 The non code-mixed Navajo version would be: “Há’át’íish baa naníná?”

12 The standardization of newer Navajo is best exemplified in certain terms now used by radio announcers. For example, on the three Navajo-language AM radio stations (KNDN, KGAK and KTNN), deejays will mark their speech through repetitive use of terms such as “ya’” and “aldó [also].” The use of the affective particle, “ya,” meaning “you know what I mean?” is used particularly by younger (30s and below) and middle generation (30s—40s) speakers. After attending a Chapter meeting where I heard a middle-aged chapter official say in passing, “I heard it through the grapevine, ya,” I relayed this humorous quip to my Navajo teacher and to my host parents in Arizona. They all found this code-mixed sentence to be humorous but also nonsensical, as they understood him to be saying something like, “I heard it through the grapevine, didn’t I?”
language”/Naabeehó bizaad [“Navajos, their language”]. This older, more “proper” Navajo is sharply distinguished from what Peterson refers to as the stigmatized Jáán or Jxáán Navajo which isn’t considered “proper” Navajo (Peterson 2006: 76). In accordance with this schema, I often observed that many Navajo speakers whom I considered to be quite fluent would compare themselves and their Navajo against this older Navajo and often told me that, compared to their grandparents, etc., they “weren’t really fluent.” This shortcoming was even sometimes mentioned by way of an explanation for why they, in turn, weren’t talking to their kids in Navajo, since they were concerned about teaching them incorrect Navajo. Thus, “Although there are relatively few speakers of the “traditional” type of Navajo [Saadsání], many view any deviance as “not really Navajo” (Peterson 2006: 84).

However, former KTNN deejay and linguist Leighton Peterson notes that even those “elderlies” considered by younger generations to speak “traditional” Navajo often saw their own linguistic knowledge as inadequate and lacking in symbolic power and cultural capital. Peterson notes:

> Although there are relatively few speakers of the “traditional” type of Navajo, and despite the fact that numerous elderly believe that they themselves do not speak real Navajo...this form has a great deal of symbolic power. For example, on our listener survey for KTNN radio we asked participants for

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13 For a diagram of Navajo speaker types and their place in the sociolinguistic hierarchy, see Peterson’s excellent diagram in his dissertation on p. 76.

14 During his fieldwork, Peterson noted a similar phenomenon, stating that “Almost all of my consultants judge their own language abilities in relation to the “traditional” Navajo, and many consider any deviance or lexical shortcoming to be “wrong” or as part of “new” or “slang” Navajo” (Peterson 2006: 77).

15 “Elderlies” is a local term of respect for older Navajos in their sixties and beyond. It is used interchangeably with terms in English and in Navajo such as “grandma” (másání) and “grandpa” (cheii), also terms of respect, to denote older, culture-knowledgeable Navajos who may or may not actually be grandparents.
language proficiency. In many instances, people of various ages who were obviously (in our opinion) conversing fluently in Navajo in front of us would respond that they did not speak Navajo; when asked, they said they responded that way because they did not speak Navajo like their parents or grandparents (therefore they did not speak Navajo). Thus, there are stigmatized forms in Navajo, but the bases for evaluations of these non-standard forms are constantly in a state of transformation. I have spoken with many elderlies who emphatically state that they themselves speak bad Navajo, and do not speak it the way that their grandparents spoke (2006: 77).

In a way then, each generational speech community has elected to self-silence—or render itself invisible—to some extent. Building on this, we could say that linguistic invisibility is rendered between the poles of two linguistic ideal types, those of Standard American English on the one hand, and Saadsání on the other. Thus, although linguists like Peterson identify multiple speech communities on the Navajo Nation—among them those who speak “Navajo English,” “Jxáán Navajo, and “Grandparents’ Navajo”—those whose speech exists between these two idealizations are often stigmatized and silenced compared to those deemed to speak “standard” English or Navajo. These perceptions of linguistic difference, in turn, speak to a larger Navajo politics of difference as this is refracted through speech and the voiced utterance. Language becomes one strategic choice used to index belonging and social authenticity as a Navajo. Thus, while in reality “significant differences may not exist between these speaker types...it is important that some Navajos think of differences as existing and equate particular identities with particular ways of speaking” (Peterson 2006: 74; italics mine).16

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16 For example, according to my Navajo teacher, “older Navajos were considered to be people of “few words.” Language was considered sacred and not to be used casually (Shirley Bowman, comments on chapter draft, 10/16/2011).
From the examples above, we see how Fast’s comment about how language can be used as a weapon speaks to the broader issue of language politics in Indian country today. Historically, linguistic anthropologists have often seen language as a key marker of cultural distinction and specifically of “Indianness” in Native North America. Perhaps reflecting anthropology’s own historical bias in this vein, “having a language” continues to influence how “Indian” many Indian nations consider themselves and others to be today.

Like culture, language is something that is widely understood by Navajos to be a socially acquired skill rather than something “innate” to one’s heritage or one’s “blood.” At the same time, Native language proficiency is also perhaps one of the only things about Native culture that is to some extent considered “inalienable” or what Anthony Webster terms a culturally “secured domain” (Webster 2009: 17). Here, phonetics, diction, dialect and the ability to tell a joke are keys to a code used by Indians to determine each other’s place of origin, linguistic skill level and cultural knowledge about comportment in a way that outsiders or non-mother tongue speakers such as myself simply cannot assess in quite the same way. Thus, language can be and sometimes is used as a key internal marker of authenticity and belonging within Navajo and Native communities. This may explain, for example, the now central role of the formal, Native language “introduction” and the performative

Moreover, this affective attachment to language is sometimes particularly amplified given the long history of non-Indians conveniently appropriating other more malleable forms of Indian identity such as adopting Native clothing styles, attending “hobby” powwows, participating in “faux” Native religious ceremonies and through the use of “Indian names,” as seen in naming practices used by Boy Scouts of America, summer camps and other non-Indian groups (Deloria 1998: 144).
phenomenon this has become across Indian country. This is so even if the words to the introduction are memorized, syllable by painful syllable, and may be the only words in that language the speaker knows.

Similarly, in John Yazzie’s story, knowing Navajo is revealed to be that which makes you “distinct” or “specific”—that is to say, not “generic”—as a Navajo. These and similar anecdotes reveal, I think, both the importance of language in the Navajo cosmology (discussed ahead) and the strong associations for some between speaking the Navajo language and, to use the words of one Navajo Times reader from the previous chapter, “being Navajo.” In the case of the older lady at the Mustang, her irritation at the cashier is based on the expectation that Navajos do, or “should,” speak and/or understand Navajo. Since the cashier was phenotypically Navajo in his appearance, she ultimately questions his Navajoness based on his inability to understand her request. Similarly, revealing the perception that speaking Navajo makes one locatably and identifiably Navajo, John shares how his inability to speak fluently causes him to be labeled as a “generic” Navajo. From this perspective, it is having the gift of language and also perhaps ceremonial knowledge—two skill sets that are often linked—that makes one a Navajo.

The discursive use of the term “generic” is also particularly interesting, since it has a similarly biting sting as does the accusation, “Yáadi lá Diné!” It could, for example, refer to John’s lack of language skills, but it could also refer to an interracial and intertribal politics of difference referenced in Chapters Two and

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18 This phenomenon is referenced in greater detail in the introduction to the dissertation. The “introduction” is also something that I, as a community-external language learner, was also highly encouraged to learn and regularly “perform” in public settings.
Three. Thus, in contrast to Radmilla, John’s mother is Pueblo and not Navajo. In the Navajo way, then, clanwise that makes him more Pueblo than Navajo. Thus, while he may enroll in the Nation based on his blood quantum, John is socially marginalized and without the sense of Navajo social citizenship he seems to desire. In an ironic twist, however, from a Taos Pueblo perspective, since his mother married “out” of her tribe, her children may or may not actually be granted Taos citizenship, even if they meet the minimum blood quantum requirements for the tribe of \( \frac{1}{4} \).\(^{19}\) Thus, John may not really socially belong or be claimed by either tribe.\(^{20}\) Moreover, American Indians—unlike American nationals—are typically not allowed dual citizenship in two tribal nations,\(^{21}\) such that, although I don’t know for certain, in all likelihood John is enrolled with the Navajo Nation, not Taos Pueblo. If this is indeed the case, he is a citizen of a nation whose fellow citizens label him as “generic.”

But if Navajo language is an index of Navajoness, it is certainly not the only one. Early on in his study of Navajo poetry, for example, linguistic anthropologist Anthony Webster confesses that he made a fundamental mistake in his own research methodology which he would later correct: “I had confused being Navajo,”

\(^{19}\) I wish to thank Taos Pueblo Tribal Enrollment Office specialist, Micheleigh Lujan, for her clarification of enrollment requirements for Taos Pueblo (personal correspondence, 4/04/11).

\(^{20}\) This is because, within many Pueblo societies, female out-marriage (exogamy) beyond the Pueblo is highly discouraged and, in some cases, children of such unions are actively disenrolled. A famous court case, Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez (1978), was premised on just such a double standard for the child of a Santa Clara Pueblo woman who married “out” and whose child was thus denied citizenship with Santa Clara Pueblo.

\(^{21}\) Both the Cherokee and Osage Nations, who have begun dually enrolling some of their own tribal citizens, have recently successfully challenged this rule. For example, see the Osage Nation Constitution Article III under “Membership” (section III) where it states: “An enrolled member of the Osage Nation can choose to be dually enrolled as a member of another Indian tribe without forfeiting Osage membership” www.osagetribe.com/uploads/OsageNationConstitution.pdf, accessed 2/10/2012).
he states, “with speaking Navajo” (Webster 2009: 2, italics mine). He explains further: “The use of Navajo can and does index Navajoness. However...Navajoness can be indexed by traditional poetic devices that have been transferred to English. Navajos can and do use English to index Navajoness”22 (Ibid: 46; italics mine). For example, in a code-mixed joke I was recently told by a friend from Crownpoint (August 2011), we’re told of a Navajo medicine man who’s getting ready to conduct a ceremony in a hooghan. He is speaking to the younger people in attendance, and tells them, at length and in Navajo, that during the ceremony there will be no use of English because it can impact the efficacy of the ceremony. He continues in this vein, waxing eloquent about the beauty and centrality of the Navajo language in a Navajo worldview, and then, at the end of the soliloquy, code switches back into English, using a thick Navajo accent: “Bilagáana bizaad [English] éí [filler word], I DON’T LIKE IT!” In this way, we see in this joke that “there is a feelingful connection to both Navajo and English and, as such, both languages can be brought to bear in performances of narratives of Navajoness” (Webster 2009: 15).

_Diné Bizaad [The Navajo Language] in a Traditional Navajo Worldview_

My own entry into the Navajo language began at the age of seventeen when I worked as a Ranger at Canyon de Chelly National Monument. As a multilingual speaker, Navajo is the most challenging language I have attempted to learn. Its orthography and phonetics alone can take many individuals, including myself, years

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22 In addition to English, I would add that there are certainly Navajos who may have used/continue to use Spanish, Ute, Apache and other Keresan languages to index their Navajoness, as well. For more on the history of Navajos as multilingual speakers, see House 2002.
to master. As a result, today there are very few non-Navajos fully proficient in the Navajo language; the few that are I can count on one hand\(^{23}\) and are often known in Navajo communities specifically for this “feat.” Indeed, during my fieldwork these stories of “other” male *Bilagáanas* and their striking abilities to communicate (or, sometimes, to make a memorable and amusing linguistic fumble) in Navajo were often the initial icebreaker and were invariably about the same two or three people, such that I almost feel I know some of these early Mormon missionaries and traders whose linguistic prowess lives on in public memory. Thus, among many Navajos there is a communal recognition that for non-Navajos, learning Navajo can be extremely difficult.

Revealing some of the “*Bilagáana*” (Anglo) communities that Navajos first had sustained contact with once Navajo Country (*Diné Bikéyah*) officially became a part of the United States in 1848 (with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo), non-Navajo speakers of Navajo have traditionally occupied the historically male roles of missionaries, traders and linguists. Their version of Navajo—spoken with modified tenses and using only basic verb conjugations—became what is today referred to (and sometimes ridiculed as) “trader Navajo” (Peterson 2006: 82).\(^{24}\)

Moreover, “lay” Anglos that do learn Navajo, usually through their Navajo spouses, are almost uniformly Anglo men as opposed to Anglo women. There are a couple of possibilities as to why this may be the case, but based on anecdotal

\(^{23}\) One of the most fluent non-Navajo speakers of Navajo, to my ear, is Gary Witherspoon himself, who first came to the Navajo Nation as a Mormon Missionary, married into a Navajo family and then wrote, among other texts, *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe* (1977).

\(^{24}\) Peterson notes that today’s radio advertisements by Anglo pawnshop owners play on this stereotype of “trader Navajo” to humorous and successful advertising effect.
observations in the field and from conversations with Navajo and Anglo friends, it appears that there are many more Navajo women who marry Anglo men—and who marry “out” in general—than there are Navajo men who marry Anglo women. In fact, Navajo men who I’ve talked to about their decisions to date “outside” their tribe are often regarded as something close to “race traitors,” while Navajo women seem to not be regarded quite so harshly for making similar decisions. This may be in part because of kinship based definitions of Navajoness and the fact that children of Navajo men and non-Navajo women no longer have a Navajo first clan and are thus considered “less” Navajo than children of Navajo women who, regardless of the father, have a primary Navajo clan from their mother. In this context, my own learning and “performing” Navajo as an Anglo woman became doubly exoticized in certain ways.

While language is indeed used as both a trope of exclusion and as a performative index of Indianness, it also holds a culturally unique and central place in the Navajo cosmology and creation narrative (House 2002: xxiii). As Gary Witherspoon (1977) suggests, from a Navajo philosophical perspective, speech and song are externalizations of thought and are an imposition on the external world representing a “transformation of substance” (1977: 31) of air or wind into audible form. Wind is understood to be what gives one the capacity to speak a language (Ibid: 30). “The capacities to think “far ahead” and to speak a language are acquired

25 Additionally, from a female perspective, stereotypes of Navajo men as abjected and “unsuccessful moderns” and of Anglo men as steady, “reliable” breadwinners with cultural capital may also play a role in these personal decisions.
from what he terms (translating from Navajo) “wind souls” dispatched at birth, and these capacities distinguish humans from other animals who have only calls and cries” (Ibid: 30). Thus, “Thinking and singing the world into existence attributes a definite kind of power to thought and song to which most Westerners are not accustomed” (Ibid: 17).

Similarly, David McAllester also attributes a definitive power to speech and song in the context of the public songs from the Navajo Enemyway ceremony. In Enemy Way Music (1954), he shows how aesthetic value and effective use of language and wind ultimately determine the efficacy of the curing ceremony itself (1954: 5, 79). Entering through the whorls of the fingertips and into the lungs, wind is what gave human beings the ability to speak; as such, language is that which makes us human and, perhaps for this reason, is often afforded primacy of place in discussions of Navajo identity and self-expression. In this way, language and song are understood to be sacred. Perhaps as a reflection of this linguistic primacy, the office for the Miss Navajo Council states that “The most important qualification for the Miss Navajo Nation Pageant is to be fluent in the Navajo and English languages” (www.missnavajocouncil.org/, accessed 12/13/2010).

Moreover, language use must be proscribed and to some extent sanctioned by those who speak it well: used with bad intentions, aesthetic ignorance or repetitious naïveté, poor language use can negatively impact other peoples’ lives in

26 For example, linking effective and aesthetically pleasing language use with spiritual knowledge and social prestige, Dyk quotes his Navajo interlocutor, Left Handed, as saying: “And don’t talk roughly, because you’ve learned many songs and prayers. If you know the songs and prayers you don’t want to talk roughly. If you do you won’t get these things, because all the stocks [livestock] and properties will know that you’ll be rough with them. If you think kindly and talk in the kindest manner then they’ll know you’re a kind man, and then everything will go to you” (Dyk 1938: 81).
ways both spiritual and material (Reichard 1944; McAllester 1954: 64; House 2002: xxiv) through what McAllester termed "danger through misuse" (1954: 64). This understanding of the power of language also impacts processes and social spaces for language acquisition and may also explain why Navajos learning Navajo as a second language are sometimes given such a hard time for their initial linguistic fumbles. For example, as Witherspoon notes and as I was also made aware, repeating any word four times can be understood as willing bad things to happen; as a result, when learning to pronounce new words from an older guide, Kenneth Watchman, at Canyon de Chelly, he strongly encouraged me to ask a question—for example, how to pronounce a new word—no more than three times. After three missed tries, he would sometimes stop teaching me for the day.

Navajo is an SOV, polysynthetic, southern Athabaskan language with a complex morphology. Like Mandarin Chinese, Vietnamese, Yoruba, Cherokee and many Algonquian languages, Navajo is also a tonal language. In these and similar languages, this means that lexical and grammatical meaning is distinguished through tone, such that the same phoneme, given a different tonal emphasis, can have a completely different semantic meaning. This contrasts with the way that

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27 Now living in a rest home, Kenneth was one of my earliest Navajo language teachers. He worked with his son, Kelvin, as a guide for the Tsegi’ Guide Association at Canyon de Chelly National Monument.

28 Subject-Object-Verb.

29 "Navajo is an SOV polysynthetic language spoken in parts of New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. The language belongs to the Na-Dene Language Family, Athabaskan Language Branch. The Athabaskan Language Branch includes the Alaskan language group, the Western Canadian language group, the Northwestern Pacific Coast language group, and the Apachean language group" (Goertz et. al 2006: 1).
pitch is used paralinguistically for dynamic stress—i.e., with the goal of increased emotional emphasis—in English and other non-tonal languages.

There are three levels of phonemic tone or pitch in Navajo. In written Navajo, high pitch is indicated by diacritics on the vowels [á,é,i,ó], and low and middle pitches are indicated through single vowels ([a, e, i, o], medium pitch) and double vowels ([aa, ee, ii, oo], low pitch). Rising and falling tones are indicated by placing high and low pitched vowels side by side, such as: dóola [bull; falling tone] and hágoónee’ [goodbye; rising tone]. Low pitches also receive a longer durational emphasis. For example, whereas the word “hágo” [come here] features a short, high pitched first syllable [há] and a short, middle tone second syllable [go], the same sounds combine differently with long vowels and all high tones to make the word “háágóó[sh]?30” to mean “where are you going to?”

In addition to these three tones, Navajo also prominently features nasal tones, lateral ls or /l/ and a linguistically salient feature known as a “glottal stop.” Glottal stops, like nasals and lateral l, are considered to be their own consonant in the Navajo alphabet, and are written as /’/ (as seen in the word for “yes,” aoo’). As such, skillful attention to wind/air within one’s body plays a central role in both conceptions of language, as articulated by Witherspoon (1977: 53), but also in the physiological ability to successfully communicate and produce Navajo phonemes.

Edward Sapir, through the process of incredible linguistic detective work, argued that southern Athabaskan languages such as Navajo have Northern origins

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30 Technically speaking, since this is a question, an “sh” should be added at the end as an enclitic. However, since it’s already implied in the word, it’s often shortened to simply “Háágóó?”
and came to the southwest via the Great Plains (Sapir 1936). However, many Navajos disagree with a northern origin story (such as the theory of the Bering Strait land bridge) and instead believe that they have always been in the southwest. In fact, anecdotally I was sometimes told that perhaps some Navajo communities left the southwest after their Emergence into the Fourth or Glittering World and then migrated northward. Indeed, this reverse migration is something that Sapir also postulated, although he ultimately concludes that a migration from Alaska is more probable than vice versa (1936: 224-225). In either case, mobility has long characterized historical and linguistic antecedents of the Navajo language, *Diné Bizaad*.

Navajo was first transcribed as a written language by the linguist and Franciscan Friar, Father Berard Haile, in the late 1890s. Berard Haile’s first transcriptions were followed in 1910 by the first Navajo dictionary and orthography, written and published by the Franciscan Fathers at Saint Michael’s Mission (http://www.franciscan.org/who/June_150Anniversary.asp, accessed 1/26/11). Later, Robert Young and William Morgan published *The Navajo Language: A Grammar and Colloquial Dictionary* (1987), which is still the main dictionary and standard orthography referenced by linguists and speakers today. *The Navajo Language* is consulted, for example, in the Navajo orthography for the weekly “Navajo language page” that appears in *The Navajo Times*.

31 In “Internal Linguistic Evidence Suggestive of the Northern Origin of the Navaho,” Sapir concludes: “the geographical center of gravity of these languages [Navajo and Apache]...lies in the north” (1936: 234).
The Navajo language has been used strategically by the United States government throughout the twentieth century, albeit for very different—and often contradictory—ends. While B.I.A educators disparaged Native languages as the enemy of assimilation and “progress,” during World War II the Navajo language was used by the U.S. military as another kind of “weapon” in the Pacific Theatre—along with Hopi and Comanche—to help the Allies take Iwo Jima/Mount Suribachi and win the war. Here, in contrast to the divisive context in which Fast describes how language can be used as a weapon, Navajo became the unifying linchpin used to create an unbreakable “double code” that was only declassified in 1969 (Durett 2009: 100). The ways in which Navajo has been both berated and lauded by the U.S. government aren’t lost on most Navajos today, and, perhaps as a result of this ambivalence, Navajo Code Talkers—none of whom received promotions upon their return to the U.S.—hold an almost sacred status in Navajo communities today (Durett 2009; Meadows 2011; Nez 2011; Robinson 2011).

Linked to this long history of military service is a strong sense of patriotism and affect for both Navajo and U.S. homelands. These homelands—and allegiances to them—are sometimes seen as mutually exclusive, sometimes not. Thus, U.S. nationalism, indigenous nationalism, patriotism and military service conjoin today on the Navajo Nation in a way unique to Native North America, and Navajo citizens enlist in record numbers in the U.S. military.32 Crucially, Navajo veterans see themselves as fighting for the U.S. nation but also, and often more importantly, as

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32 According to the History Channel documentary film, *Navajo Code Talkers*, ca. 18,000 Navajos currently serve in the U.S. military, or approximately 9% of Navajo Nation citizens (A&E Television Networks: Marketed and distributed in the U.S. by New Video, [2006], c1998).
fighting for the preservation and protection of their own indigenous Nation, its language and its citizens (Clevenger 2010: 9). As Steven Clevenger (Osage) shows in interviews with Native veterans of the Iraq war, Navajo and other Native veterans also see themselves as the only soldiers fighting for land that was originally theirs pre-colonization, and language preservation in particular plays a central role in this preservationist mission for many Navajo patriots (2010: 9, 10). In these ways, the Code Talkers represent the perfect fusion of both U.S. patriotism and Navajo tradition.

Status of the Navajo Language Today: Language Politics and Language Acquisition

In a 2007 survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 170,717 self-reported Navajo speakers, making Navajos the tribe with the largest number by far of fluent Native speakers from a single tribe in the United States (2007 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau; Zepeda & Hill in Robins & Uhlenbeck, eds., 1991: 135-137). Moreover, of the approximately 175 indigenous languages spoken in the United States today, Navajo is one of only nine languages spoken by a population of 10,000 speakers or more (Zepeda & Hill, Ibid: 136; Henson 2008: 283). This relatively high number of Navajo speakers, for example, stands in stark contrast to numbers of Native speakers of California tribes, where many languages

33 In contrast to the large number of Navajo speakers, a language survey conducted in 1962 showed fifty-one American Indian languages were spoken by a community of ten speakers or less (Henson 2008: 136), which means that in all likelihood most of these languages are dying or are now dead.
have either died out completely or are currently being revitalized by only a handful of speakers at the outset (Hinton & Montijo 1994: 13-14). In some ways, then, the status of the Navajo language more closely resembles South American indigenous language communities such as Quechua or Aymara, where millions of speakers continue to use and learn their heritage language as their mother tongue.

However, this large number of Navajo speakers doesn’t reflect low rates of transmission from older to younger generations. As such, there is a significant generational gap between older and younger speakers, and, as seen in the frustration of the másání [grandma] at the Mustang station, increasing numbers of young Navajos do not speak (although many still understand) Navajo. For example, whereas tribes like the Mississippi Choctaw and San Felipe Pueblo now show that speakers between the ages of 5-18 sustain higher speaker rates than adult speakers in those same communities, as of 2000 the overall percentage of self-reported adult Navajo speakers is 83.3% and rates for children ages five and over is only 74% (Henson 2008: 283-284).34 Thus, more adults speak Navajo than do children, and some see major language shift and attrition as imminent in Navajo social spaces. In response to this shift and reflecting the ways that Native language use is now seen as an asset and an index of Navajo identity, some Navajo linguists and educators have become extremely proactive about reversing Navajo language decline. This concern has translated into a number of bilingual/bicultural schools on the

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34 It is also worth noting, however, that “speakers” reflected in this survey are not necessarily fluent in their language; instead, the way “speaker” was used for the purposes of the survey is defined more broadly as “likely that the stated percentage of individuals sometimes use Native language in the home” (Ibid, 284).
reservation which are supported by Title VII “Bilingual Education Act” (1968) funds, chief among them the Rough Rock Community School (Rough Rock, AZ), Rock Point Community School (Rock Point, AZ), Little Singer Community School (Bird Springs, AZ) and the new Navajo language immersion school in Fort Defiance, Arizona, *Tséhootsoóí Diné Bi’Ólta.’* Each of these schools emphasizes both spoken and written fluency in the Navajo language and pedagogically expresses a direct link between the Navajo language and familiarity with traditional tenets of Navajo culture.

Today, there are also very few fluent Navajo speakers who can both read and write Navajo. This is because, overall, Navajo is still primarily an orally/aurally-transmitted language. Some Navajos of an older generation—say, sixty five and over—aren’t necessarily speakers or readers/writers of English, either, so reading and writing in Navajo—treating Navajo as a “literate” as opposed to an “oral/aural” language—is simply not that important or even relevant to the ability to communicate. When elderly people do choose to write, it is almost always in English, and thus Navajo language literacy is very rarely taught in the home. At the same time, *having* a written language to show to non-Navajos as an indicator of contemporary Navajo linguistic and cultural vitality—and dispelling any remaining tired myths about indigenous communication techniques as “primitive,” merely

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35 During the 2000-2001 school year, I was a high school instructor at the Rough Rock Community School, a bilingual/bicultural grant school located on the reservation and founded in 1968. I also had the privilege of observing at *Tséhootsoóí Diné Bi’Ólta* for one day in the fall of 2010. The latter was founded as a freestanding school in 2003 (http://www.wrschool.net/tdb/about_TDB.htm, accessed 2/21/2011).
pictographic or pre-literate—is also significant to many Navajos, regardless of whether they themselves can read and write in Navajo (Cohen 2009: 4).

As Dinwoodie observes in the case of British Columbia’s Tsilhqot’in Nation, showcasing an indigenous language specifically through its public, written form also indicates a strategic use of voice in the current climate of indigenous rights-based claims (Dinwoodie 1998: 195). In this sense, written language becomes one form of what Deborah House has called an “official and publicly sanctioned discourse” strategically communicated in public nation- and identity-building events (2002: xvi). For one, showing that a tribe has a language through use of its written form speaks to the prior occupation—what Clifford has called the “indigenous longue durée” (Clifford in Starn & de la Cadena 2007: 199)—of Aboriginal nations in settler colonies such as Canada. Second, documents written for public consumption in an indigenous language come to act as a particular “construal of ethnic nationhood in the terms of particular cultural traditions” (Dinwoodie 1998: 196) which privilege language as an index of cultural continuity. From the perspective of younger speakers literate in both English and Tsilhqut’in, the documents (a declaration written in both Tsilhqut’in and English in this case) thus legitimize Tsilhqut’in alongside English as a bona fide, publicly recognizable language (Dinwoodie 1998: 216).

We can see the ideological disjuncture (Meek 2010: 116) between those that speak versus those that read Navajo in the many Navajo-language signs that are

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36 Perhaps the best example of this linguistic and ideological shift is heard in the name change to an area on the mountainous AZ/NM border formerly known as “Washington Pass,” named after Colonel
cropping up and replacing English-language place names on the reservation, such as the town of Dalton Pass, New Mexico (Eastern Agency), which recently changed its sign name from “Dalton Pass” to the Navajo name, “Nahodishghish.” This disjuncturing is manifest in the fact that many fluent Navajos aren’t comfortable reading these sign names although they might use these same names frequently in their everyday speech.

In fact, it is really only those who teach Navajo as a second language that typically have the skills, time and access to materials and instruction to be fully literate in their language. Thus, many Navajos see Navajo language literacy as a privilege and an accomplishment rather than a commonly shared ability. Even then, becoming fully literate as an adult speaker can be quite challenging. As an example, my own Navajo language teacher, Shirley Bowman, participated in a five-year long program offered through the Ford Foundation and supervised by non-Native linguist, Clay Slate, to help Navajo language and culture instructors become fully

John M. Washington who led a military expedition there. This area of the Chuska mountains (off NM 134) was recently renamed to commemorate the great Navajo headman, Narbona, who was killed by Washington during the skirmish there in 1849, and is now officially called “Narbona Pass.” Thus, language use as it relates to place names is not only political but foregrounds the ability of a community to commemorate its history through processes of naming.

37 Interestingly, this sign name change has generated some debate, particularly vis-à-vis its correct spelling. My Navajo teacher noted that the correct spelling, based on its pronunciation, for Dalton Pass is “Nahodeeshgiizh,” not “Nahodishghish.”

38 As Solnit points out, place names, by their very definition, are almost always politically charged, and it is significant that, on the reservation now, English signs which memorialize non-Navajo individuals—Keam’s Canyon, Thoreau, Crownpoint—are gradually being replaced with Navajo names that are descriptions of places based on more permanent markers such as physical attributes (Solnit et. al 2005: 99).

39 A common exception to this rule is the shift I’ve noticed in the last five years or so, in which roadside signs which used to read “Squaw Dance”—indicating a three-day “sing” or ceremony—have now almost uniformly changed to be written in Navajo as Ndáá.’

40 I am thinking here of Navajo language instructors at high schools such as Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington, NM, and instructors at colleges/universities such as San Juan College (Farmington, NM), Diné College (Tsaile, AZ and elsewhere on the reservation), the University of New Mexico (Albuquerque and Gallup), and the Arizona state schools (NAU, ASU and U of A).

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fluent in reading and writing Navajo. In her case, of the original sixty participants, approximately six (including Shirley) graduated from the program (Shirley Bowman, 1/25/11, personal communication). In this way, based on their limited numbers, their funding from non-profits like the Ford Foundation, and connections to American Universities, fully literate Navajos form their own class of “tribal elites,” often acting as the liaisons and cultural “translators” between the Navajo and non-Navajo world of researchers (such as myself), employees and federal government representatives.

In contrast, many non-Navajo language learners, often faced with the challenge of learning Navajo away from the reservation without Navajo speakers to practice with, learn Navajo primarily as a written language through pairing language tapes and textbooks or through programs such as Rosetta Stone. For this reason, there is often a bizarre discrepancy between “community-external” (Hinton 2001: 40) Navajo speakers who are fully “fluent” in reading and writing (but cannot speak) and Navajos who are fully “fluent” in their speaking but often cannot read or write in Navajo. This disjuncture is probably amplified by the fact that many of the characters used to write in Navajo—such as glottal stops [], the lateral [], nasals [a, â, etc.] and trigraphs [ch’, tl’, ts’] look quite different than characters of the English alphabet, and by the fact that many reservation elementary schools only offer a term or two—if that—of Navajo language literacy.42

42 The phonology is never taught at the elementary level.
During my fieldwork, this speaking/reading divide was compounded by the odd state of affairs in which, while I’m not fluent in Navajo, I can write just about anything phonetically in Navajo, and so on occasion fluent Navajo speakers will commandeer me to write things out for them in Navajo (birthday signs, clan names). For example, in my Navajo language classes in Crownpoint taught by Shirley, I would often read long passages from children’s stories out loud, much to the amusement of my peers, using correct pronunciation and diction, but often have absolutely no idea what I was reading about! My peers, on the other hand, would snicker at the punch lines and often assumed that, since I was reading it correctly, I knew what I was saying/reading about and would later reference the story content to me in class discussions afterward. Thus, there was often an assumed association between good accent/diction and comprehension. In this way, ideas of literacy, comprehension and the anthropologist-cum-linguist as “expert” often become fused in Navajo sociolinguistic settings.

“At the Place where the Men Get Roasted:” Artfulness and Naming

Navajo is also an extremely descriptive and highly gendered language (Goertz et. al 2006). Almost every natural phenomenon has a male and female name, such as the words for “male” and “female” rain. Similarly, reservation mountain ranges, and the two canyons at Canyon de Chelly (de Chelly and del Muerto) are often paired as “male” and “female.” Even a term like “firewood” is denoted and gendered by the method in which it is obtained and by whom. Hauling wood in Tsaile, AZ with the Bia family one day, Tommy teases me for picking up the dry
kindling off the ground instead of lifting the freshly cut, heavier logs he has just cut and carrying them to the pickup truck. “We call that “sáanii bichizh” [old women’s firewood],” pointing to my arms full of dry groundfall. “What do you call that?” I ask him, pointing with my lips to the freshly cut logs. “Just plain ‘chizh’” [generic word for wood of any sort], he replies. As we discuss the term a little more with his wife later, they both explain to me that the word sáanii bichizh—and the generalization behind it—stems from the fact that men often fell the larger trees with an axe or chainsaw and load the cut logs (the “real” wood) into the vehicle or wagon, while the women pick up the groundfall (which, I would add in my defense, is dryer than freshly cut wood and makes for excellent kindling/fire starter!).

The descriptive qualities of the Navajo language also make it particularly apt for describing new cultural phenomena from a Navajo perspective, and Navajo speakers often also enjoy playing with contact between languages—for example, between English and Navajo. Indeed, this is something that David Samuels also notes about linguistic puns in the San Carlos Apache context (Samuels 2004: 4, 8). In this way, “English is ripe for punning opportunities in Navajo” (Webster 2009: 10). We can hear the remarkable amount of detail in the Navajo language in Navajo compound nouns43 including Navajo place names and particularly neologisms. For example, popular restaurants in the bordertown of Gallup, New Mexico such as Furr’s Cafeteria and Golden Corral have titles which simply describe the manner in which food is obtained at these establishments. Thus the Navajo name for Furr’s is

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43 An example of a compound noun is seen in the Navajo word for pickup truck, “chidi bikée’ji’ adeez’di” [car, behind it extending, the one that extends out], also glossed as a “car with an extension to the back of the vehicle.”
“Hazhdiiisho’idi” or “At the place where you scoot your tray along,” referring to its buffet and self-serve, and the name for Golden Corral is “Dziits’íhídi” or “At the place where you eat ‘til you pop,” referring to its all-you-can-eat policy (Shirley Bowman, field notes, Crownpoint Dialysis Center, Crownpoint, NM). The name for Furr’s Cafeteria, according to Shirley Bowman, is even more specific and socially descriptive, as it also implies, from a man’s perspective, that you are “scooting your tray along” with someone else, as in you are out on a date at Furr’s (or somewhere similar).

Similarly, one of the Navajo names for Wal-Mart from a male perspective is “Hastólí dach’íhídi” or “at the place where the men get roasted.” This moniker, according to Tommy Bia, describes the weekly ritual where, when families go to Gallup or Farmington, NM, on Saturdays to do their shopping at Wal-Mart, the men often wait in the vehicle out in the paved parking lot, getting hotter by the minute and “roasting,” while the women are inside, laboring over purchasing decisions or perhaps “visiting” with acquaintances (Tommy Bia, 11/05/2010). Making this roasting moniker even more apropos for its users, the Gallup Wal-Mart in particular—the highest grossing Wal-Mart in the U.S.—has become wildly popular for offering free “roasting” not of men but of Anaheim green chilies in the late summer months for customers that purchase their chilies from Wal-Mart.

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44 Speaking to its popularity with many surrounding Native communities (in this case Zuni and Navajo), Wal-Mart is also humorously referred to in English as “Gathering of Nations,” or even “The Gathering of Navajos and other Indians,” a take-off on the famous annual intertribal ceremonial that takes place in Albuquerque, New Mexico each April and the fact that it’s predominantly attended by Navajos. In Navajo, Wal-Mart is also simply called Naalyhéhé bá hóoghan hótsaaidí [at the large trading post].
Finally, the Navajo language is highly onomatopoetic and often quite literal in its naming practices. Words like chidí (car), hashtl'ish (mud), Gáamalií\(^{45}\) (Mormon) and Éé’ Neishoodii Daachaáigíí/Nidaamaasígíí (Pentecostals) come directly from the initial perceived sounds of these objects and people. Chidí and hashtl'ish are simply onomatopoeias for the noises of a car (allegedly from the sound of the first Model T Ford when it came to the reservation in the 1930s)\(^{46}\) and the sound one makes walking in mud (“tl'ish tl'ish” or “squish, squash”), respectively. Similarly, Christian denominations on the reservation are distinguished from one another by their speech acts, the way they dress and how they comport themselves during religious worship. Mormon missionaries, for example, were said to sound like they were mumbling all the time in their sermons and door-to-door proselytizing. These utterances in Navajo were sometimes described as “ghálí ghálí ghálí...” [bla bla bla...], so Mormons were given a Navajo name that sounds like they’re mumbling, gáamálii.\(^{47}\) Similarly, since Pentecostals are known to be very emotional and even cry during their services, they are called “the ones with the long robes [religious persons] who cry” (Ee’ neishoodii daachaáigíí) or even sometimes Éé’ neishodii nidaamaasígíí, or “the ones with the long robes [religious persons] who roll around on the ground” (Shirley Bowman 1/25/11, personal communication).

\(^{45}\) Another variation for “Gáamálii” is “Máamálii” (Young & Morgan 1987).

\(^{46}\) This is how the linguistic origin of “chidí” was described to me by my first Navajo language instructor, David McAllester.

\(^{47}\) Another version of the origin of this term shared with me by Shirley Bowman is that, when Navajos first heard the term “Mormon,” their closest approximation of it in Navajo was malii, since there is no “r” sound in the Navajo language. Malii then became Gamáalii (Shirley Bowman, personal communication, 1/25/11).
Blood and Language, Language and Identity

In contrast to some linguists’ views of language as a skill that is socially acquired, having Navajo “blood” and speaking Navajo are sometimes perceived to go hand in hand, particularly by Navajo speakers of an older generation. Thus, language is sometimes understood as something that exists within one’s self, a code that needs merely to be activated for those who have enough blood. At the Many Farms Conoco Station (10/31/09) one day doing laundry with my host sister, Karen, a middle-aged man approached us and skeptically asked Karen, in Navajo, if I was a “white Navajo” or a “white Indian,” because he hears us talking together in Navajo. This exchange, as one of many I observed, reveals the isomorphism between language and blood—that Navajos speak Navajo and Anglos speak English—in Navajo speech communities, such that a non-Navajo attempting to learn Navajo is often quite disconcerting to Navajo speakers. For example, whereas an aspiring French speaker can travel to France to practice French with Native speakers and most nationals know that she is a) an outsider and b) a beginning language learner and therefore contextualizes that individual’s halting utterances as such, on Navajo there is a much narrower and more proscribed social space for novice language learners. In other words, if you are not a linguist, trader, ethnographer or missionary, it is not only rare for a Bilagáana to speak Navajo; to do so is also sometimes regarded and challenged as biologically “unnatural.”

Going to the Navajo Nation to learn Navajo often evokes mixed emotions including encouragement, discomfort, curiosity and pity. Because part of my own
research interest was in a Navajo ethnography of speaking and in uses of language in daily discourse, despite these mixed reactions I decided that persevering in my own attempts to learn and interact in Navajo was more socially beneficial than detrimental. However, in contrast to anthropologist Jessica Cattelino’s experience in her early attempts to learn the Miccosukee or Creek/Muscogee languages, at no time was I told that learning Navajo was an issue of cultural property—i.e. “it’s ours not yours” or that I should respect Navajo sovereignty or cultural patrimony by not learning it (Cattelino 2008: 72). In fact, perhaps because there are many more Navajos\textsuperscript{48} than Florida Seminoles,\textsuperscript{49} my learning Navajo was considered less a threat than a novelty, and people liked to watch me, building on Philip Deloria’s concept of “playing Indian,” “play Navajo” by attempting to speak it, particularly in public settings. For example, for most gigs that \textit{Native Country} played for Navajo audiences, I was invariably asked to “introduce” myself in Navajo on stage, although I was usually the only band member to be asked to do so. This introduction would sometimes be followed by applause from Navajo-speaking members of the audience. In this way, similar to how ethnomusicologist Patricia Tang discusses her experience performing as an Asian American violinist in a Senegalese world music band, my speaking Navajo—and performing in a Navajo band—was (and is) often regarded and treated as an entertaining gimmick and a cultural curio (Tang 2007: 22-24).\textsuperscript{48}\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{48}Percentage-wise per population, there are also more Navajo language speakers than Creek/Muskogee or Miccosukee speakers.

\textsuperscript{49}There are approximately 3,300 citizens enrolled in the Seminole Tribe of Florida (Cattelino 2008: 17) as opposed to ca. 332,000 enrolled Navajos (2010 Census).
However, while non-Navajos are often exoticized when they speak Navajo, Navajos speaking Navajo are absolutely understood to be expressing their cultural patrimony, even their blood “obligation,” as a Diné. This is seen in the reaction of a former Diné College student to reading the introduction to David Samuels’ *Putting a Song on Top of It* (2004) for our class seminar discussion. In response to the passage “High school students who don’t speak a word of Apache nevertheless think of Apache as their language and consider English, the language they use every day, to be in truth someone else’s” (Samuels 2004a: 8), this student announced that this is exactly how he feels about Navajo as *his* heritage language. He elaborated that although he doesn’t really speak it—although his passive fluency is good—he absolutely sees Navajo as “his” language and English, the language he was talking to us in right then, as “someone else’s.” Further explaining this perspective where language is perceived as something that comes from deep within oneself, Peterson notes that:

> Many Navajos consider language to be within a person, part of a person, even if they lack basic proficiency in the language. Rex Jim, a Navajo educator and poet [and now Navajo Nation Vice President], told a group of students that “the gods have already given you the Navajo language; all you have to do is tap into it.” When speaking about Navajos who are not speakers of Navajo, consultants always phrased things in terms of “she lost her language” or “he doesn’t speak *his* language” (Peterson 2006: 58).

Because language is naturalized as something one “does” without applying concerted effort, learning Navajo is not only linguistically challenging but can also present social obstacles. Today on the Navajo Nation there are very few social spaces for Navajo language learners, both Navajo and non-, such that novice language learners are often treated as even somewhat cognitively impaired by older
Navajos because of their limited linguistic abilities in Navajo (never mind that they may be fully fluent in English or another language). In this way, limited linguistic abilities can be heard by other speakers as limited cognitive/cultural abilities, and can result in people speaking to you in louder-than-normal-voices and code-switching from Navajo into English.

Moreover, occupying the social category of language learner is often untenable because of the endless teasing that accompanies it. This teasing—something I often experienced but in a much gentler version than many of my Navajo language-learning peers—is a common element in Navajo society in general and is easily performed around quasi-cognates (particularly ones associated with sexual innuendo or bodily functions). Teasing most often occurs specifically between in-laws as a form of social control (Kluckhohn & Leighton 1946)—and as such is often encouraged and socially sanctioned in these contexts.

Navajo phonetic mastery can be quite challenging for a non-Native speaker and mispronunciations can often also become a source of teasing and communal laughter. For example, in a lesson on names for Navajo body parts at the Crownpoint Dialysis center with my teacher, I made the mistake of adding in a glottal stop in the Navajo word for “my nose,” “shichííh” (where “ší” means “my” and “chííh” means “nose”). Instead, I unwittingly pronounced a word with a totally different meaning—“shich’íí”—where there is a glottal stop after the “ch” digraph; quite unlike “shichííh. ” “shich’íí” translates to “my shit” (where “ch’íí” means “shit”). Since Shirley’s treatment chair was surrounded by fourteen other Navajos, many of them older, also receiving dialysis at the same time, the majority of them were within
earshot to hear my linguistic fumble. When Shirley’s belly started quietly heaving with mirth, I quickly looked around the clinic in embarrassment to see everyone else assiduously avoiding my gaze but in similarly heightened states of laughter. I, in turn, turned beet red, started feeling uncomfortable and, in embarrassment, abashedly requested to move on to another word less fraught with linguistic double entendre.

Indeed, as some of my Navajo peers have complained, it is almost as if older fluent speakers are sometimes actively listening for the mistakes of novice language learners (Zepeda & Hill in Robins & Uhlenbeck, eds., 1991: 141-142), ready to make a joke with the assumption that the person being teased understands it’s all in good fun and with a spirit of inclusion, not exclusion. And, while few of these puns or “intentional misconstructions” are malicious in intent, this teasing can be very isolating and discouraging for second language learners. This is especially true for speakers who are already linguistically self-conscious or who don’t even understand the joke to begin with because of limited linguistic comprehension. Thus, these jokes often seem to misfire. As a result, some learners—and Navajos in particular—feel so exposed and singled out for their efforts that they stop learning altogether, choosing, instead, to reoccupy their previous, higher status and safer cultural roles as mothers, teachers, employees, and as otherwise esteemed members of English-speaking, or “Navadlish” speaking, reservation communities.

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50 Indeed, these jokes are often executed by language instructors themselves as a way to cajole shy speakers out of their shell.

51 “Navadlish” is a local term for any form of code-mixed Navajo and English.
For example, one friend of mine told me that, as a junior high school student, she would try to practice Navajo at home with fluent adult speakers. Her uncles, upon overhearing her attempts, would tease her so badly that eventually she decided to stop speaking altogether in order to avoid the humiliation. In response, she chose to focus on other ways of expressing her Native identity, in this case through participating and excelling in slow-pitch softball, a popular pastime throughout Navajoland and Native North America. She explained that she felt that she was supposed to either “just know it,” i.e. know Navajo almost at a genetic level from birth, or not speak at all. Thus, as Meek notes, increased linguistic stratification often leads to “further marginalization of potential speakers” such as my friend (2010: 133). The middle ground of a language learner clearly made everyone uncomfortable. In these examples, we see a Navajo language ideology where language and blood depend on each other as mutually reinforcing indices just as language and Navajo also identity co-constitute one other, such that blood relies on language as language relies on identity.

Perhaps because so much of Navajo humor does revolve around word play and artful punning, many Navajos are extremely linguistically attuned and show a heightened sensitivity to language and language use. As such, part of Navajo sociality and proper language use is demonstrated through creative and skillful word play, as heard in the use of puns and jokes in particular. In this way, language for many Navajos is much “more than a grammatical system,” it is “something that people inhabit and that inhabits them as well” (Webster 2009: 11). Language is one outlet for the expression of, for example, the “felt attachment to aesthetic forms” or
what David Samuels has called the “feelingful iconicity” of linguistic forms (Samuels 2004a: 11). And it is often in the interstices of language play that many Navajos exhibit great pleasure in and appreciation for language use, as seen in the following cartoon by urban Navajo cartoonist, Kee Terry. Here, two different language ideologies, that of the urban “cosmopolitan” and the local “traditional,” are exemplified in the characters of Otter and “Grandma.” Grandma’s responses play on Vincent Craig’s ubiquitous usage of the descriptors “gooder” and “somehow.”

![Otter Cartoon](image)

**Figure 22. Otter Cartoon (reprinted from Peterson 2006: 134, Courtesy of The Navajo Times); Used with Permission.**

Although depicted as a “traditional” Navajo through her hairstyle (a hair bun called a *tsiít’óól*), floor-length satin skirt and non-standard English [“way, way back we talk ‘gooder’”], in all Otter cartoons Grandma is shown speaking in English, not
Navajo. Moreover, because of the scare quotes Terry uses around terms understood to mark Navajo English such as “gooder” and “somehow,” I interpret Grandma’s speech act here as a commentary on the usage of these terms rather than their bona fide incorporation into her own speech. Again, like Earl Tulley’s performative use of Navajo during his stump speech, Terry’s “Grandma” uses Navajo English as a type of performance, a comment, perhaps, on the imperfect English used by a certain generation of mother-tongue Navajo speakers younger than herself but older than her slang-speaking grandson. Thus, Grandma’s assumed fluency in Navajo gives her the leverage to not only make fun of her grandson and his urban slang [“Yo wassup?!], but also, by implication, ascribes her the linguistic prestige to tease other Navajos who speak English with a thick Navajo or “jáán” accent.

In another example of wordplay and heightened attention to language, at Native Country’s last public performance before I left Chinle for North Carolina, bandleader Tommy Bia told a joke to a small group of Indian Health Service (IHS) employees, seated outside at the Chinle Comprehensive Healthcare Facility (CCHF). The joke revolves around a pun and is translated from Navajo:

An elderly couple had been fighting all morning. It is August, the season for piñon picking, and so in the early afternoon, they decide to go into the hills to harvest some piñon [pine] nuts. They separate and each starts harvesting from a separate tree. The elderly man (cheii) discovers that his tree has large, plentiful nuts and, seeing that his wife’s tree is already picked over, wants to tell her to come over and pick nuts with him at his tree. “Kójí danitsaa” (“Over here, they [the nuts] are big”), he says to her. Misinterpreting what he says and still upset about their fight that morning, she hears him say, instead, “Kójí danitsaah!” (“Come over here and die!”) and becomes irate; the fighting then begins again (translation, Tommy Bia, 11/04/10).
Tommy’s joke isn’t one that he’s made up himself. Rather, it’s a joke from an extant repertoire of Navajo jokes that fluent Navajo speakers love to retell in appropriate public forums. These jokes often entail double entendre and subtle or not so subtle references to bodily functions or sexual innuendo. Tommy’s humorous anecdote plays with the very subtle difference between “danitsaa” and the more finally aspirated “danitsaah,” a phonetic distinction I can still barely hear as an intermediate Navajo speaker. These jokes foreground linguistic distinctions in words, underscoring how sonically they are similar but semantically can refer to something as different in meaning as “they are big” is from “lie down and die.” As such, the retelling of such jokes is an admission of just how easy it is, even for Navajos, to sometimes mishear their heritage language even as they are speakers of it.

But it is also a performance which emphasizes the pleasure with which people listen to the craft that is artful Navajo language use. In this way, skillful joking is in some ways the quintessential example of what Webster might term a linguistically “secured domain,” in that these jokes are delivered by artful speakers for the benefit of artful listeners who can understand the linguistic distinctions and cultural humor implied in the performance. Joking is a linguistic domain from which both the speaker and listener(s) can only understand and “get” the joke if they are fluent in Navajo.\textsuperscript{52} In this way, both Kee Terry’s “Grandma” and Tommy\textsuperscript{53} use their

\textsuperscript{52} For example, when I asked other members of the band who aren’t quite as fluent as Tommy in Navajo to translate it for me as he spoke, they said they didn’t quite “get it” or weren’t comfortable translating it into English and that I should really just ask him afterwards for his own translation.
linguistic knowledge to make fun of two rez-based, generational speaker types, showing how particular identities are indeed linked to particular speaker types. In Tommy’s case, he makes fun of an older Navajo couple squabbling, and in Grandma’s case she makes light of middle-aged Navajos who speak English with a “jáán” accent: both draw on a repertoire of codified Navajo humor and linguistic ideology to effect their performances. As such, both jokes can be read as social commentaries on Navajo generational differences and how these differences are manifested through speech.

Proper language use also often secures public perceptions of belonging to a Nation where the “national” language is Navajo. In this way, similar to what Eleanor Nevins observes about language revitalization in White Mountain Apache speech communities, Navajo—like other “national languages”—is articulated as the national language of the Navajo Nation, spoken by Navajo citizens alone (Nevins 2004: 272). In contrast to the example of a European nation, however, the Nation in this case specifically defines its citizenry based on a blood percentage and an a priori assumption that language is always-already inside anyone that wishes to access it. These ideologies of blood and language partly explain, I think, how blood becomes so strongly tied into the equation of speaking the Navajo language and Navajo identity more broadly.

The “Artificial” Navajo: Language as Index of Navajoness

53 This is the only time I heard Tommy tell a joke completely in Navajo, perhaps because it excludes less fluent speakers such as his son, the drummer for the band.
Some of the expectations about blood and language were revealed in many of the comments that my host mother, Jane Tom (no relation to Orlando Tom), and her daughter, Karen Morgan, made to me while I was living in their family's main ceremonial *hooghan* for 2½ months in the fall and winter of 2009.

One evening I got lost in a blizzard driving back on the short stretch of dirt road between a friend’s house and my *hooghan*—an incident the Tom family found quite amusing. Upon arriving for a visit at her house the next evening in Rough Rock, Karen teased me, calling me “the artificial Navajo lost in the snowstorm.” “Artificial,” she explained to me, because I’m a *Bilagáana* and not a Navajo, and because I managed to get lost on a road on which a “local,” such as one of her family members, probably never would. “Navajo,” in turn, because I speak (some) Navajo, which, despite my skin color, makes me (at least for the purposes of the joke) “temporarily” Navajo. Like the comment made at the Many Farms Conoco with Karen, speaking (some) Navajo gave me the ambiguous status of an “artificial” or “white” Navajo/Indian.

My host mother in particular also strongly associated language as a reflection of “being Navajo”—what Samuels would term a “transparent index,” in which being Navajo means speaking Navajo. This was evident in a more recent return visit to the Toms after I had moved out of the *hooghan* (October 2010), when a friend and I were sitting at their kitchen table and visiting. In this instance, Jane said something to me in Navajo, I didn’t understand her and I then asked for clarification. In English, she then said to me quite pointedly and with a note of exasperation in her voice, “*Shiyázhí [my little one], Don’t become a bilagáana!!*” (Jane Tom, October 2010, Tom
residence, Rough Rock, Arizona). This comment, clearly meant to catalyze me into brushing up on my rusty Navajo, is complicated on multiple levels, because, of course, I am a *bilagáana*. Although Jane clearly knows this too, it’s unclear to me whether she has a) come to see me as being in some way Navajo because she considers me to be her daughter and she is Navajo (she often told me, for instance, that she was looking forward to having additional grandchildren through me); b) sees me as being slightly Navajo because I speak some Navajo or c) is simply using *Bilagáana* in its more derogatory sense as a foil and, by her warning tone, simply means “don’t become one of them” or “don’t lose your Navajo language/connection to Navajo culture/don’t become ignorant about Navajo language and culture like other *Bilagáanas*.” Reinforcing the last interpretation, when she is particularly frustrated with her Navajo paternal grandchildren (her “nálís”) who are less-than-fluent in Navajo and sometimes can’t understand her when she speaks to them in Navajo (usually in the form of directives or requests), Jane also sometimes refers to them with irritation as “*Bilagáanas*.”

These and similar comments show how strongly Jane, as an older Navajo woman from a rural community, associates speaking Navajo with being, looking and “acting” Navajo, and, conversely, how she associates not understanding Navajo with other another linguistic habitus or, as they say in Navajo, with another way of “walking around” (*naaghá*) in the world.

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54 Eleanor Nevins notes a similar phenomenon on the White Mountain Apache reservation, in which middle-aged Apache speakers refer to their non-fluent Apache grandchildren using expressions like “Those white people!” and “I live with a bunch of White people here!” (2004: 281). In this case, these phrases are used to note, with both humor and exasperation, how lack of linguistic knowledge is linked to a loss of cooperative participation in Apache social life and family activities.
Finally, moving to the *hooghan* to ostensibly learn Navajo and help care for an elderly couple was a supreme lesson in the law of unintended consequences. Although I did my best to insist on speaking Navajo all the time, my host parents had goals of their own, and one of those goals, for my host father, Kee Tom [my “*cheii*” or maternal grandfather], in particular, was to learn English with my help. Since he had limited formal education and was self-conscious about his English, I obliged by doing English lessons with him in the evenings while we intermittently watched his favorite show, “World Wrestling Entertainment” (WWE), on TV. In this way, Jane and Kee spoke English to me when they wanted and they also sometimes spoke in Navajo to me when they wanted. The decision to speak to me in English, however, was also affected by my “yellow hair.”

After our initial meeting in June 2009, Jane, who is in her early seventies, wanted to give me a Navajo-sounding name that reflected my *Bilagáana* background and decided to call me Asdzáá’ *Litsóí* or “Yellow Woman,” referring to my hair color. Once I moved into the *hooghan*, she admitted one day that she was really having a lot of trouble speaking Navajo to a *Bilagáana*. Exasperated after I’d asked her, for the umpteenth time, to talk to me in Navajo [me: “*Dinék’ehjí, shimá*”], she exclaimed: “*Shich’é’é* [my daughter], maybe it’s because your hair is yellow that I can’t talk to you [in Navajo]!” (Jane Tom, Rough Rock Arizona, 12/12/09).

Me speaking in Navajo—particularly in bar settings where I would be asked by our bandleader to “introduce myself in Navajo” to the crowd—also led to other conflations of language, blood and habitus, in which I was told I was “really” Navajo
on the inside and only “white” on the outside. Again, in this particular case, the fact that I was a female, Anglo speaker seemed to attract particular attention.

During a set break performing at the Windy Mesa Bar in Page, Arizona, a middle-aged Navajo lady, Sarah, approached me and gifted me with a beautiful pair of white shell earrings. She told me the gift was because I reminded her of her young niece, who also liked to sing and is ½ Navajo and ½ bilagáana. Referencing my speaking Navajo in my stage introduction, Sarah reconciled the linguistic disjuncture she perceived by inverting the derogatory term “apple” by telling me and my band mates that, instead, I must really be “white on the outside but red on the inside!” (Sarah Jackson, Windy Mesa Bar, 10/04/09).

**Conclusion: The Multi-Voiced Utterance**

In examining aesthetic, affective and humorous attachments to language in daily discourse, we see how the speaking voice can be used both to secure one’s place within the social field of Navajo relations or, conversely, how voice can also be used, in the case of John Yazzie, the Crownpoint Chapter President and the teenage cashier at the Mustang station, to exclude, silence or marginalize. These processes of incorporation and liminality (van Gennep 1909), in turn, must be interpreted in relation to other judgments of Navajoness, such as contexts of speaking, claims to linguistic and cultural expertise, the type of Navajo one speaks, and the age and prestige group of the addressee and addressee in what Roman Jakobson (among

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55 Apple is a term used on the reservation to describe “Navajos deemed to be more Anglo than Navajo” (Peterson 2006: 103) or to denote Navajos who are “red” [i.e. Indian] on the outside but “white” on the inside.
others) has called the “speech act” (Jakobson 1960). In this way, an analysis of the utterance shows us the ambiguous and incomplete functions of language and voice in Navajo speech communities, such that the voice itself—and the sounds or voicings it makes—indexes multiple, and often conflicting and contradictory, messages (House 2002: xvi).

Similarly, the speaking voice comes to articulate crucial elements of social practice, such as who can speak for whom or who has the right to correct the speech of another, in both private and public settings. Thus, different identities become attached to different Navajo speaker types, which in turn give certain speakers—based on their gender, age, community prestige, and their own position within the sociolinguistic hierarchy—more authority than others.

Layered on top of this, we see how in some cases having Navajo “blood” also points to the expectation that someone speak or “tap into” Navajo in order to be considered “fully” and locatably “Navajo.” Tied to this is the idea that having Navajo “blood” obliges one to activate one’s linguistic knowledge and not simply let it lie dormant. In this sense, language operates as the middle term in an equation in which blood is to language as language is to identity.

But to say that the only way to be “Navajo” is to speak one’s heritage language is to exclude the 26% (or more) of Navajos ages 5-18 who do not speak Navajo, many of whom do strongly identify as Navajo and have a strong affective connection to the Navajo language, even if, like my Diné College student, they don’t necessarily speak it. As evidenced in the examples discussed throughout this chapter, Navajos today are trying to come to terms with just this question, where
language shift has started to make English, in addition to Navajo, the “national” language of the Navajo Nation. Thus, as Peterson notes, we are seeing a shift where “marked forms of English” can also “index a Native American identity” (2006: 87).

Part of the conflict, of course, is in making rights claims as a sovereign nation located within the larger settler colony of the United States, and the recognition that having a national language distinct from English is an important tool—a sonic marker of social and cultural difference—in making these claims for political, environmental or cultural ends. In reversing language shift and encouraging Navajos willing to put in the time to learn their heritage language, the Navajo Nation may need to create learning environments socially appropriate to Navajo learning styles. College classrooms, for example, where Navajo is taught using methods similar to how other “foreign” languages are taught, provide one learning environment already in place, but as Nevins notes in the case of White Mountain Apache speech communities, other, context-based language environments may ultimately be more effective in teaching language skills that can be contextualized within a social paradigm of Navajo cooperative participation. Elementary school programs such as Tséhootsooí Diné Bi’Olta’ and their in-house, grandparent mentorship program may ultimately have more long-term success—and cultural credibility—in this domain.

Another way to address the difficulties experienced by second language learners might indeed be through working to remove some of the social stigmas associated with not being fully “fluent”—especially since, as per the KTNN survey, the bulk of Navajo speakers see themselves as not being fluent—and through actively opening up social spaces for language practice, play and for making
mistakes. Yet another method might be to make non-speakers who mark their Navajoness through other expressive forms beyond their southern Athabaskan heritage language more publicly visible. In this regard, the former Miss Navajo Nation (2010-2011), Winnifred Bessie Jumbo of Two Grey Hills, New Mexico, may have some salient advice. A recent graduate of Brown University, where she majored in anthropology with an emphasis in Native language revitalization, Jumbo publicly\(^{56}\) acknowledges the fact that she isn’t fully fluent in Navajo. Despite this perceived shortcoming and despite Navajo fluency being a criterion for electing a Miss Navajo, discussed in the previous chapter, in a feature article for the *Navajo Times* written shortly after her crowning she stated that language revitalization would be one of the central foci of her reign.\(^ {57}\) Noting that "I’m somewhat of a fluent speaker but I’m always learning new terms as I go," she states, "I want to stress to people that it’s OK to speak Navajo *even if you don’t speak it fluently*. It’s OK to learn Navajo even if it’s just your [Native language] introduction or your clans" (Jumbo in Smith 2010: 1; italics mine).

Through Miss Navajo’s comments, we see how the English-only policies of the past and the place of Navajo language within the Navajo cosmology live on in the heightened sensitivity to language use and language performance found in many Navajo communities. Further, while I have presented a case study around bilingualism and specifically of Native language use in places increasingly

\(^{56}\)This is the first time that, to my knowledge, a Miss Navajo has publicly admitted after her crowning that she isn’t fully fluent in her heritage language.

\(^{57}\)It is interesting and perhaps apropos to note that, for the 2010 Miss Navajo Pageant, almost every contestant ran on a campaign strongly advocating Navajo language revitalization (field notes, Navajo Nation Museum, Window Rock).
dominated by English, the issues presented are also culture-specific and unique to Navajo speech communities in the affect, sense of struggle, and generational language politics shared by the many speakers of Navajo and/or English featured here. Thus, while I have used voice as a more general analytic concept to examine Navajo language politics, voice is also, as Dinwoodie reminds us, a Navajo-culture specific trope with its own bundle of meanings, associations and sounds (Dinwoodie 1998). In this way, language performance articulates with other kinds of performance, including the kinds of musical performance and ideas of sonic difference as social difference I document in the chapter that follows, “Sounding Navajo.”

For this Miss Navajo, her utterance in Naabeehó bizaad — imperfect, incomplete and halting as it may be—and her insistence that it’s still “her language” and not someone else's (such as that of an elder, a medicine man, or a speaker of a prestige variety of Navajo) speaks to a newer and more flexible structure of voicing that some younger Navajos are now adopting toward their heritage language. As such, in her process to, as she puts it, “learn new terms as she goes,” her own speech is dialogic; she is constantly learning new vocabulary from those who are better speakers than herself, but she’s also offering up her own views on language and language-use in return. Using her prestige as Miss Navajo and her cultural capital as a female culture bearer in Navajo society, Miss Navajo calls attention to the issue of language stigmatization for second language learners by insisting that speaking some Navajo is better than not speaking at all. As such, Miss Jumbo expands a category where only those who speak Saadsáñí “really” speak Navajo. In the process,
she also challenges a Navajo linguistic politics of difference in which those who speak “more” or “better” Navajo are in some sense understood to be “more Navajo.” By admitting her linguistic imperfections and yet insisting on making her own voice heard in Navajo regardless, she uses speech to transform the “substance” or stigma of learning Navajo—and the sociolinguistic disjunctures this creates for many speakers—into a symbol of power and grace in the face of historic challenges and cultural loss.

Finally, in articulating her own stance toward a new, Native language pedagogy, the former Miss Navajo rearticulates social practice and a Navajo theory of voice as being about maneuverability, doing your best with what you have at hand, and taking pride in the heritage language one has been given. As some Navajo traditionalists might say, emphasizing the Navajo ethic of individual responsibility and the importance of following one’s own path, T’áá ako ájit’éego [to each in their own way].
Chapter Five

“‘Sounding Navajo:’ Exclusion, Inclusion, and the Politics of Tradition”

Now all the Indians all dress like cowboys
And the cowboys have turquoise and leather on.

~Country singer Johnny Lee, “Cherokee Fiddle”~

March 23rd, 2010. I am sitting with the lead singer for the Mother Earth Blues Band (MEBB), Charlene “Chucki” Begay, in a cozy bar in downtown Gallup, New Mexico, called the Coal Street Pub. A grandmother of four, at age fifty-two Chucki (Kinyaa’áanii) is sleekly dressed in all black and looks at least ten years younger than her age. It’s late afternoon, rock music is blaring through the house speakers as the waitresses gear up for the night shift, and we’ve just been served chocolate cake and coffee. Chucki is sharing her stories of life as a musician with me. As we talk, Chucki, who planned to become a lawyer before she found out she had a degenerative eye disease, repeatedly describes her band and the music they perform as “soulful.” She is telling me about the first time she and the lead guitar player, Richard “Ritchi” Anderson, Jr., took a CD of their rock- and blues-inspired music to the local country radio station, KTNN AM 660, in the tribal capital of Window Rock, AZ, hoping to get some airplay. After listening to the CD, the Navajo deejay informs Ritchi that he won’t be able to air his music, telling him “you don’t sound Navajo enough.” This comment really got the ire of the band, as this station
plays many local bands on its airwaves, although these are more typically country and metal bands.

![Image of Chucki Begay](https://www.navajotimes.com); Used with Permission

Figure 23. “Chucki Begay” ([www.navajotimes.com](http://www.navajotimes.com)); Used with Permission

What does it mean to “sound Navajo” and how does one successfully “sound” one’s Navajoness? How do ideas of musical genre, gender\(^1\) and the nation play into making this determination? If, as we saw with Radmilla, Navajo ideas of difference and belonging are sometimes overdetermined through language, place of origin, blood and phenotype, how do sonic differences also carry social differences?

\(^1\) Following Joan Scott, I treat gender throughout as an analytic category to be questioned, a “social category imposed on a sexed body,” and thus not a stable and “natural” social identity (Scott 1999: 32).
Further, if voice and vocality in particular are “among the body’s first mechanisms of difference” (Feld, Fox, Porcello & Samuels in Duranti 2004: 341), how might markers of social hierarchy—gender, class, phenotype, place of origin and linguistic knowledge—be rendered socially intelligible through the voice itself? In other words, how is a Navajo politics of difference activated by and heard through an aesthetics of voice and voices? For example, how do some voices, in the words of musicians I played with, sound “crispy” “clean,” “deep” or “soulful,” while other voices/singers are only “in it for the money”? In what ways does voices show signs of wear by sounding “dull” and “hoarse” and are no longer able to perform songs from memory, relying on “cheat sheets” [lead sheets] instead (Chucki Begay, Gallup, NM, 3/23/2010; Tommy Bia, Carson Mesa, 5/14/2009)?

Hardly exclusive to the anthropologist, these questions about what sounding Navajo might mean were also very much on Chucki Begay’s mind after her visit to KTNN. She continues: “What does that [sounding Navajo] mean? KTNN plays a lot of Navajo country, mostly country2...The chapter house [country] bands are big on the reservation. They got their own sound. A lot of times it’s not a professional sound. That’s what they [KTNN deejays] mean I think. We sound too mainstream [i.e. professional] for them” (Begay 2010).3 Thus, from Chucki’s perspective, sounding

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2 In the context of popular music and other American Indian communities, it is not always the case that country music is the genre understood to best narrate a peoples’ rural way of life (an explanation often used to explain the deep connection between Navajos and country music). For example, on the Hopi Nation—a tribe also located in Arizona and whose land base is completely encompassed by the Navajo Nation—reggae music is known to reign supreme as the “representative” music of choice (Jacobsen, personal communication with KTNN marketing director, Edmund Ciccarello, see also Walsh 2008, M.A. thesis, “Rez rhythms: An analysis of contemporary Hopi reggae”; Ullestad 1997; Chang & Chen 1998: 4).
Navajo for this deejay means “sounding like” the chapterhouse bands. Those were the first Navajo groups, back in the 1960s and 1970s, to perform popular music, all male and playing mostly country music (Jacobsen 2009). What, then, does it mean that, for some older Navajo listeners and fans, “sounding Navajo” becomes equated with “sounding country,” and that, among other things, this sound is gendered as a man’s voice? Further, how has country music—a commodified music genre that emerged in commercial form in the 1920s in the southeastern United States and traveled to the Navajo Nation via AM radio airways—come to sometimes index both “Navajoness” and “tradition”?

This chapter examines the meaning of sound in what does and doesn’t count as Navajo and why. I foreground a Navajo affective attachment to voices, showing how, paraphrasing Navajo comedian Vincent Craig, certain voices for certain people are “just somehow.” I look at the different sonic forms that Navajoness can take, sounds that are shaped by decisions about genre (country or “something else”), gender (the register of the male singing voice versus a female voice), and

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3 Chucki Begay, interview by author, 25 March 2010, digital recording, Coal Street Pub, Gallup, NM.
4 In referring to the Navajo Nation, throughout this chapter I interchangeably use “Navajo Nation” and, where appropriate, simply “Nation.”

5 In discussing affective attachment to voices and to other objects of so-called modernity, I am reminded here of Navajo poet Luci Tapahonso’s poem, “Hills Brothers Coffee,” where the narrator’s uncle, shidá’, talks with great affect about his favorite brand (Hills Brothers) of coffee, saying repeatedly in what sounds like a direct translation from Navajo: “Ah-h, that’s the one that does it for me”/But this is the one./It does it good for me” (Tapahonso, Sāanii Dahataat, 1993: 28).

6 I discuss the uses of “somehow” in everyday speech more extensively in the Introduction and Chapter Four.
relationships to technology (the “chapterhouse” sound versus sounding “mainstream”). Buttressing these sounds are other factors, including where you live and record your music, the P.A. equipment you use to perform, and whether your band fits the criteria of sounding “rez” or “jáán.”

Moving between analyses of listeners and performers, and between agents’ and institutional perspectives on Navajoness, I trace the ways that many of these aesthetics were initially formed through listening to one, late-night radio station out of Oklahoma City, KOMA AM 1520. In particular, I show how local performances of these sounds and songs come to be associated with a certain gendered idea of Navajo “tradition” and the “local” which continues to hold a certain moral authority for some on the reservation today.

For the musicians whose music and lives I discuss in this chapter, these affective attachments include a passion for the famous voices of Waylon Jennings, Gary Stuart, Johnny Horton, Johnny Cash, Don Williams, Loretta Lynn, Jimi Hendrix and Etta James, but also the lesser known voices of lead singers for Navajo and other Native southwestern “Native bands,” such as Vincent Craig, Ernest Murphy (Wingate Valley Boys), Johnny Emerson (The Fenders), Henry Watchman and Harold Mariano (Navajo Sundowners), Leon Skyhorse (Skyhorse), Tommy Bia (Native Country), Errison Littleben (Native Country/Neon Moon) and many others.

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7 “jáán” (also spelled “John”) is a term I discuss at length in Chapter One. It is a term denoting a rural, working-class Navajo. In musical contexts, someone who refers to themselves as jáán might be someone who is self-taught on their instrument.

8 “Native Bands” is the southwestern vernacular for bands with Native musicians who play and perform popular music (usually rock or country).

9 “Sundowners” is a Navajo euphemism for sheepherders, who typically come home with their sheep when the sun goes down.
Joining these attachments to larger questions of civic belonging and Navajo nationalism, I look at the role of gender and genre in determining who and what gets included and excluded from definitions of “sounding Navajo.” As Chatterjee (1989) and others (Nagel 1998; Altinay 2004; Neuberger 2004; Weidman 2006) have shown us, nations are gendered using a variety of expressive resources, including music. Using examples from Chucki’s experience as a female blues vocalist and Tommy Bia’s experience as a male vocalist fronting a country band, I probe how vocal tone color—and the ways a gendered voice, dialect and production value conjoin—effect the difference between a sense of belonging and what Salamishah Tillet has called “civic estrangement” (2009: 125). Writing in the context of post-Civil Rights U.S. racial politics, Tillet defines civic estrangement as “legal citizenship that is complicatedly coupled with a persistent sense of (...) estrangement from the rights and privileges of the contemporary public sphere” (Tillet 2009: 124). In joining Tillet’s concept to Balibar’s idea of “having a voice” as exerting an “effective presence in the public space” (1988:724) discussed in Chapter Two, I ask how country music becomes its own sort of nationalist project (Chatterjee 1989), where country and vocality are used as signifiers which perform and enable certain masculinist ideologies about Navajos, the Navajo Nation and Navajo tradition.

Indeed, some Navajos in their forties and older explicitly recognize country music as the popular music genre which best signals their Navajoness, albeit of a very proscriptive localized type and form. The late ethnomusicologist David P.
McAllester, in a sort of mea culpa for his own exclusive focus on Navajo ceremonial musics (like the Yé’ii Bicheii\textsuperscript{10} ceremony mentioned below), wrote that:

About twenty years after all Navajos were aware of it, I began to realize that the ceremonial music I was studying, though still vital and functioning in the culture, was not the music that fills the airwaves in the Navajo Nation (...) I began to listen to the many radio stations that broadcast to Navajo listeners and found that the great majority of requests sent in are for Waylon Jennings and Don Williams, rather than Yeibichai songs. (McAllester 1979:182).\textsuperscript{11}

The naturalization of country as an index of Navajoness thus takes place in part because of country music’s historical precedent in reservation spaces and the fact that it has existed concomitantly with “traditional” musical forms including ceremonial musics for over half a century. The sense of country’s historicity is further buttressed by its thematic/textual content, and the fact that its arrival preceded other genres such as blues, rap, hip hop or even heavy metal on the reservation. As the bassist for one Native band told me once about the connection between Navajo tradition and country music, “In our traditional culture out here, the LAND has a lot to do with it. You’re lookin’ at sheep, and cattle, things that our families have done for generations, and the kind of music that’s always gone along with that—has been country” (interview, Scott Chapin, 07/24/02, Many Farms, Arizona). Thus, country music carries nostalgia for older Navajo fans in particular—

\textsuperscript{10} Yé’ii Bicheii is the commonly used name for the formal curing ceremony known as the Nightway or Tl’ée’jí.

\textsuperscript{11} McAllester’s mea culpa also indexes an older style of anthropology, in which anthropologists studying Native North America were so focused on ideas of “tradition” that they missed important changes and engagements with modernity happening right in front of their eyes. A great example of this is Alfred Kroeber’s attempts to reconstruct traditional Yahi culture in photographing Ishi, the last “Wild Indian,” and ignoring Ishi’s own preference for more contemporary tools including arrowheads made of glass rather than obsidian and harpoons made with nails instead of wooden tips (Starn 2004).
those who attended the first era of “dances” put on by Navajo country bands—and dancing to country songs you know and love, in turn, enables an age-specific sociality both then and now. In this way, nostalgia, as Louise Meintjes notes in another musical context, “carries weight” and becomes strongly fused to ideas of tradition and traditional culture (Meintjes 2010: 2).

We can understand the tension between belonging and estrangement as a struggle between two sets of contrasting aesthetics—a local, inwardly directed aesthetics and a cosmopolitan, more outwardly directed sensibility whose target audience is beyond the Nation (Peterson 2006: 111). Viewed from this perspective, we can see that when a band’s recording sounds (what Tommy refers to as) “rez” or “jáán” this becomes a sound of inclusion on the reservation, but also sounds an exclusion beyond the confines of the Navajo Nation in the larger non-Navajo music scene. Conversely, not sounding “jáán”—sounding mainstream or “professional”—serves to exclude bands from a sense of belonging in Navajo contexts and on the Navajo reservation, but often signals a larger acceptance and incorporation into non-Navajo musical circuits and scenes and furthers a band’s ability to get off-reservation gigs. Thus, sounding country, and sounding “rez” or “jáán” in particular, produces and enables a particular kind of on-reservation sociality, where the idea of “making do,” and helping one another make do, becomes central to the musical aesthetics of rez country itself.

I conclude by looking at the ways in which a premium on hi-fidelity male sociality (Meintjes 2010: 2)—harmonious social relations—implies a set of limits and a sense of provisionality which sometimes leads to a “lower-fi” live or recorded
sound. In other words, while knowing and liking "hi-fi" sound, Navajo musicians often privilege the social over the musically technical in musical contexts, especially if privileging the musical means asking someone to leave the band or not play (be silent) in order to achieve that sound. This social “poetics of manhood” (Herzfeld 1988), in turn, emphasizes interrelatedness (often through kinship ties) and relations of obligation and reciprocity. Thus, through living and working in a provisional geographic and social space—on a reservation where unemployment currently tops 60% and where type 2 diabetes and kidney failure take many lives before they’ve been fully lived—a “lo-fi aesthetic is at once hi fi male sociality” (Meintjes forthcoming: 29). Through this dense network of social relations, performed and enacted through musical practice, an artful masculinity can be cultivated.

Such a “hi-fi” sociality formalizes the social networks created through music making, such that working as a “free lance” musician or simply “sitting in”—practices which repeatedly attach and then detach you to multiple musical communities—is much less common and less socially acceptable in the Navajo Native band scene (Jacobsen fieldnotes summer 2009). Rather, with some notable exceptions, music is often seen as a male domain of practice where men intimately forge and publicly perform their relationships with each other on a Friday or Saturday night or by recording tracks of themselves and others in the private spaces of their garages and living rooms with their own 8-track recorders. In a context where social relations are made primary, albums are often self-produced in all-
Native music spaces or made in off-reservation recording studios\textsuperscript{12} who charge $500-$1000 to produce an entire album in one day. Thus, as Meintjes notes about the lo-fi recordings of Zulu men’s *ngoma* song and dance in the South African context, this performance of “dense male sociality is as much about the male space of the studio [or living room 8-track] as it is about the public life of *ngoma* performance” (forthcoming: 5-6). Music making and the dense, place-based sociality that accompanies it can therefore be both private and public. Understanding these aesthetic, gendered and territorial dimensions (Ottosson 2006; Dent 2009) is not only essential to comprehending the day-to-day cultural politics behind Navajo music making. Rather, I suggest it is also central to understanding the larger politics of sameness and difference undergirding performances of Navajo and indigenous identities in the broader sense, as well.

**Part 1: KOMA and the Politics of Tradition**

As David Samuels notes of popular music on the San Carlos Apache reservation, “there is no doubting the moral authority of tradition” (Samuels 2004a: 8) on American Indian reservations and within Indian communities today. However, what and who comes to be seen as representing “tradition,” from the perspective of both listeners and performers, is partly a question of aesthetics, target audiences and cultural politics. Thus, although discursively portrayed as “fixed” and

\textsuperscript{12} A commonly used studio for Native band recordings is “Alta Vista” out of Albuquerque, NM.
unchanging, understandings of "tradition," the local and the cosmopolitan are often highly contingent and provisional. Take country music and KOMA\(^\text{13}\) as an example.

In both interviews and casual conversation, each musician I played with over the age of forty consistently mentioned their personal stories and intimate listening experiences tuning in to KOMA out of Oklahoma City in the 1960s, 70s and ‘80s.\(^\text{14}\) KOMA (AM 1520) was an AM station that only broadcast in the evenings and played a mix of country, rock ‘n roll, the Beatles, and other popular “hits” from that time period until, in 1980, it changed its format to country music. As the station recalls about its own legacy in the 70s and 80s, ”These were considered by many to be the best years of radio. And for baby boomers across the western US, KOMA was king” (http://www.komaradio.com/komainfo.aspx, accessed 5/22/11).

In the beginning, KOMA was the only radio station for which most reservation residents could get a signal and, even then, it was at best intermittent. Errison Littleben of Native Country recalls listening to announcer “Wolfman Jack” on KOMA as a child growing up in his family's hooghan between Round Rock and Rock

\(^{13}\) Not coincidentally, listening to KOMA in strategic places for better reception, such as at “FM Hill” in San Carlos, plays an important role in the lives of San Carlos Apache musicians with whom Samuels did his ethnographic research, as well.

\(^{14}\) This residual affect for a radio station no longer broadcasting is not unique to Navajos. As evidenced in the following quote, KOMA comprises a shared memory for many adults of all ethnicities growing up in the western United States during KOMA’s hey-day. “Throughout the 60’s and 70’s, KOMA was the favorite of teens all across the western US. With the big 50,000-watt signal and the relatively few rock-n-roll radio stations across the plains, KOMA was the main station for the hits. KOMA (along with handful of other legendary stations including 890 WLS, Chicago; 1090 KAAY, Little Rock; 1060 WNOE, New Orleans; 770 WABC, New York; 800 CKLW, Windsor/Detroit; and 1100 WKYC, Cleveland) could be heard on car radios, in homes, and everywhere a kid could tune in. Often teens in New Mexico, Arizona, Wyoming, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, and other western states would eagerly await sunset when the mighty 1520 would come booming through with the newest hits of the day. They would sit in their cars on hilltops, turn it up at parties, or fall asleep with the radio next to their beds as they listened to Chuck Berry, the Supremes, Paul Revere and the Raiders, and the Beatles. Soldiers in Viet Nam even reported tuning in KOMA to give them a little feeling of being back home” (http://www.komaradio.com/komainfo.aspx, accessed 5/22/11).
Point, AZ. Including all the vivid details of a precious memory, Errison recounts how he and his siblings would warm up the radio batteries on the woodstove and then run a copper wire from the radio along the pipe and up through the roof of the hooghan to act as a conduit. They would then listen for a precious hour with their small, battery-operated radio placed in the center of the hooghan. It was also on KOMA where Tommy Bia, growing up in a log cabin on Carson Mesa near Many Farms, AZ (where they also ran a copper wire through the roof to get reception), heard some of the songs for which he still, some forty years later, tells me he holds the most affect. These include Claude King’s “Wolverton Mountain,” “North to Alaska” and “Johnny Reb” by Johnny Horton, Johnny Cash’s “Folsom Prison Blues,” George Jones’ “The Window Up Above” and, later, also songs by Waylon Jennings.¹⁵

For Shirley Bowman, herself a big fan of Native bands and whose brother was also in a band before he went to Vietnam, listening to the radio was a privilege, something that was regulated and where often the whole family would sit down in their hooghan in the evening and listen to the latest sounds. She recalls: “We liked to listen to KOMA. It only came on at night (...) As we were growing up, [my mom] restricted us to listening to radio just once in the evening for an hour, then she’d turn it off, at that time we didn’t have electricity so a lot of our radios were run on batteries” (Bowman 2009).¹⁶ These memories strongly link listening to KOMA with being reared in “traditional” dwelling places such as a hooghan or a hand-built log

¹⁵ Tommy notes that at night everyone listened to KOMA. During the day prior to 1985 (when KTNN AM 660 went on air), you could listen to KGAK, a Navajo-format country music station out of Gallup, NM.

¹⁶ Shirley Bowman, interview by author, digital recording, Crownpoint, NM, 27 May 2009.
cabin, where families had neither running water nor electricity. This lifestyle today—one increasingly rare for many Navajos—has come to be associated with Navajo “tradition” by younger generations of Navajos.

Like Radmilla’s story (Chapter Three) about learning to sing while herding sheep, the musicians I spoke with also strongly associate singing, playing and listening to the radio with working in a ranch environment and herding sheep in particular. In fact, AM radio’s portability—and the fact that most AM stations on the rez today are country music stations—is often one of the reasons used to explain the popularity of country music on the reservation in general. Tommy recalls how he and his brothers would come back from shepherding and listen to their battery-operated radio on hot summer afternoons, making music on their guitars once they were done with their chores. Similarly, Carson Craig, Chucki Begay and Radmilla Cody all talk about gaining their “voice”—their confidence to sing in public—by first singing to the sheep in the privacy of the canyons where they took them to graze. As Chucki recalls, “Music was always a big part of what I love. I’d make up songs. I’d herd sheep and I’d be up there in the canyon singing...So that’s how I knew the music was there [i.e., inside of her] (Begay 2010). Thus, for many musicians and singers in particular, isolated outdoor spaces became in effect private places of vocal pedagogy—where you “give your concerts in the canyon” and only the sheep will judge your singing (Ibid).

The link between living in traditional dwelling spaces, leading a “traditional” lifestyle caring for livestock, and listening to country music comes to strongly typify a certain Navajo traditionality and connection to the past (Samuels 2004a). In turn,
country music and the musicians that play it—particularly those performing an older variety of what’s sometimes referred to as “hard country” (Peterson 1997: 150, 153; Ching 2001: 6)—themselves come to be linked not only with this same idea of tradition, but also become positively associated by fans with the nostalgia that comes with understanding the past as, in some ways, being better than the present. Thus, as Meintjes notes about Zulu aesthetics in post-apartheid South Africa, “In the current epoch in which the past appears to have had better quality (of life, of sound, of traditions) nostalgia carries weight (Meintjes 2010: 2; italics mine).

However, while some fans express their affect and nostalgia for older rez country by dancing to every song they know, others—urban Navajos, born-again Christians, Latter Day Saints—disparage country and country dances as being in poor taste and as exceedingly corny or even vulgar. If class, educational level and musical taste are linked, as Bourdieu (1984: 14; 363; 486), Keil (1985), Fox (2004a; 2004b) and others contend, then, from the perspective of its disparagers, country is decidedly on the more blue collar side of the class/taste spectrum. From this vantage point, country dances in particular are sometimes seen as lowbrow and even “unsafe” events. We see this perspective in a recent letter to the Gallup Independent, where a Navajo couple from Albuquerque, Ariel and Muriel Nez, wrote in to voice their displeasure that young Miss Navajo contestants were escorted, by their chaperones, to a “country western dance” when they should have been sleeping and preparing for the events of the next day’s contest (Nez 2011: A4).17

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17 “We are appalled with the committee who chaperoned the young contestants. These so called “chaperones” took these young contestants to local dances when they should have been resting and
While I can only speak to the country dances on the reservation I attended and played at, overall these events are considered to be quite safe and are sometimes specifically billed as alcohol-free, family-friendly activities. In light of this, I think it’s important to see in such comments the class overtones that “attending a country dance” can have, at least for some, and how this flies in the face of how virginal young women competing against each other in the domain of “traditional” knowledge and culture should behave. From the Nez’ perspective, Miss Navajo contestants’ performances of esoteric “traditional and sacred dances” and songs act as forms of what Bourdieu calls “legitimate culture” (1984: 28), or expressive cultural forms that have been sanctioned by a cultural elite. Conversely, attending country dances or playing easily accessible, “kitschy” country music delegitimizes its participants and excludes them from membership in the Navajo cultural elite.

At the same time, from a musician’s perspective, this same “corny” brand of older country can also serve to legitimize bands with other country musicians. Thus, country music performers create their own, internal hierarchies in which bands that “sound” old, or play exclusively older country tunes (i.e. pre-1980s) are often higher up in the socio-musical pecking order than bands that sound “too modern,” play “pop-country” or more contemporary, rock-influenced styles of country music. Within this hierarchy, musical groups that other bands and fans consider to be more

preparing for the next day’s competition. These young women were competing for a title many view as a role model. We highly doubt being at a country western dance sets a good example for many young people on the reservation” (“Changes Needed in Miss Navajo Contest,” Navajo Times, Ariel & Muriel Nez, 9/22/2011: A4).
musically conservative are also heard to be more “Navajo,” as seen in the value-laden contexts where “rez” is used approvingly and in the KTNN deejay’s pronunciation that MEBB doesn’t sound “Navajo enough.” Consider, for example, a Farmington-based Navajo band, Stillwater, that plays originals and more contemporary “countrypolitan” songs. The bandleader, Lee Begay, frequently reminisces about the days he spent as a kid listening to KOMA and “old school” country but is also sometimes told by fans that his band doesn’t sound “rez” enough. Reflecting this critique, he is sometimes asked, “how come you don’t play the old songs? How come you don’t sound rez; how come you don’t sound mono?” 18 (Begay 2003).

Thus, playing a sub-genre of country music and using a certain lo-fidelity technology comes to reinforce a way that some Navajos see themselves. It is a story, as Clifford Geertz would say, that Navajos tell themselves about themselves (Geertz 1973; see also Lotman 1990). KOMA, beamed from far away and representing the cosmopolitan world beyond the reservation during its heyday, has created a sonic legacy which has come to be heard today as an intensely local, or “traditional” aesthetic.

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18 AM radio stations broadcast through a single channel (“mono”), while FM stations broadcast in stereo. This is why music—and sound transmission in general—sounds extremely different when switching between AM and FM broadcasts. In the ways dancers and fans are using it above, “mono” refers to a more compressed, single-channel sound—what some describe as “tinny”—music often heard on AM radio on stations like KOMA (see also Fox 1992).

19 Lee Begay, interview by author, 6 August 2005, Farmington, New Mexico, digital recording, personal archive.
Like the Navajo Long Walk, the LDS “Placement Program,” BIA boarding schools and a love for Vincent Craig, KOMA is now also a shared reference point. The station represents a form of “non-hereditary collective memory” (Lotman 1990) that older rural Navajos can refer to, knowing that their peer group will understand the reference. KOMA in particular is so linked to images of traditional lifestyles such as living in *hooghans* that, in interviewing the rhythm guitar player, Errison Littleben, from *Native Country*, he told me that he plans to write a song called “Listening to KOMA,” which chronicles his life growing up in the *hoohan*, attending Rock Point Boarding School and starting to play in bands himself. As he sees the teleology of his music career: “It all started with KOMA at the *hoohan*” (Littleben 2010). Similar to making a Vincent Craig reference using Navajo English words such as “gooders” or “somehow” (Chapters 1, 4), Errison knows that writing such a song taps into a shared history of intimate listening experiences that he can then channel through sound for a heightened affective response from his older Navajo listeners. In activating these intimate listening experiences, Errison’s performances are as much about recreating the sound and production value of an old radio broadcast as they are about performing country music as a genre in its own right.

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20 In some respects, KTNN AM 660—a tribally run, Navajo-language AM radio station—now fills the void created by KOMA when KOMA changed from an AM to FM frequency in the early 2000s. KTNN first went on air in 1985 and now, along with KGRK (Gallup) and KNDN (Farmington) is on the main AM stations listened to for country music on the reservation today. Because all three stations feature Navajo language broadcasting and all play primarily country music, I argue that these stations serve to further strengthen the extant link between Navajo tradition (and specifically speaking in Navajo) and country music.

21 Errison Littleben, interview by author, 1 July 2010, Thunderbird Lodge, Chinle, AZ, digital recording, author’s personal archive.
In addition to being coded as “traditional,” country music is also sometimes
gendered in reservation spaces as a “male” musical genre. And in these ways, as
Chatterjee has demonstrated in the postcolonial, East Indian context (1989), ideas of
gender, tradition and nation often become conjoined. Thus, as in East Indian
classical music contexts, Navajo “tradition” is seen as being located on the “interior”
of the woman’s body, an essence “deep within,” and thus as something that needed
to be guarded and protected from public view/hearing by men (Weidman 2006: 19,
191). In fact, lead singing for Navajo bands of many genres—including but also
extending beyond country—is often marked as a male domain, as seen in the
experiences of many of the Navajo female lead singers I interviewed and spent time
playing with. “Backup” or “harmony” singing, in contrast, is considered a more
“traditional” female musical role, as evidenced in Tommy Bia’s abashed comment
about how, as a boy, he was sometimes “the harmonizer, doing the female part of
the songs” (Bia 2009). Thus, gender and genre become provisional codes of
exclusion that get activated in certain reservation spaces. Similarly, ideas of the local
and the cosmopolitan are also highly contingent, where what was once considered a
cosmopolitan and worldly sound—rock and country songs learned off a non-local
radio station—is now often heard by younger Navajos listeners as too overtly
“retro,” local and emplaced.

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22 This gendered vocal division stands out in sharp contrast, for example, to the many female lead
singers of blues and country bands nationwide (i.e., Chicago, Memphis or Nashville, TN), where
women are (equally problematically) often prescribed as only singers and rarely considered
“serious” instrumentalists (lead guitar players, drummers, steel players, fiddlers, etc).

23 Tommy Bia, interview by author, 14 May 2009, Carson Mesa, AZ, digital recording, author’s
personal archive.
Part II: The Sound of Exclusion: Gender, Cultural Roles and Belonging

As a female musician, Chucki Begay's authority as the bandleader is often challenged by other Navajo men. Her lead guitar player Richard Anderson, Jr.—who is also her husband—is the major exception to this rule. But this discomfort with her being a female musician is particularly true, she tells me, in Navajo cultural spaces where the band sometimes tries to get gigs. In a story she tells me which weaves together ideas of cultural roles, gender and belonging, she recalls a comment that was posted on a website created for the promotion of Navajo bands called rezbandz.com.24 Shortly after MEBB posted their contact information on the site, the male lead singer for a well-known Native band that plays primarily gospel and country posted the following comment for all to read: “Chucki Begay does not belong in music. Native women don’t belong in music.” Unsurprisingly, this comment generated heated discussion and dissent, particularly from the offending musician’s female promoter and booking-agent and from the man that hosts rezbandz.com. In addition, many of Chucki’s female fans made a point of coming up to her and refuting his claim, saying things like “No way, you rock, better than anyone else” (Begay 2010). While this individual eventually apologized, his comment nonetheless reveals important ways in which the Navajo music scene can often be understood as a “boys club,” a place where men “belong” and women often feel they don’t. This is particularly true, I think, for women trying to perform genres other than country in spaces on the Navajo reservation. Indeed, Chucki’s

24 The URL is: www.rezbandz.com (accessed 5/25/11).
interpretation of this comment is even more Navajo-specific. What he’s really saying, she explains, is that Navajo women don’t belong in music.

Chucki’s take on why music has become more of a male domain is rooted in her own understandings of Navajo tradition and traditional gender roles, in which women possess most of the material goods—livestock, hooghan, property—but men have “side projects” such as taking care of the livestock or, more recently, being in a band. Since (traditionally and historically) women hold more authority in family decision-making, the men want their band to remain male-exclusive.

She explains:

It’s because of the music that it’s a man’s world. My uncle was in a band when he was young, before he went to Vietnam, back then there was no women [in bands]. It wasn’t the woman’s place I think. Traditionally and culturally, I think the woman had the home, that was her place. The men, they had the livestock. And if they leave [their woman] all they take is the saddle and the horse. The woman takes everything else, because that’s her property. The mindset it still there. The man has the band, that’s his, the women don’t belong in there. [Man says to woman:] “You take care of the home, that’s your hooghan that I built for you, that’s your sheep, but this is my band, my guitar” (Begay 2010; italics mine)

In these ways, Navajo bands have become an almost sacred male domain, a gender-segregated hallowed ground, where women often tread lightly, if at all.

MEBB’s own sense of exclusion from the reservation music scene is evident in the comment on rezbandz, in the fact that KTNN won’t give them airtime, and in their difficulty getting hired by the official tribal bureaucracy (Navajo Nation government). This third form of exclusion has prompted Ritchi to write a series of pointed letters to the Navajo Times, where he criticizes tribal agencies, such as the annual Navajo Nation Fair Committee and Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation, for
always hiring non-Native musicians as their main acts for public events and for refusing to recognize that Navajo bands can also “sound professional,” show up on time, and proudly represent the Navajo Nation by playing alongside or instead of these big-name artists. For example, in “Local Bands Should Be Hired For Concerts, Fairs” ([Navajo Times] [Window Rock], 7 July 2009: A-6), Ritchi states that “As a musician from the Diné Nation, I want to know why the Navajo Nation doesn’t support and hire their own people when it comes to concerts at the fairs and at parks like Monument Valley. Why?” Going on to specifically discuss the ways in which “chapterhouse bands” are often hired as opening bands over bands like MEBB, he adds, “There are Navajo bands that are very capable of opening for these big names [Aaron Tippin, Dwight Yoakam, Johnny Lee25] you all hire. Bands that don’t sound like chapter house bands—no disrespect to chapter house bands” (Ibid). Ritchi opines that the Fair Committee is stuck in a colonial “70s mindset” which doesn’t believe Navajo musicians can sound professional and, citing some instances where major acts have refused to sign autographs for fans, suggests that the committee should be “telling these major acts that they are a guest in our country and should act accordingly” (Ibid). He concludes by noting the diversity of musical talent on the Navajo Nation, asserting that there are other genres of music—such as rap and blues—that the fair committee should also consider hiring for opening acts at the Fair. “The Navajo Nation has some very professional

25 For example, Johnny Lee and the Urban Cowboy Band (whose lyrics from the song “Cherokee Fiddle” are quoted at the beginning of this chapter) performed for the June 2011 “Treaty Days” celebration in Window Rock. The local opening band was the “Stateline” Band, a country music band from White Cone, Arizona ([www.rezbandz.com](http://www.rezbandz.com), accessed 5/31/11).
musicians, singers, bands, and rappers that need to be supported by their own people in the fair committee, government offices, Navajo Nation Parks, etc” (Ibid). The Navajo Tribe, Ritchi suggests, should be showcasing the cosmopolitan nature of the Navajo tribe and the Navajo music scene by featuring their female vocalists and also bands that play other music genres besides country.

Singing Etta James: Attachment to Voice and Music “From Within”

Because women so infrequently front Native bands, crowds and fans often express surprise (and sometimes delight) in finding out that Chucki can sing. Chucki notes, “when people hear us, [they often say] ‘I never heard a Navajo band play blues before, especially a woman singing.’ It’s always that response: [I/we] never knew a Navajo woman could sing like that!” (Begay 2010). Thus, *Mother Earth Blues Band* faces a double discrimination in playing to Navajo audiences: they are considered out of the ordinary for having a female lead singer and because they don’t play “Navajo” music, a.k.a. country music, and instead play musical genres historically associated with African American performing, such as the blues.

Strongly influenced by *Xit*, a 1970s Native rock band that sang politically-charged songs influenced by the “Red Power” movement of the late 1960s-1970s, Chucki describes *MEBB*’s sound as more “contemporary Native rock kind of blues.” Like *Xit*, Chucki also tries to promote social justice with her music and to “spread a political

26 Women often play crucial support roles, such as band managers and long-haul drivers, instead.

27 “Red Power” refers to the era of Indian Civil rights activism, formally spearheaded by the American Indian Movement or AIM.
“message,” for example encouraging young Navajos to play music and be in a band but without the “sex, drugs and rock ‘n roll” image.

However, just as many Navajo country musicians insist that country music is “traditional” Navajo music, Chucki sees rock and blues as an equally apt sonic marker of Navajo tradition and authenticity. As she notes about the intertwined commercial origins of country and blues in the late 1920s, “country came from blues.” Thus both genres share the same soulfulness and pathos that Chucki believes is so often a part of Navajo peoples’ lives today. She describes, for example, how she tries to put blues music “into a story” so that Navajo women in particular can relate to it and understand that the thematic content is about their own lives. In this way, Chucki uses songs like Etta James’ “I’d Rather Go Blind” to act as a topos of Navajo women’s experience, what cultural studies scholar David Brackett calls a “truth-to-self” approach. Similar to early jazz singer Billie Holiday, Chucki uses her own life experiences to buttress the believability of the music she sings (Brackett 1988 [2000]: 54). In this way, she incorporates a “sense of struggle as part of her self-created image” (Ibid).

Country came from blues...came from people’s soul, heart, singing about their experiences, mostly sad, we Indians do have a sad history, tragic, why not sing about it? Why not sing about a broken heart, your baby left you, it’s us, it’s who we are, a lot of women can relate to those songs I sing. Like the Etta James song, “I’d Rather Go Blind.” I’ll put that into a story for them. I dedicate it to all the women, [I’ll say] this is for you. You’re giving your heart to one man, but he’s over there with someone else...he’s over there texting and emailing somebody else you know. It’s heart and soul kinda music. That’s really who we are.”
Citing Etta James as one of her strong vocal influences, Chucki clearly has a strong affective tie to James’ songs and especially to her voice. We hear this, for example, in the beautiful, highly pharyngealized and tortured vocal style—what Aaron Fox calls the “ravaged voice”—Chucki employs in performing cover versions of James’ songs (Fox 2004: 328). And for Chucki, singing—both her original songs and Etta James covers—illuminates her “heart and soul” and comes from “somewhere deep.”

In contrast to other bands who, from Chucki’s perspective, are “just up there singing” or are playing for financial gain, music for her is that which lies within, waiting to be expressed and externalized through the bodily “channel” with which one is most blessed, regardless of financial incentive. For Ritchi, this sense of music as depth is channeled through his guitar-rock inspired guitar playing, and for Chucki, this is expressed through her voice. Ritchi, she notes, “gets so into his guitar because he’s playing from somewhere deep. When I sing, it’s the same way, I’m singing from somewhere deep, it’s heart and soul...We have gifts each of us. I was gifted with the voice and Ritchi was gifted with playing guitar” (Begay 2010). In this sense, Ritchi’s guitar-playing and Chucki’s singing each possess a grain, a unique sonic texture, what Barthes might describe as the friction between language and a ravaged voice (Chucki), or the more literal friction generated between a highly

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28 To hear performances of some of MEBB’s songs, visit: http://www.myspace.com/chuckibegay, accessed 12/06/2011.

29 Fox describes the ravaged voice as an icon of crying in country music: “A pharyngealized tone, for example, can be iconic of the ravaged voice of a character textually narrated explicitly or implicitly as ‘crying’” (Feld, Fox, Porcello & Samuels in Duranti 2004: 328).
mobile, expressive body—fingers, sinews, bodily movement, facial expression—and a wailing, crying lead guitar (Ritchi) (Barthes 1977: 181).

Beyond Etta James, Chucki is also attached to other voices. This includes “old country,” Christian hymns sung in Navajo in the church choir, her dad singing “squaw dance” songs in his pickup, and songs she and her brother heard late at night listening to KOMA such as the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix’s “Purple Haze.” It was listening to KOMA with her brother, for example, that, at age seven or eight, she and her brother “really learned to rock” [dance] (Begay 2010). And, like many of her male country counterparts, in her specific references to older country songs Chucki tends to mention only the names of Native bands locally known for playing that song, and not their national counterparts who originally recorded most of the cover songs Native bands played. For example, she recalls: “Sioux Savages [out of Tuba City], Navajo Sundowners, Zuni Midnites [Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico]...I grew up with that old country” (Begay 2010). Thus, although her own form of musical expression is most often through blues, rock and contemporary Native American-inspired originals, Chucki shares many of the same musical influences and aesthetic attachments—to KOMA, KGAK and early Native bands—as her male, country-music playing musical colleagues.

Like Chucki, other Navajo female vocalists also experience a form of civic estrangement from the Navajo Nation, in which social citizenship is denied to certain female singing voices. The numbers reflect this estrangement: out of

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30 In Citizenship, Social Class and other Essays (1950: 10–14), T.H. Marshall outlines three form of citizenship. These are 1) political 2) economic and 3) social.
approximately sixty bands reservation-wide, there were four female vocalists publicly performing in bands during my fieldwork, and I was one of them, albeit non-Navajo myself. In one of my first phone conversations with the bandleader from Re-Coil, Frank Begay, he mentioned that typically the band chooses to play off-reservation gigs—in bordertowns and at casinos—because “people on the rez don’t appreciate my wife’s voice.” He went on to explain that, even though Re-Coil performs a lot of country songs, because his wife sings most of the songs they sometimes have difficulty booking on-reservation gigs. In talking to Recoil’s female lead singer, Doreen Begay, she also echoed feeling underappreciated and even sometimes stigmatized on the reservation as a female vocalist.

Moreover, Re-Coil’s decision to bill themselves as primarily a country band to begin with is influenced by the fact that, if and when they do play on the reservation, country music is far and away the genre of choice. Thus, despite the band’s wide variety of musical influences, which “run the gamut from gospel to country to classic rock to metal to jazz to symphonic arrangements” (M. Begay 2011) and the fact that most of the musicians are white-collar professionals and may not relate to country music’s working-class themes and associated clothing styles, the repertoire they draw from is about 90% country music and 10% blues, rock and Frank and Doreen’s originals. Again, even this small amount of musical “experimentation,” along with having a female lead singer, translates to having a smaller on-reservation fan base. Thus, despite playing mainly country music, Re-Coil members are often

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31 Michael Begay, 27 June 2010, personal correspondence via email.
made aware that they have indeed “strayed too far,” and this is why they secure primarily off-reservation gigs.

From the Begay's perspective, their decision to prominently feature a female vocalist has also resulted in fans sometimes telling them that they don't sound “rez” enough, a term that forms part of a linguistic complex used to describe rural reservation lifestyles, taste, class positioning and musical tastes. Similar to how Chucki is told she doesn't sound “Navajo” and Stillwater is asked why they don't sound “mono,” telling them they don't sound “rez” comes to signal yet another form of non-belonging and civic estrangement.

*Re-Coil* might have wished at one point to be considered a little more “rez,” at least for the purpose of getting more on-reservation gigs closer to where the bandleaders live in Fort Defiance. However, other female lead singers like Leann “Lady Wildfire,” also of Fort Defiance, AZ, is explicitly trying not to sound “rez.” Not sounding rez informs part of her musical toolkit, to the point that she actively works against this particular musical stereotype. In asking me to join her in recording a Christmas album at Alta Vista Records in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Lady Wildfire told me on the phone that she specifically didn’t want the recording to “sound rez” and wanted, like *MEBB*, to do everything in her power to make it sound “more professional.” She also talked about “sitting in” with another male-fronted Navajo band and how she was often the only musician that wasn't paid or reimbursed for

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32 In the context of repertoire decisions for dance bands in Kinshasa, Congo, Bob White notes a similar phenomenon, stating that “musicians express the fear of losing an already-precious, local audience base as a reason for not straying too far from standard themes about love and male-female relations” (2008: 122).
gas. In addition, with this band she was typically allowed to sing the “female” parts—harmonies—and only rarely allowed to sing lead vocals.

In sitting in with this same band, Candice Craig experienced similar challenges as Lady Wildfire in trying to make musical inroads as a professional musician. Like Chucki, Candice also made it clear that, because she loves to sing and singing is “her sanctuary” (Craig 2010), she is willing to sing for free or for gas money alone. As she began to sing more solo songs and as the crowd began to increasingly request her to sing instead of the male lead singer, she became squeezed out of the band—mostly by them not offering to let her sing anymore and pay her gas—and she eventually stopped performing with them altogether. From her perspective, jealousy and feeling overshadowed by a woman caused the lead singer to get rid of her.

Looking at the musical experiences of Chucki, Candice, Lady Wildfire and Doreen Begay, we can see how “sounding Navajo” means, in some cases, sounding like—or singing with a vocal register and tone color of—a man. Thus, the male singing lead voice has come to be naturalized as one particular, normative “sound” of Navajoness. Successfully capturing this sound, in turn, secures a band’s place and social citizenship within the Nation in powerful ways. In contrast, being a female vocalist and playing music that steps outside the traditional canon of early country songs—sounding too cosmopolitan or rock, blues or pop-influenced—often means your fellow Navajo listeners won’t dance to your music because they don’t know the songs.
Dancing to a song—the ultimate sign of musical approval—and knowing a song combine to create a shared form of Navajo sociality which singers (inadvertently) deny their fans by choosing new repertoire and new kinds of lead voices. Fans reciprocate this loss of sociality by often refusing to dance and by interrogating these bands and their singers about why they don’t sound mono, rez or Navajo or why they don’t play “the old songs.” In this way, fans deny these musicians the sociality and sense of inclusion that fans feel is denied to them as a result of the band’s aesthetic and “experimental” playlist decisions.

As a response to this civic estrangement, these female musicians actively step outside and beyond the traditional reservation fan base, performing in off-reservation venues such as bordertown bars (Gallup, Holbrook, Farmington), open mics and karaokes (Farmington, Sky City Casino, Dancing Eagle Casino, Albuquerque), music festivals and “jam sessions” (Chaco Rio, Albuquerque, Gallup) and, the most coveted and most lucrative off-reservation gigs of all, “casino” gigs at places like Sky City (Acoma Pueblo) and Dancing Eagle Casinos (Laguna Pueblo). Thus, going against this vocal grain—playing other genres besides country and singing “like a woman”—has direct implications for geographic spaces of inclusion/exclusion and where one can get gigs and feel musically appreciated for one’s talent.

In addition, perhaps because female vocalist have needed to take an adversarial stance to the “boys club” practices and “chapterhouse” sound that accompanies it, the female singers discussed here often see the “rez” or “chapterhouse” sound as specifically a non-professional (i.e., too local, “mono,” low
fidelity, tinny, “corny” or “old school”) sound. As Navajo women, they contend that sounding Navajo is less about genre, musical “gear” and technological aesthetics and more about soulfulness, that which one has “inside” that gets expressed in song without financial gain in mind. This language of interiority reflects an idealized and naturalized Navajo discourse about music, where Navajo tradition, spiritual purity and music as coming from within are located exclusively in the Navajo female singing voice.

Part III: The Sound of Inclusion: Performing the Jáán Band

In Chapters One and Three, I discussed the ways that the term jáán or “john” acts as both a laudatory and derogatory designation standing for contemporary Navajos/Navajoness, a term used between and among Navajos. Ways of being a jáán are marked through one’s lifestyle, place of residence, speaking English with a Navajo accent, and through a “backwoods” sensibility supposedly possessed by those seen as being most “jáán.” Jáán, however, can also denote musical sound, a sound often associated with a certain relationship to technology (P.A.s and recording equipment in particular), being perceived as a “rez band” and, lastly, a feeling of being incorporated into the larger social body of the reservation music community. These technological aesthetics come to signal forms of social belonging, an inclusion into Navajoness which stands in sharp contrast to the boundaries and exclusions experienced by Chucki, Lady Wildfire and Candice. In these ways, the image and sound of the “jáán” exemplifies the multifaceted and contradictory ways
that Navajoness is often constructed and articulated in contemporary expressive culture.

But how does a band sound “jáán” exactly, and how is the term jáán related to other emic descriptors of rurality and technology also in circulation on the reservation such as “rez,” “mono” and “jung jigga jung”? Finally, how does jáánness get performed not only through singing style and recording technology but also through gesture, gendered imitations of the abjected male “burlesque” (Ching 2001: 35), and other performative icons of Navajoness?

At its most overdetermined and essentializing, jáán is a denotation that leaves nothing untouched. As such, being a jáán comes to be seen as an ontological state of being, something which affects everything from how one speaks to the way one sings or plays an instrument—i.e., how one makes a musical or linguistic sound in the totalizing sense. For example, someone who speaks no English at all—whose speech and performance of self doesn’t show the cracks between a Diné and Anglo worldview—and is an esteemed traditionalist such as a healer (hataahij) in their community would probably never be referred to as a jáán.

Moreover, jáán as a pejorative term is deeply influenced by outside perspectives of Navajos as actual jááns, in line with the most egregious stereotypes of Native peoples as primitives and as hunter-gatherers incapable of successful engagements with the modern world and its accompanying technologies. Thus, in its most negative sense, when Navajos use the term jáán toward another Navajo it is with the intention of labeling each other as the “unsuccessful modern.” In fact, when
used in this sense, jáán is often pronounced “jxáán,” with the added “x”33 aspirating the “j” sound and adding heightened “productive affect” to the word’s meaning (Peterson 2006: f.n.80, p. 149).

But jáán can also be used in more humorous, lighter-hearted contexts, such as when one refers to oneself or one’s music as jáán or “rezzie” among people one knows and loves.

July 20th, 2009. It’s a Saturday morning. I am sitting with the extended Bia family by a place called “Gorilla Mountain,” a butte with the profile of a gorilla located between Bitachochee/Indian Wells and Holbrook, AZ on state route 77. We’re facing a large softball field, watching players warm up and waiting for the daylong tournament to begin which we’ll all be playing in as a team called “District 10.”34 Tommy, our team captain and my bandleader, excuses himself to go get ready for the day ahead. To re-energize the group—we rose at 7 am and drove two hours to get here—I pull out my purple iPod and small speaker set and place them on the tailgate of my pickup behind us. I decide to play the songs I have from our band, Native Country, in particular some older songs featuring Tommy’s voice that the group had recorded before I joined the band. To my ear, the songs sound good—not quite properly mixed (the lead singer’s voice is a lot louder than the back vocal and

33 Since pitch is less effective in expressing intensity in Navajo, the “x” is one way, in the Navajo language, to add intensity and heighten the meaning of a word, seen for example in the semantic difference between the word “litsó” [yellow] versus “litzxó” [orange; deep yellow, a.k.a. “intense yellow”].

34 District 10 was selected as a name because it’s the name of the grazing district in which the Bia’s are permitted to graze their livestock. Other teams we played against had team names that also closely resemble many locally emplaced, Native band-naming practices. These teams included: L.A. (Lukachukai) D-Backs, Holbrook Bombers, Tuba City Dreamers, Central Navajo, Whitecone, and Fishcreek.
lead guitar tracks) and a little raw in the way the sounds are blended together—but still, there's a lot of affect and energy audible in each track. At the start of the second song—“Room at the Top of the Stairs” —Tommy returns to the group. He stops, cocks his head to indicate he's listening closely, and then, in an animated voice, exclaims: “I said to myself, now that sounds like a rez band—and I was right!!”

Figure 24. Tommy Bia with bass guitar, Windy Mesa Bar, July 2009, photo by Doug Riley/Dandelion Empire Photography; Used with Permission

How did Tommy know, and what signaled this association for him? What was rez or “jáán,” as other musicians might describe a similar sound, about this recorded song, and what caused Tommy to label his own band Native Country as such? How does this term come to be self-referential in a prideful way but also a delimiter, a sound which locally emplaces a band as provisional and, for its user, also precludes the

35 Original version recorded by Eddie Rabbitt, Eddie Rabbitt, 1975.
possibility that the band might “make it” to the musical “big time” (whatever that might be or look like)? How might such a term suggest a sense of inclusion and belonging in the Navajo Nation yet exclusion from the greater U.S. nation and its associated musical worlds?

**Performative Icons of Navajoness**

In some ways, Tommy’s reference takes us back to the performative aesthetics of the chapterhouse bands Ritchi critiqued in his letter to *The Navajo Times*. These bands started playing and performing country music in the 1950s, during a time when many Navajo cowboys were still excluded from participation in the national rodeo circuit and, against the larger backdrop of Indian activism, including the birth of AIM and Nixon’s policy of self-determination, they began forming their own “all Indian” rodeo circuits in order to compete on their own terms and turf. Hand in hand with this, Navajo bands also began to perform in all-Indian spaces, in part to simply show people that “Indians can play, too” (Bia, Jr. 2002). In particular, in the 1960s bands like *The Wingate Valley Boys, The Fenders* and, a decade later, the *Navajo Sundowners* gained huge fan bases and attracted up to 500 people at a dance. Spurred by cheap gas prices and a relatively prosperous economy,

36 American Indian Movement, founded by the Indians of All Tribes in 1969.

37 Navajo Nation Rodeo Cowboys Association (NNRCA) and All Indian Rodeo Cowboy Association (AIRCA) (now called International Indian Finals Rodeo or IIFR) are examples of these.

the 1960s today are seen as an economic and artistic “golden age” both for Navajo bands and for the Navajo Nation at large (discussed in Chapter Three). In contrast to those musicians playing the U.S. national music circuit, however, these bands and their protégés were—and still are—live dance bands. They played up-tempo country songs in 2/2 or 4/4 so that fans could dance—typically partner dances such as the “two-step”\(^\text{39}\)—to their music. Bands like The Valley Boys and The Fenders became known in particular for the voices of their male lead singers and their contrasting personae.

Figure 25. The Wingate Valley Boys, 1967 (courtesy of Bruce Hamilton, Hamerhouse Productions); Used with Permission

\(^{39}\) Like country music, the two-step didn’t originate in Navajo territory but rather came from Texas. However, since its introduction onto Navajo land in the 1950s, the two-step has arguably become the most popular couple’s dance on the reservation and has been thoroughly absorbed into Navajo expressive culture. Also known as the Texas shuffle step and similar to the Foxtrot, the two-step is a “progressive” dance where couples move counterclockwise around the dance floor. The dance is accompanied by songs in 4/4 between 130-200 beats per minute (Casey 1985). It features four steps: quick, quick, slow, slow, or “step-together, walk, walk,” and is always a couples’ dance.
Lead singer Ernest Murphy of The Valley Boys (second from left holding electric guitar, back row), for instance, was known as a gentle crooner a la Jim Reeves with a silky-smooth voice. The band members, all from the tribal capitol of Window Rock, AZ, were seen as cosmopolitan Navajos. They were college-educated and attracted dancers from the “higher ranked rodeo organization” (Bowman 2009).\footnote{At that time—often still true today—the sequence was to participate in or attend the local rodeo and then segue to the nearest local “dance” after the rodeo.} In contrast, Johnny Emerson of The Fenders (first on right) was a little rougher-around-the-edges, with a hard-edged, nasal voice closer to the voices of hard country artists such as Hank Williams, Sr. and Johnny Horton, the latter being Emerson’s biggest vocal influence. Band members—all originally tribal policemen from Crownpoint, NM—were know to be a little “rowdier” and had a more working-class image, doing entertaining gimmicks on stage and really giving the crowd their
money’s worth. Johnny Emerson in particular became known for his thick Navajo accent when singing, and his unique pre-show “sound check,” blowing with his whole mouth into the microphone—as opposed to the standard spoken “mic check, one, two, three”—and loudly tapping it with his index finger to make sure it was “live” (Mason, Sr. 2010). Along with his singing style, Johnny Emerson’s mic check has become part of what, following Greg Urban’s analysis of icons of crying in Shokleng speech styles (1988), I refer to as performative icons of Navajoness. These icons—both aural and embodied/gestural—are often imitated in jest by other bands today in order to signal likeness or conjure memories of these older bands for those who might remember them. In particular, such imitations follow what Barbara Ching, writing about traditional “hard” country music, has called performances of the male abject burlesque (2001: 4). In such performances, a male pathos of estrangement and class-based alienation is expressed through exaggerated humor; self-deprecation, sardonic wit and a hard-edged, often highly nasalized singing style. These performative icons of working-class abjection, through their emphasis on a male poetics of sociality, serve to ultimately reincorporate performers and their listeners back into the a gendered, class-based Navajo social body.

In the beginning, both bands were comprised of young male musicians (many of them still in high school) who didn’t yet have the financial capital to invest in expensive guitar amplifiers, public address (P.A.) systems and professional studio recording sessions. As such, they made do with what they could afford, and the

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41 Eddie Mason, Sr., interview by author, 12 July 2010, Many Farms, AZ, digital recording, author’s personal archive.
resultant sound was a tinnier, less polished sound which, as discussed earlier, resembled the compressed, single-channel sound of music heard on AM radio. Today, this compressed sound of the chapterhouse bands is referred to as “mono” and can be understood as an aesthetics where the majority of “listening is done through lo-fi production,” both live and recorded (Meintjes 2010: 2). When Navajo comedian Vincent Craig started recording in the 1980s, he codified the chapterhouse band sound—perhaps using a phrase that was already in circulation at the time—with the onomatopoeic descriptor, “Jung jigga jung.” “Jung jigga jung”—also called the “chapterhouse beat”—thus became a shorthand for the chapterhouse bands and their unique sound. It is also used as a way to indicate that the “beat”—i.e. the tempo—of most Chapterhouse dance songs is almost always identical so that songs can be danced to. In particular, playing with this “beat” means playing songs in 2/2 and 4/4—duple meter—and not playing waltzes, ballads, or slow songs that are in ¾ or 6/8 (triple meter), because you can only dance the two-step to songs in duple meter. So, the chapterhouse beat, tinny speakers and low-fidelity listening making the band sound “mono” have also become a part of the jáán band sound. This sound, like country music itself, is both abjected and loved, and almost always features the male singing voice.

The sound of the jáán band is also very generation-specific. Imitating—and sometimes making fun of—Johnny Emerson in particular, Craig created a series of musical skits based on the chapterhouse dance experience, people “rubbing belt buckles” (partner dancing), sporting western “banana peel” boots with the boots split down the side so the tops flopped over, and wearing “ten gallon” cowboy hats
(“An O’Fender Song,” *Cowboys ‘n Stuff*, Vol. 4). These skits are slices in time for many Navajo baby boomers, taking them back to their adolescence and giving them a space to feel nostalgic for it. For many Navajo youth today, these bands and the chapterhouse spaces they performed in are associated with an older generation as “rez” and they seek to actively distance themselves from these markers. In this way, chapterhouses and chapterhouse bands become “a marked space for some Navajos, indexing the traditional or the local, and therefore is not necessarily appealing, especially for many Navajo youth or others who do not wish to identify with anything they consider to be traditional, “Rezzie,” or “Johnnie”” (Peterson 2006: 97).

But Tommy’s comment about us being a rez or jáán band should also be understood vis-à-vis his own vocal attachments and in the context of the diminishment of his own voice. Diagnosed with vocal nodes in the late 1980s, Tommy has continued to sing and front his own bands since then, but during gigs he has had to cut back on the number of songs he sings as the nodes have grown and his voice tires more quickly. In addition, whereas in his younger days he could perform up to 200 songs from memory, as he has aged he has come to rely on “cheat sheets”—a common practice for many vocalists regardless of age—but something that for Tommy marks himself as getting older and beginning to lose the acuity of his memory. Thus, while his voice still remains his son Arlondo’s all-time favorite country singing voice—described to me by Arlondo as a deep, rich and strong voice—Tommy’s own perception of his voice is that it has begun to show sings of “wear,” that it has become “dull,” “hoarse” and has lost the crispness that, for
example, Errison’s singing voice has (Bia 2009). As Tommy recalls, expressing nostalgia for how the voice that used to be:

“Back then, my voice was a little different...it was deeper [than] it is right now, it was more crispier like Errison’s singing. There was no dullness to it” (Bia 2009).

Thus, while Arlondo expresses his deep affective attachment for his dad’s voice as the “vocal gold standard” that he grew up listening to, Tommy likes Errison’s voice. In turn, he complains about his own voice as something that he is “just making do with” and believes his voice has led to a lower-fidelity band sound. Nostalgia, even for one’s own voice, carries weight.

In fact, Tommy’s inability to sing a full set now on his own was the main factor in deciding to add other vocalists to the band such as Errison and myself to begin with, so that the singing could be shared three ways and Tommy could rest his voice in between songs. Thus, his decision to open band membership to a female vocalist such as myself was directly impacted by his own ailing voice. I might not, for example, have been granted entry into the band under other circumstances. In addition, Tommy’s own non-local vocal idol, hands down, is Waylon Jennings. This is seen in the fact that he performs a lot of Waylon’s songs in the band and also for fun on his own at home, and in the fact that he and I performed a number of Waylon/Anita Carter duets as part of Native Country, something Tommy saw as

42 Tommy Bia, interview by author, 14 May 2009, Carson Mesa, AZ, digital recording, author’s personal archive.
43 For example, in the song “You’re Gonna Miss Me,” Tommy would sing this song and then sometimes have me sing the highest notes for him in the short bridge section, explaining that he could no longer “hit” that note comfortably with his voice.
unique in the Native band scene. As Tommy describes it, Waylon’s voice was deeper than the voices of many other country stars, and, significantly, his vocal range was similar to Tommy’s once his voice changed when he became an adolescent. Tommy’s attachment to Waylon’s voice was also seen, for a whole week after Waylon died in 2002, in the way his son described how his dad “got quiet,” a culturally appropriate way to signal loss and grieving over a loved one that has “passed.” So in referring to his own band and his more recent singing voice as rez, Tommy is indicating that 1) he recalls and nostalgically remembers what his “old” voice sounded like; 2) he is comparing his own band’s sound against the professionally recorded sound of his musical idols such as Waylon; and 3) he is indicating that, to him, the recording and the band sounds like a “Navajo” band. And so, in the case of hearing our band through my computer speakers, he was absolutely right.

“Mono,” “Jáán” and Rez

Since the 1980s, this link between a single channel sound and Native bands has been further cemented by the fact that, until very recently, Native bands have been exclusively—and generously—aired on AM radio stations such as KTNN, KGAK and

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44 In the Navajo way (Dinék’ehjí), you mourn someone’s death intensively for the seven days after they pass away.

45 As of October 17th, 2011, a new FM Navajo language radio station has begun playing the music of Native bands. When asked about the station’s music formatting choices, the station manager for KYAT (94.5 FM) declared that “We’re definitely going to be a country station” (George Malti, http://www.navajotimes.com/business/2011/1011/101711radio.php, accessed 11/01/2011).
As such, the term “mono” now acts as a convenient referent to indicate the sound of the current Navajo bands whose sound follows in the footsteps of the chapterhouse bands, such as another band from Crownpoint called “FENDERS II.” As referenced in my story about Lady Wildfire recording her Christmas album, bands today actively work to either secure or reject this “mono” sound. Thus, in contrast to “jung jigga jung,” a term which is firmly embedded in the historical past to describe the chapterhouse bands, “mono” is a term which uses the past to describe the present.

While mono and jung jigga jung are terms which refer specifically to sound and relationships to listening technologies, “jáán” and “rez” describe much broader social categories of Navajoness. Thus, in the ways I’ve heard it used, jáán is a state of being out of which a sound like the chapterhouse sound can emanate. In contrast, “rez” is often used to describe a way of doing things, namely “making do” with what one has. So, for example, fixing a broken mic stand with duct-tape instead of running into “town” right away for a replacement clip might be referred to approvingly as fixing it “rez-style.”

In particular, the personal characteristics which emanate from jáán as an ascribed status—language, lifestyle, way of carrying oneself in the world—all indicate the unease with which older Navajos view Anglo influences on a traditional Navajo worldview. As such, my understanding of the figure of the jáán—and the

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46 For example, KTNN deejays such as Ray Tsosie and the late Ernie Manuelito and have both hosted regular shows dedicated exclusively to playing the music of Native bands.

47 “Town” describes the closest bordertown outside the reservation boundary (usually between a 1-3 hour drive). Depending on where one lives on the reservation, “town” could refer to Farmington, Gallup, Page, Flagstaff, Cortez or Aneth.
frequency with which it currently surfaces in Navajo linguistic discourse—is that this figure is an implicit critique of modernity and the particular forms it takes on the reservation—namely, the Anglicization and bureaucratization\(^{48}\) of Navajo worlds (as seen in the BIA and the IHS) and various Navajo engagements with this world. It is the word used to describe the painful transition points, where the cracks in the back-and-forth from one worldview to another are made audible in sound through “imperfect” language (for e.g., “broken” English) and music (for e.g., feedback hissing through a P.A. at an impromptu outside gig).

One way to understand these transition points is through the lens of the local and the cosmopolitan, viewpoints which are certainly influenced by class, gender, educational level and place of residence but also by one’s outlook on the world and openness to “outside,” non-Navajo influences. As Leighton Peterson notes about the relationship between cosmopolitan and local aesthetics and “emergent technologies” on the reservation,

Locals may have a more inward-directed sense of aesthetics. They may be transnational in the sense that they have traveled off of the Navajo Nation or even abroad, have satellite TV 101 that beams the world into their living rooms, and have far-flung relatives who visit and send remittances. However, I do not mean to imply that cosmopolitans are “assimilated” or adhere only to “outside” values and norms, rather that they are willing to engage these values and norms. Their transnationalism may not translate into engaging new media technologies in the same way as members of other groups (2006: 111-112).

In keeping with this view, Navajos that seamlessly make this transition between social worlds don’t seem to engender or become the butt of these jokes.

\(^{48}\) Vincent Craig, for example, has a famous routine which makes fun of how Navajos interface with tribal bureaucracy. In the routine, he impersonates a female Navajo B.I.A. employee working in an Indian Health Services (IHS) Health Clinic who, each time she greets a new Navajo customer, yells “What’s your CHART number?” instead of first saying hello, welcome, etc.
Thus, someone who spends time with their grandparents herding sheep in the Chuska Mountains one day and goes to Window Rock for a Council Session in their capacity as a Tribal Council Member the next, or a monolingual speaker (English or Navajo) that doesn’t even attempt the transition between languages, is treated differently than someone who tries to bridge these slippages and fails. As Peterson (2006) observes in his study of emergent media on the Navajo Nation, the figure of the jóán is “A rural Navajo who is considered to be neither ‘traditional’ nor ‘assimilated’ (2006: 103). Noting the views of one of his interlocutors, Jane Yazzie, Peterson writes:

A Jáán...means somebody from the sticks who speaks [English] with a heavy accent, who is not really trendy, who goes out and feeds the sheep, waters the cows, grooms the horses, drives a truck, wears a squaw dress, and is not real traditional. They’re living in a hogan, but they’re not totally assimilated and acculturated (Yazzie 2001 in Peterson 2006: 103-104; italics mine).

In parsing out this dense statement, we can see that Yazzie’s explanation—and implicit critique—crucially posits the figure of the jóán as someone who is neither traditional nor assimilated; it is the figure of someone living betwixt and between, whose lifestyle exposes the fissures between two social and linguistic ideal types but whose position acquires the upward mobility of neither. In this distinction, Peterson notes that “Yazzie is separating rural and poor from what she considers to be traditional, a distinction that is often not made” (Peterson 2006: 104). Thus, jóán in Yazzie’s definition refers to someone that has the lifestyle of a “traditional” Navajo but doesn’t have the traditional knowledge to buttress and properly guide this way of life. Linguistically, the figure of the jóán also exists between the poles of
two linguistic ideologies—speakers of Standard American English, on the one hand, and speakers of *saadsání* [*Naabehó*\(^{49}\) *bizaad*] or older Navajo as the “real Navajo,” on the other (Ibid, 75). Those that exist between these poles acquire the prestige of neither. Thus, culturally and linguistically, the figure of the *jàán* is abjected, betwixt and between, neither successfully here—traditional Navajoness—nor there—Angloness—and instead exists in the uncomfortable interstices in between.

In rez country music in particular, the figure of the *jàán* is specifically embodied and performed as the abjected male. Although women are also described as *jàán*, in the musical context it is mostly men who are thus denoted. Thus, Tommy can say that a *Native Country* recording sounded “rez” or “*jàán*” because the track we were listening to sonically marked many of the characteristics associated with the so-called *jàán* band described above. The track features a slightly nasal, male singing voice,\(^{50}\) was recorded in a home studio and, as Tommy puts it, “isn’t properly mixed;” the country song playing was one that has been “covered” by many older Native bands and is part of the extant Native band “canon,” and the song was crackling through my teeny, battery-powered computer speakers from a compressed digital MP3 file on my iPod. All these factors combined to make the recording quality “tinny,” thereby reproducing a low-fi listening aesthetic so often associated with live and recorded performances of Native bands. Affectively, for Tommy our recording might have also reminded him of the in-betweenness of

\(^{49}\)“*Naabehó bizaad*” translates as “the language of the Navajo people.”

\(^{50}\)To hear Tommy sing other songs in a similar style, listen to “Cindy” and “Thanks A lot” on our myspace page, [http://www.myspacemusic.com/nativecountryband](http://www.myspacemusic.com/nativecountryband), accessed 12/07/11.
playing a “white man’s” music genre but using Navajo-style, “make do” sound equipment. In this way, Tommy’s use of the term jáán is a commentary on less-than-successful mediations which to him sound fragile and provisional—not as he might ideally have them sound—and which bring attention to “bad sound quality” as a type of expressive resource in its own right (Meintjes 2010: 1). His is a commentary on a term which, ultimately, reflects an outsider’s perspective on how “they” might hear the band and this song track, pointing to the complex mediations and perceived valuations of Anglo and non-Navajo cultural influences on Navajo land.

But the figure of the jáán also rests on its antithesis, the “modern,” upwardly mobile or “urban Navajo.”51 “Urban Navajo” is a referent used to refer to a Navajo that speaks accentless English, lives in Phoenix or Albuquerque or another large U.S. urban center, and sees the world from a more or less Anglo perspective. In this way, the “urban Navajo” is the necessary foil to the image of the jáán. Like Mamdani’s theorization of colonial parasitism, in which he observes that “settler and native go together...there can be no settler without a native, and vice versa” (Mamdani in de la Cadena & Starn 2007: 4), “jáán” and “urban Navajo” need each other in order to remain socially salient and to maintain their respective linguistic currency. These social figures, in turn, often get mapped onto ideas of social stratification and of

51 A typical example of how the “urban Navajo” is used as a foil of what not to be as a Navajo is seen in the recent independent film, Turquoise Rose (2007). Turquoise, an urban Navajo from Phoenix played by Navajo actress Natasha Kaye Johnson, is asked by her mother to move to the rural, reservation town of Hunter’s Point, AZ, to care for her ailing grandmother. Portrayed as selfish and as someone who doesn’t prioritize her family over herself, she has already purchased tickets to go to Europe for the summer with her non-Native roommate. The movie recounts her transformation as she decides to ditch her plans and move to a hooghan to care for her grandmother.
Navajo locals and cosmopolitans. As Peterson notes about the aesthetic ramifications of these worldviews,

 Jáán is also used in various genres of joking to index being “Rezzie” in contrast to being modern, to being a local rather than cosmopolitan, inward looking rather than “outward.” Just as locals are not necessarily the most traditional, however, cosmopolitans are not necessarily the group with high status or wealth. Too often, tradition becomes synonymous with poverty, and progress becomes associated with all that is not Navajo. Too often, tradition [the local] becomes synonymous with poverty, and progress [the cosmopolitan] becomes associated with all that is not Navajo (2006: 104).

As such—and as I discuss in Chapter One—jáán is a highly self-referential term where aesthetics point inward toward the Navajo Nation, a word that only the “in-group”—in this case Navajos—would “get.” It is an aesthetic representing collaboration, community networks, reciprocity, and needing the support of one’s family and clan relatives in order to get things done. In this way, Tommy’s use of the term in my presence was spoken with the assumption that, even as a non-Navajo, I would know what this term meant; the comment in fact may have even possibly been for my benefit and to make me feel included on a joke in English that I would get. As Peterson notes, this label “can be self-ascribed or applied by Navajos to other Navajos whom they consider to deviate from traditional ideals, and they have to do with people’s interpretations about being Navajo and the differences in the expression of Navajo ethnic identity” (Peterson 2006: 104). As a pejorative, ascribed term which is sometimes given a positive valence depending on context, the figure of the jáán can therefore offer us important insights into the multifaceted, crisscrossing and often contradictory ways that Navajo identities are constructed, performed and articulated in speech and song.
For Tommy, it’s a term he uses to describe his affection for and attachment to his band and his younger singing voice while acknowledging that it doesn’t necessarily sound like the professional country bands he hears on mainstream country radio; it’s also a term he very rarely uses around non-Navajos because he knows it could be misconstrued and misused to buttress misguided stereotypes about Navajos and Navajo musicians’ abilities to “make it” professionally off the reservation. Jáán is a term that reflects a space he and fellow musicians have carved out controlled neither by the gatekeepers of “tradition” nor by aspirations of off-reservation capital and consumption.

More broadly, for Navajos jáán can be used as a gendered term of inclusion which indicates a form of highly localized civic belonging—over and beyond one’s legal citizenship as a Navajo—to the Navajo Nation. It is this same affective or extra-legal sense of belonging that is often denied to Navajos—who themselves only gained the legal right to vote in Arizona as late as 1948—within the framework of the larger U.S. nation-state and is denied to those, like Chucki, Stillwater and even Re-Coil, who sound too “cosmopolitan,” “professional” or “mainstream.” Jáán and rez or “rezzie” are terms which include some and exclude others—they work as “rites of incorporation” into a gendered, generationally divided Navajo social body (Van Gennep 1909 [2004]: 11).52

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52 Van Gennep theorizes three social rites of passage: 1) rites of separation 2) transition rites and 3) rites of incorporation (1909 [2004]: 11).
Other performative icons of Navajoness are enacted less explicitly through sound and more through gesture and how one interfaces with sound technology itself. Building on Johnny Emerson’s famous mic checks back in his *Fenders* days, many of the male musicians with whom I played would periodically mimetically re-enact Johnny’s performances of the abjected male for humorous effect. Again, these are jokes that only a select few would get—those who saw or heard about how the *Fenders* performed—cementing a civic belonging and incorporation into the social fold. For example, at one rehearsal up on Carson Mesa, the lead guitar player LeAnder Bia—our shyest band member who rarely chooses to sing—agrees to sing one of his favorite songs. We’re excited to hear him and wait eagerly for the signal to begin playing. Knowing all eyes are on him, he clears his throat and gets ready to start. Then, instead of singing, he slowly and deliberately begins tapping the mic and then blows into it, mouth wide open and within an inch of the mic, making a strong, throaty “whooshing” noise. Tommy and Arlondo start cracking up. I look up from my guitar, perplexed and curious. Tommy explains to me that this is something that “other” bands will do as a form of mic check and that LeAnder is playing on an image of the *jáán* for the humorous benefit of his cousin-brother (Arlondo) and uncle (Tommy). “You watch them [other bands], Kris,” he says, “they’ll do that!”

Tentatively, LeAnder begins to sing.

Since my first induction into this highly stylized, gestural form of humor, I saw variations of this mic check performed fairly often by other musicians. I never, however, saw it performed seriously as Tommy had alleged—it was always a humorous burlesque of “other” bands, past and present. The apotheosis of these
performances occurred for me at an interview I participated in with Re-Coil at K-UNM Radio station in Albuquerque. We had just finished playing for two nights at Sky City Casino, and were feeling optimistic and relaxed. The interview was hoped to be a good way to continue promoting the band and its newest album Good Time, featuring Re-Coil's first original recorded track of the same name. On the way into the multi-story red brick building, A.J. the bass player comments that the building “feels like a boarding school”—it does—and band members are joshing each other good naturally as we enter the studio space itself. “Ronnie B,” our interviewer for the show “The Singing Wire,” nods to us as we enter and we begin to get situated before we go on air. All of a sudden, in the ultimate moment of humor, drummer Mike Begay, the shyest member of that band, grabs an unplugged mic and dramatically starts to softly blow into it a la Johnny Emerson. Again, everyone starts cracking up and we try to stifle our giggles in the formal space of the UNM recording studio.

In imitations of Johnny Emerson, musicians today link themselves through gesture back to one of the first male Navajo vocalists to become known and loved on the reservation. On the one hand, these imitations make fun of Johnny's lack of savvy—what Yazzie refers to as his “not being trendy”—or what might be referred to as a “technological primitivism” often (and mistakenly) associated with America’s first peoples (Deloria 2004: 5-7). This is the performance of the abjected male that Ching identifies as being so prevalent in the performances of hard country singers.

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53 The Singing Wire is a Native music show hosted every Sunday afternoon by KUNM (89.9 FM) which airs from 2-4 pm Mountain Standard Time.
such as Hank Williams, Sr., Hank Jr., and all the members of the “Outlaws.” This performance of the burlesque, in turn, reinforces the emphasis on relatedness of Navajo male sociality and of Navajo country performance practice in particular.

On the other hand, these imitations can be understood as an homage to a man who, funny as his mic checks might now seem, also engaged with technology successfully enough to lead and front one of the first Navajo bands to ever publically perform a genre of popular music for reservation audiences. Thus, while these bands may be seen as “retro,” “corny” or jáán now, at their inception the sheer audacity of the chapterhouse bands to say “we can play, too” was seen as incredibly cosmopolitan, innovative and worldly for their time. Where sounding “rez” emplaces a musician or band as “local” now, it’s only within the last thirty years that what was once considered cosmopolitan shifted to become what’s now considered a very “local” or even “traditional” Navajo sound. This shift—seen in the way younger musicians like Lady Wildfire consciously tries not to sound “rez”—foregrounds the unfixed and changing nature of Navajo understandings of the local, the cosmopolitan and the nature of “tradition” itself. Thus, while musicians are criticizing this mic check in their reenactments, they’re also acknowledging their own, unique musical history and lineage as Navajo musicians.

And, while most musicians would find these imitations humorous, there are others who don’t. Eddie Mason, Sr. (Ta’neezhahnii or Tangle Clan people), original band member of both The Fenders and The Valley Boys—and one of the only members from either band still living—explained to me that he finds Vincent Craig’s imitations (which are really imitations of Johnny Emerson according to Eddie) to be
both arrogant and reductionist (Mason 2010). For Eddie, this is especially true in light of the fact that Vincent Craig left Crownpoint and the reservation to go “on Placement” in Utah as a teenager, lived with an Anglo family, and came back thinking he was “better” than everybody else because of his new-found Mormon religious identity. Like discussions of the Navajo Long Walk (referenced in Chapter One), this experience of Placement—those who went versus those who didn’t—speaks to yet another internal politics of difference on the Navajo Nation. From Eddie’s perspective, Vincent’s imitations of Johnny were a way for Vincent to show his own cultural cosmopolitanism, for him to show other Navajos that, although he may be a musician from Crownpoint and speak Navajo, he’s seen the world and is “anything but a jáán.”

**Hi-Fi Sociality, Lo-Fi Listening**

Beyond the aesthetics of sound and gesture, in Navajo musical practice we also see an aesthetics of sociality at work. I call this, following Herzfeld (1988), a poetics of male sociality. Like the sound of the jáán band, these aesthetics for male musicians also work to include rather than exclude. Working in the context of rural KwaZulu-Natal, Louise Meintjes asks what it means for Zulu men in particular “to live and work creatively in a provisional space” (Meintjes 2010: 1). She notes: “I am

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54 Eddie Mason, Sr., author by interview, 12 July 2010, digital recording, author’s personal archive.

55 Eddie is also from Crownpoint.

56 This refers to the Mormon Placement Program, a residential program placing Indian children in Mormon Anglo homes during the school year. I discuss the Placement Program in more depth in the Introduction to the dissertation.
struck by how much listening is done through lo-fi production,” such that “on a global scale of unequal resources, hi fi production would account for a minute proportion of recorded music that is circulated and enjoyed” (Ibid, 2). In another rural performance context where life is also often lived as provisional, I too am continually struck by how much of the music of the Native band scene is recorded and listened to in “lo-fi” settings—what Meintjes, quoting Brian Larkin (2008), calls “an aesthetic that is marked by poor transmission” (2)—despite the fact that all of these musicians have a knowledge of and appreciation for “hi fi” production value. In the Navajo context, this lo-fi aesthetic is particularly evidenced through monophonic AM radio transmission of Native band songs, through the production of home studio recordings, and through live performances in less-than-ideal performance spaces. What is the cultural work that a lower fi production value enables, and what are we to make of these aesthetics as a form of male sociality in particular?

In playing with Native Country over the course of two-plus years, I was continually struck by a sense of possibility but also a sense of limits. This was particularly true in discussions of band membership. As a band we would semi-frequently have conversations about the “future” of the band, our own musical goals, and where we hoped to be in one, two, three-year’s time. Initially, I was confused by the many musicians Tommy would reference as possible future band members and

57 For example, Nakai Hall, the main music venue on the Window Rock Fairgrounds, and the Silver Dome in Lukachukai, are literally spacious tin airplane hangers attached to a concrete floor. Sound ricochets off the walls so quickly and so unpredictably that it is virtually almost impossible to hear yourself when are playing inside these spaces.
by the fact that none of these individuals were ever informed about our interest in them. Thus, throughout these various discussions, our core band membership remained as a five-piece band.

As I became more comfortable in the band and learned the ebb and flow of these discussions, I came to understand that there were important limits that constrained Tommy from actually including these individuals in our musical family, constraints that stemmed from a combination of loyalty to family, feelings of being slighted in the past, clan obligations, availability of musicians, and distance from Many Farms/geographic location of other instrumentalists. Gender also played a role in these choices, as female musicians were regarded as an asset for their abilities to sing (females as instrumentalists was never discussed) but also as a liability in terms of the “baggage” that often came with them—for example, jealous or possessive husbands/partners who may not approve of them performing in public, “drama,” etc. Thus, while initially the world seemed our oyster as far as our pick of musicians went—this was often the way it was framed in discussions—when we factored in the various constraints outlined above, our choices became seriously limited, bringing us back to our core group of five. While this sense of limits, and of having to “make do” with what one has at hand without compromising one’s social standing, is certainly part of the reality of making music in many rural areas and not unique to the reservation, as part of a concluding anecdote I trace how musical provisionality is locally refracted in Navajo musical practice.

For example, even in the case of musicians who we never got around to inviting to “sit in,” each of these musicians was usually discussed as having one or
two great assets, inevitably offset by one or two major flaws. While one musician might “sing great but really can’t play guitar,” another could perhaps “play good lead guitar and is a good all-round musician but can’t sing,” and yet a third could “sing and write songs” but had a “big head,” the musical ego of a prima donna or couldn’t be trusted to deal with band finances. In other cases, there was a skilled vocalist and guitar player who lived in an urban area over four hours away from Many Farms—too far to play gigs or regularly rehearse—and yet another who “sings great, plays ok, too, but is generally unreliable” and in the past hadn’t consistently shown up for rehearsals or gigs. In this way, each musician represented a possibility, a potential but also something that, even if they joined, was also fated to be temporary and adopted merely “for the time being.”

Another way in which a set of limits could be seen was in the conversations centered around our CD-in-progress. In particular, since our lead guitar player never felt quite happy with the “leads” he recorded for these songs but also never recorded any new ones, he didn’t want the tracks released on the CD. This put Tommy in a compromised position. Releasing these songs in CD form—they are now on our MySpace page because this felt like a less final, formal venue—would then in a sense entail going behind the lead guitar player’s back, something Tommy would never do.

All of these social constraints have sonic effects: while Tommy’s dream is to produce a more professional sounding CD which would reflect his thirty-plus years

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58 “Leads” refers to the solo guitar portions of the song. In country music performance practice, this usually refers to the “intro,” “solo” after the first chorus and the “outro.”
dedicating his leisure time to playing music, this hi-fi CD has yet to materialize. Instead, what has emerged are seven cuts, recorded at home on Carson Mesa, which vary in quality and which he feels are too “lo-fi” to circulate as official promotional material for the band to get more gigs—one of the original goals we’d discussed at the beginning of my fieldwork when I joined the group. As a result of this decision to not pressure the guitar player into re-recording the tracks, sociality in the context of the band was maintained, Tommy has maintained social ties with his nephew, as strained as they might become over his refusal to simply re-record the guitar tracks, and music making became contextualized as more of a hobby and less as a professional endeavor. For Tommy, this is not so much by choice but out of necessity in order to maintain harmonious familial relations. Making music, then, becomes an important way to craft an artful masculinity and an ethos of belonging and relating through music, where social ties are solidified through displays of loyalty and also through the art of playing music, however provisional the sound.

**Conclusion**

In looking at the relationship between “sounding Navajo” and belonging to the Navajo Nation, we see how sounding one’s Navajoness often means playing songs from an older canon of country music associated with the sounds first heard on KOMA. We can also see how musical belonging is indexed, more often than not, through the male singing voice and, for those musicians who play popular music, through playing and performing country rather than blues, rap, or other genres more commonly associated with urban as opposed to rural lifestyles. Thus, playing
“rez country” enables particular kinds of sociality for which older Navajos hold deep and continuing affect. Performing affective attachment to the male voices that came before—for example, those of the chapterhouse bands and their lead singers—emplaces musicians and fans within the local, Navajo reservation music scene today.

Similarly, sounding Navajo is enacted through performances, bodily gestures and reenactments—both humorous and serious—of essentialized identities such as that of the Navajo jáán. Taken together, these performances signal a social belonging to a particular Navajo public sphere. Civic estrangement from this same sphere, in contrast, often results when straying from these prescribed norms, from switching one’s sound from a lo-fidelity transmission signal to a higher, more “mainstream” or professional sound, by choosing not to sound like the chapterhouse bands, or sometimes through simply sounding one’s voice or one’s instrument in the gendered body of a woman instead of a man.

The “grain” of the voice in these instances is produced not only by the friction between language and a voice (Barthes 1977), but in the friction generated when body meets voice or instrument meets body,59 such as when Ritchi is playing the guitar and leaping around the stage as he plays or when Chucki performs Etta James employing a ravaged, highly pharyngealized voice. In each of these forms, sound becomes the externalization of that which lies within the body of the musician, the private soul that, once again, is made public. One’s musical grain—how one chooses to sing, play, or interface with recording technology and P.A.s—in turn articulates a

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59 For example, Bourdieu, interpreting Barthes’ idea of grain, talks about this as the pad of the pianist’s finger touching the piano keys (Bourdieu 1984: 76).
musician’s relationship to extant social structures, in this case the paradigm which holds as its mantra that playing country music, sounding mono and singing “like a man” are synonymous with “sounding Navajo.” Thus, at its most essentializing, “sounding Navajo” and playing country music come to be heard as a sort of primordial, Navajo “essence,” a nationalist project which leaves little room for musical experimentation or variation in social roles. Similar to White’s discussion of popular dance band music in Mobutu’s Zaire, rez country thus signifies “a privileged form of cultural expression that becomes instrumental in the articulation of [Navajo] national identities” (2008: 8).

If words are the “sign of the voice” (Frith 1988: 121), what does singing signify in the Navajo context, and how is social structure articulated (Feld & Fox 1994) when a singing voice conjoins with spoken language to form its own, unique “grain”? Linking this question to larger themes of the dissertation, I have shown in this chapter how a Navajo politics of difference is specifically made audible in sound through ideas of musical taste, gender, and nation. At the same time, this sound is tied to ideas of Navajo tradition and territoriality, to where one makes a sound and performs one’s music (for example, playing on versus off-reservation or on the Arizona versus New Mexico sides of the reservation).

Performative icons of Navajoness—sounding like or enacting the gestures of the early chapterhouse bands, singing with a thick Navajo-English accent—symbolize a musical group’s belonging to either the Navajo Nation or the greater U.S. nation, but rarely both at the same time. As such, bands and musicians use the sound that will most quickly serve them in gaining a sense of civic belonging either
to spaces of Navajo sociality or spaces of non-Na\-vajo (usually Anglo) sociality. For those that choose to perform for other Navajos in particular, enacting and drawing on earlier images and sounds of the chapterhouse or jáán bands and getting fans to dance to your songs is essential not only in cementing both one’s own sense of belonging to Navajo territories and social spaces but also in one’s perception of belonging by other Navajos. For those that choose—or are relegated by virtue of gender or genre—to play in the off-reservation music scene, developing an adversarial stance toward the chapterhouse sound can also buttress musicians’ senses of civic belonging to non-Na\-vajo spaces such as bordertown bars and casinos. Thus, using this “dated” sonic toolkit further entrenches musicians within a Na\-vajo-only music scene and at the same time often serves to further exclude more urban Navajo musicians playing in the off-reservation music scene by virtue of that same sound.

Sonic differences carry social differences because sound is value-laden, socially embedded, and often inextricable from ideas of class, gender, generation and nation. These sonic differences, in turn, are rendered social intelligible through vocal and bodily “grain,” vocal register, linguistic labeling (jáán), timbre and forms of “hi-fi” male sociality. For Navajo country bands, sounding “rez” becomes a local way to belong, participate and relate through music; it is an aesthetic choice that eschews upward mobility for its own sake and instead focuses on the affect music generates for those that relish it, both past and present.
Conclusion: Coda

June 2011. I am seated at the table with the daughter of a close friend from Many Farms. Here, in my sunny kitchen in Durham, NC, a space far away from the reservation, seven-year old Ashley\(^1\) relates her trials and insights as a primary school student with a Navajo mom and a Korean and French dad. As she carefully slices tomatoes for dinner, she relates how she one-upped a classmate from her rural, reservation elementary school who was teasing her about her non-Navajo sounding last name during recess. Very aware of her French surname and that she doesn’t speak Navajo, Ashley went to her maternal grandmother [her másání] for advice. Her másání, fluent in Navajo, told Ashley to address the male student by the Navajo version of his last name, “Blacksheep,” or Dibéliezhííní, in order to throw him off. Returning to school the next day, Ashley tried this tactic, adding a throaty “bah bah” for added effect at the end of the punch line. “And guess what?” she now announces, her eyes bright and animated: “it worked!” Her classmate got mad because he didn’t understand what she was saying in Navajo, and eventually he stopped teasing her altogether. Triumphantely, she ends her story with the appraisal: “…and Kris: he’s a full-blood Navajo, too!”

Ashley’s story reminds about the role of language in discourses of authenticity on the Navajo Nation. Even as a second grader, her anecdote demonstrates the iconicization between language (in this case, a non-Navajo

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\(^1\) Ashley is a pseudonym.
sounding name), blood quantum and identity, revealing how deeply internalized senses of self can travel, even on a summer vacation, from Arizona to North Carolina and back again. But in this story we can also see and hear a heightened sensitivity to aesthetics and Navajo language use. In particular, we hear an expression of childrens’ own sociolinguistic awareness (Kulick 1997; Schieffelin 1986 ed., 1990; Schieffelin & Kulick 2004; Minks 2002; 2006). Thus, this exchange between Ashley and her classmate reveals how, even at a very young age of active language acquisition, children perform an identity in which they either proudly “do” or abashedly “don’t” speak Navajo.

Ashley’s vignette also calls attention to what I refer to as “structures of voicing,” or how voice reveals key insights into cultural hierarchy, social citizenship and belonging as these are expressed in the human singing and speaking voice. Thus, while Ashley’s “full blood” classmate teases her about her non-Navajo sounding name, he actually turns out not to speak or understand Navajo himself. Once Ashley reveals this slippage or sociolinguistic disjuncture, they become equals on a level playing field where he can no longer comfortably tease her as before. These structures also include a strong emphasis on being “locatably” Navajo. This emphasis on location includes place of geographic origin (in Ashley’s case a rural reservation town), but also frames location as the place of the tongue in the mouth, the accompanying shape of the facial muscles as one speaks and the linguistic sounds one can or cannot make as a by-product of this embodied knowledge. Thus, while many younger children today have excellent passive fluency in Navajo, it’s often difficult for them to confidently reproduce in their own voice these same
idiosyncratic Navajo sounds, such as l, high nasal tones such as å, ñ, and glottal stops. Put another way, location in the linguistic sense is about successful manipulation of wind in the body [nikch ’i]—the way in which glottal stops and air are produced in the diaphragm, voiced in the throat and constricted and then released in the epiglottis. Being “locatably” Navajo is marked by place of origin but also by an overall heightened sensitivity to aesthetics and to language use at a fundamental level. And, if Ashley’s story can be accepted as representative of at least some children in her peer group, this awareness of how someone strategically “sounds” one’s Navajoness is very heightened, indeed.

However, as I hope to have shown in this dissertation, Navajo ideologies of authenticity do not only form around language, place of origin and the last name one carries. They are also indexed by the speaking and singing voice, through race, claims to firstness, degree of Navajo blood and gendered personae, and, making matters even more complex, are at once publicly performed and privately intimated. Using music and language to explore the politics of Navajo difference, I show how ideas of voice, expressive culture and “the arts” in general are thus centrally tie into tribal, state and federal politics of who “counts” as indigenous when. In particular, through a methodological focus on prestige, gender, and generational expressions of Navajo sociality, this study sheds light upon how diminishment, exclusion and marginalization form the flip side of the coin of Navajo cultural authenticity, belonging, social citizenship and indigenous tradition. Thus, terms of linguistic approval traced throughout this study—“traditional,” “deep rez,” “rez,” “mono,” “old Navajo,” “somewhere deep”—go along in discursive frequency and intensity by
terms of linguistic disapproval. Such denotations, including “jáán,” “apple,” “generic,” and “urban” and even “New Mexico” Navajo, speak to the privileged currency of cultural distinction which permeates so many layers of Navajo discourse, private and public. Such terms also demonstrate beyond a doubt how varying identities become attached to different Navajo speaker types in often essentializing ways.

An implication of this study, therefore, has been to show how changing, evolving facets of culture come to be seen, heard and interpolated as fixed and internalized “essences.” Put another way, I have traced how Navajo ideologies of authenticity have emerged out of larger histories of U.S. expansion, racialization, territorial displacement, land expropriation and conservation. These ideologies, however, while they come to have hegemonic force for many Navajos, are also far from uncontested. In this light, expressive cultural forms—humor, music, oratory, dance, language play, code switching—are particularly apt at revealing the cracks in these hegemonic constructions, as I’ve shown with Vincent Craig, Craig’s comedic routines attempt to poke fun and expose the fallacy of a single Navajo “essence” through his impersonations of these overdetermined cultural “types.” Interpreting forms of cultural expression as unchanging, in turn, not only restricts the range of movement and senses of possibility for those so denoted; such strictures also limit our own anthropological ability as students of human culture to understand all social worlds as fundamentally experimental, creative and based on dynamic movement, fluctuation and change. Thus, while evolution and diachronic change within language structures are often a given from an anthropological perspective,
our studies of expressive culture and the desire to document “traditional”
expressive forms have sometimes blinded us from seeing change and hybridity in
Native contexts as cultural norms rather than anomalies (Deloria 2004: 2).

Rather, if we can understand voice as the instrument through which a politics
of sameness and difference is expressed, we then see how voice and vocality not
only conjoin terms of linguistic approval and disapproval, but also wed ideas of
inclusion to exclusion, soul to spirit, head to chest, and metal to wood. If words are
the “sign” of the voice (Frith 1988: 121), then voice is also the “sign” or signature of
a person and therefore of a particular identity. As something that is “culturally
inscribed” (Reed 1998: 526) in the body, voice is a primary sign of social
difference—this is clarified over the telephone when we “identify” a speaker’s
region, race, education and economic status through their voice alone—but it is also
uniquely personal, idiosyncratic and idiolectal, too. Voice—this incredibly private,
vulnerable instrument controlling our ability to speak and to sing—also acts as the
most official, representational part of our selves, the public sound of the self. Indeed,
this is why something like vocal grain—often glossed as vocal “timbre,” although it’s
actually much more than that—is so deeply personal: while it’s culturally embedded
and socially acquired, voice is also something so deeply naturalized and
unconscious, so unique to our sense of self and so specific to our individual bodies—
chest size, vocal cavity, position of the larynx, diction, dialect— that there’s often
nothing we can do to change our voices, even if we wanted to.

Affective attachments to voices—those of Vincent Craig, Johnny Emerson,
Waylon Jennings, and Etta James, but also fathers and uncles, mothers and aunties—
shape not only our politics and senses of self but also our own feelingful experiences of citizenship and belonging. Whose voices do we long to listen to, and why? What is the cultural work that hearing a particular voice at a particular moment, either private or public, performs? How might “knowing” a voice or getting a joke about another person’s voice shape us as fully-fledged members of a social group or citizens of a Nation? How do music and language craft specific senses of self that differ from one nation and one community to another?

I have shown that these senses of belonging and knowing one’s “place” are also often highly gendered. Thus, as stories about Chucki, Candice, Doreen and Radmilla demonstrate, women are often portrayed as the bearers and transmitters of that which lies “within” the Nation, including as the bearers of “traditional” culture and “prestige group” speakers of an indigenous heritage language. From this perspective, Navajoness is something that comes both from within the physical body and also from within the symbolic Nation, a private (and often idealized and imagined) center or cultural core. Men, in contrast, often come to represent that which aesthetically lies beyond the Nation and thus they emblemize its more public face; popular music, popular culture, recording technologies and Western-style Realpolitik realized at the level of Navajo tribal politics (most Tribal Council positions are held by Navajo men). These tensions and frictions between the gendering of male and female voices also speak to larger slippages I track throughout the dissertation between what is public/intimate, seen/unseen, heard/not heard, and the perceived “right” to belong based on one’s success navigating these disjunctures.
The aim of this study has not only been to show how the “grain” of the voice is the physical and symbolic locus of Navajo identity politics. It has also been to demonstrate how grain is also linked to ideas, textures and timbres of recording technology. Grain is the friction between language and a voice, but it’s also the friction between a voice and a microphone, such as when musicians imitate Johnny Emerson’s mic check and the uniqueness of his vocal grain through mimicking the “whoosh” discussed in Chapter Five. Thus, grain is produced through the “mono” sound of early Chapterhouse bands, through lo-fidelity recordings and temporary playback devices, but also by extension through a hi-fidelity male sociality privileging relatedness and reciprocity through family and kinship ties. Grain articulates with social structure because sound is not only value-laden and socially enmeshed; grain carries the residual weight of nostalgia, the former affect and future hope of sounds and voices to come.

In a final return to the concept of “tradition” and being Navajo, Benjamin Barney, director of the Navajo Teacher Education Program at Diné College, Tsaile, offers some thoughts for a future road map which is both courageous and in some ways, I think, unexpected:

I think a good map is the original Navajo map because the...map entails having to do with Utes, having to deal with Hopis, Tewas, and all these Pueblos and all these people in the tribe that are different customs, cultures, and ways and lifestyle. That original map was a good map. And that’s much more necessary now. The older [generation], my great-grandparents’ age, I think, were much better at dealing with cross-cultural, cross-language, cross-religion. And they had an ease, a flowing back and forth. That particular map, I think, is much more necessary for these younger Navajos than ever before, because they will end up in Germany, they will end up in France, they will end up in Korea. They will end up in New York City, Albuquerque, Phoenix,
Some of them have gone mid-west; some of them have gone east (Barney in House 2002: iv).

For Barney, making this observation in 1994, a return to (or active continuity of) Navajo tradition may actually mean an opening up of the categories of Navajoness, not sealing them off from outside influence. This return to the “original map” might include expanding these categories not only within and among Navajos living on the reservation, inter-Navajo, but also broadening and deepening a set of intra-Navajo diplomatic relations, for example between Navajos living on the Big Rez and those residing on satellite reservations, in U.S. cities and stationed “abroad” in the military, both in the United States and overseas. Such an approach might also include a more serious look at international relations between the Navajo Nation and other tribal nations, state governments and the U.S. nation, examining how national imaginaries of both the Navajo Nation and the U.S. nation are co-created in this process.

In returning to the idea of Navajo cosmopolitanism that Barney argues is intrinsic to traditional Navajo concepts of self pre-Long Walk, he also pushes us to reconsider the role of Navajos in larger U.S. society, in the U.S. international community, and vis-à-vis other U.S. tribes (Lee 2006). In the process, he prompts us to reconceptualize how we think about home and abroad, stateside and international, and “us” versus “them.” For example, showcasing this cosmopolitanism and “flowing back and forth,” it is not at all unusual to hear, in conversation with a Navajo Park Ranger living in the “heart” of the reservation, a casual reference to the time he spent in Belarus with his dance troupe; or a Navajo
ceremonial practitioner proclaim his affinity for käsebrot, developed when he was stationed in southern Germany; a Native American Church member recount how Navajo “grandmas” look just like the Athabaskan grandmas in Western Canada and the Canadian Shield he saw “over there” when he apprenticed to an NAC roadman; or about the cherished visits to sons, nephews, cousins and uncles who are stationed here in “my” state at Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune. Considering this, and given how Navajos are nationally known as the tribe of the legendary Code Talkers, how might a self-governing entity like the Navajo Nation argue for its “right to belong,” its social citizenship, to the U.S. nation in ways that differ from how other U.S. tribes might make this claim?

As I sit here in Cedar Grove, North Carolina, eating a piece of bááh dootlízhii [blue corn bread] baked from my last bag of Navajo roasted blue corn meal, I think about how food and what’s considered “traditional” are always relative and constantly in flux. While one person’s “traditional” food is mutton stew, pop and frybread, another’s might be fruit salad with miracle whip, fried potatoes, kneel down bread dipped in bacon fat and served with black coffee, or blue corn mush with juniper berry and Navajo (a.k.a. Mormon) tea. In looking at the origins and trajectories of these dishes, we see that tradition is indeed a multifaceted, diversely inflected and highly subjective leitmotif: what was once new is now understood as traditional, and vice versa. Each of these foods, to the person that eats it, becomes affectively tied to what it means, for them, to express being Navajo.
In her poem, “In 1864,” Navajo poet Luci Tapahonso writes about the Long Walk to Bosque Redondo, its effects on Navajo society now and how food plays a central role in this history. She narrates the following anecdote to her daughter:

The car hums steadily, and my daughter is crying softly.
Tears stream down her face. She cannot speak. Then I tell her that it was at Bosque Redondo the people learned to use flour and now fry bread is considered to be the “traditional” Navajo bread. It was there that we acquired a deep appreciation for strong coffee. The women began to make long, tiered calico skirts and fine velvet shirts for the men. They decorated their dark velvet blouses with silver dimes, nickels, and quarters. They had no use for money then.
It is always something to see—silver flashing in the sun
Again dark velvet and black, black hair (Tapahonso 1993: 10).

*T’áá Akódí. The End.*
Appendices

Appendix A
(reprinted from Irvy Goossen, *Read, Speak Write Navajo*);
Used with Permission
The Navajo Alphabet

6. When only the first letter of a diphthong or vowel cluster has a mark over it, the
tone is falling. When the last is marked, the tone is rising.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Navajo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>apple</td>
<td>biłiszína</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ball</td>
<td>dōola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we will</td>
<td>deédlítah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read it</td>
<td>fínasíí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oranges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. CONSONANTS

1. The glottal stop /ʔ/ is the most common consonantal sound. It sounds like the break
between the two elements of “oh, oh!” The difference between “Johnny yearns” and
“Johnny earns” is that the latter has a glottal stop between the last two words. All words
appearing to begin with a vowel, actually begin with a glottal stop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Navajo</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e'ñah</td>
<td>west</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a'dán</td>
<td>a hole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Following are the rest of the consonants and their English equivalents, as much as
they can be given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Navajo</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch</td>
<td>firewood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chʼ</td>
<td>hat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dl</td>
<td>mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dz</td>
<td>gah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>gah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gh</td>
<td>wool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>where at?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hw</td>
<td>bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>wheel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>antelope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kʼ</td>
<td>shoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lw</td>
<td>now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>glove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>glove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>glove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sh</td>
<td>bear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>ice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tʼ</td>
<td>still, yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tl</td>
<td>oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tʼlʼi</td>
<td>goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ts</td>
<td>wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsʼ</td>
<td>sagebrush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>beeweed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(see note under 3 below)
The Navajo Alphabet

y yá sky like /y/ in yard
z zá snow like /z/ in zero
zh bázhí his name like /zh/ in pleasure

3. /h/ represents the sound of /ch/ in German “ich” or /ij/ in Spanish “justa”, as well as /h/ in “has.” The syllable final /h/ is soft like in English. When /h/ follows /s/ and does not represent the /sh/ digraph, the /s-h/ sequence is written /sx/, /sx/ being the international symbol for /sh/.

yiyílsí for yiyíis-hí  he killed it  hitso orange (intense yellow)
litso yellow
doo nítsin da I don’t want it
doo nítsin da I really don’t want it!

4. The glottalized consonants /ch/, /t/, /t/, /ts/ are made by setting the mouth for the consonants and releasing with the glottis closed. These sounds are made with mouth air, rather than lung air. You can practice with /o’oo, očh’oo, oč’oo, oč’h’oo, oč’t’oo, ots’oo/, keeping the break between the consonant and vowel.

5. /gh/ is made far back in the mouth. Imagine you have a hair on your palate and are trying to remove it — vocally. It is made the same way as the harsh /h/ vocally.

agháa’ wool
shíghan my home

6. For /l/ set your tongue for /l/ and just blow between the side of your tongue and the gums.

bíl horse
bíl with him

References


Appendix B

Native Language Introduction:

1a. Navajo

1b. Literal Translation
Hello to everyone present. My name is Kristina Jacobsen. I am originally from Massachusetts but now reside in Many Farms on Carson Mesa at a place called “where the rock is round/spherical.” I study the five-fingered people, their culture and their songs among the students at Duke University. I am from the white people who originally come from across the ocean. My clans (ethnicity, in my case) are as follows: I am born to Swedish (maternal grandmother’s ethnicity) and born for English (paternal grandmother); I am also Danish (maternal grandfather) and English (paternal grandfather). In this way I am a woman. The ones that I play [music] with are called “Native Country Band.” The ones I play with are also from Many Farms [Arizona]. I play cowboy songs. In this way I am a woman, a student and a teacher. Cowboy songs are very beautiful to me. Dance beautifully, perhaps, and don’t forget to tip your bartender. That’s it.

1 My thanks to Navajo teachers Shirley Bowman (Diné College, Crownpoint) and Thomas Littleben (Diné College, Tsaile) for their help in formulation and orthography of this introduction. Ahehee’ láq’!
2 In my introduction, due to my own mobility the place I temporarily credited as “home” shifted between the New Mexico towns of Crownpoint, Chaco Canyon and Gallup, and Many Farms, Arizona.
3 Since there is no codified word in Navajo for cultural anthropology, I was told to describe the specific practices of the discipline, instead. “Five fingered people”—bita’ ashdla’t—is a generic Navajo term for any/all human beings and is a word that originates in the Navajo creation stories.
4 Clanwise, a Navajo is born “to” her mother’s clan and “for” her father’s clan. Thus, for purposes of identifying oneself, the mother’s clan is always a person’s primary and therefore most salient clan.
Hello everyone. My name is Kristina Jacobsen. I’m originally from Massachusetts but I now live in Many Farms, Arizona at a place called Carson Mesa. I am a graduate student at Duke University and study music and anthropology (ethnomusicology). I am Anglo, and my clans/ethnicities are English, Swedish and Danish.

I play with a band called Native Country. They’re from Many Farms, Arizona, too. I play the acoustic and lapsteel guitars. I am also a singer, but I only sing country songs. I really like country music. Have fun dancing and don’t forget to tip your bartender. Take care and thank you.
Appendix C
Class C Permit for first 8 months of research
Appendix D

Sample Page, Navajo Nation Business Site Lease Application (1 of 10 page application)

BUSINESS SITE LEASE BUSINESS SITE LEASE APPLICATION
REQUIREMENT AND PROCEDURES CHECK LIST

FUNCTIONS BY APPLICANT
1. Submit Business Proposal (includes application, business plan and sources of funding)
2. Location Clearance – ONLA-Secure land users (Customary/Permittee) consent.
3. Archaeological Clearance (AC)-Navajo Nation Cultural Resource Office. 4.
   Environmental Assessment (EA) Survey Clearance. 5. Navajo Business Procurement
   Act Clearance. 6. Sanitation Clearance-IHS/OEH-Sanitation Permit, Sanitation
   Evaluation Review. 7. Road Clearance (turnouts)-BIA/State. 8. Utility Clearance (electric,
   water and sewer)-NTUA. 9. UST Compliance Report-EPA, if required. 10. Official
   Chapter Resolution, if required. 11. Partnership Agreement, if required. 12. Articles of
   Incorporation, Corporate Leasing Resolution, if required. 13. Registration with Business
   Regulatory Department if foreign
   (not Navajo Nation) corporation. 14. Legal Land Survey

FUNCTIONS BY RBDO AND BIA
1. Completed Application Package Received (Review). 1.ONLA Site Clearance.
2. Archaeological Clearance. 3. EA Survey Clearance.
4. Road Clearance (turnouts)-BIA/State. 5. Utility Clearance (electric, water and sewer)-
   NUTA. 6. Navajo Business Procurement Act Clearance. 7. UST Compliance Report-EPA,
   if required. 8. Review Partnership Agreement and/or Corporation to
   Articles/Registration, if required. 9. Obtain current appraisal report from an Appraiser. 10.
   Obtain current and accurate survey of business site for use in
   lease documents. 2. Appraisal Report (Negotiates rental). 3. Negotiate Lease terms and
   conditions.

BUSINESS SITE LEASE PACKAGE (Assign SAS No.)
1. Executive Summary . 2. Request for Services-Department of Justice 3. Prepared
   Business Site Lease 4. Navajo Business Procurement Clearance 5. Official Chapter
   Resolution, if required
   document
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Zolbrod, P.G.
Biography

Kristina Jacobsen was born in Hempstead, NY on September 29th, 1978. She graduated from Monument Valley Regional High School in Great Barrington, MA (1996), and then attended the University of Vermont, where she double majored in Music (flute performance) and American Indian History (B.A., 2000, magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa). At the University of Vermont, she was recognized as Outstanding Senior in Music and the Outstanding Senior in History. After moving to Arizona to teach at the Rough Rock Demonstration School, in 2003 she completed the Master of Arts in Ethnomusicology (M.A.) from Arizona State University. Her thesis, “Native Bands of Diné Bikéyah: Navajo Country and Contexts,” earned her the Outstanding Graduate Student in Music History award from the A.S.U. School of Music. Her article, “Rita(hhh): Placemaking and Country Music on the Navajo Nation” (2009) was published in the journal *Ethnomusicology* and is based on research from her Master’s thesis. Upon completing the MPhil in Ethnomusicology at Columbia University, Kristina began her PhD in Cultural Anthropology at Duke University and graduated in May 2012. A recipient of awards from the Jacob’s Research Fund, the Lynn Reyer Award in Tribal Community Development and the Wenner-Gren Foundation, Kristina was the winner of the Albuquerque Visitor’s Bureau Award for best paper presented at the SWTX/ACA annual meeting. She is a member of the National Honor Society and was the Concerto Competition Winner and featured Soloist for the University of Vermont Symphony Orchestra. A baroque
flutist, singer and lapsteel player, in her free time she enjoys playing music, taking hikes with her dog, traveling, and learning new languages.